DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING ACADEMY AT NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERSITY-BROKEN ARROW CAMPUS IN OKLAHOMA: WHY IS IT WORKING?

By

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> "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and sorry I could not travel both and be one traveler, long I stood and looked down one as far as I could to where it bent in the undergrowth; then took the other, as just as fair, and having perhaps the better claim, because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that the passing there had worn them really about the same. And both that morning equally lay in leaves no step had trodden black. Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back. I shall be telling this with a sigh somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--- I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference."

Our family traveled to the path where the two roads diverge. Raised by teen parents who had only known a path of poverty, one day stumbled upon the diverge in the yellow wood. Vexed with the choice, they chose a path very different than what they had ever known or seen; a path that would break the cycle of poverty for our family. Life is about the choices we make and paths we take. They took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference…for me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Personal Leadership

The Cowardly Lion from the movie *Wizard of Oz* said it best: "I haven't any courage at all. I even scare myself." Leadership experts posit many opinions about leadership, but few address personal leadership. Described as "knowing and owning your uniqueness" (Mahan, 2006, p. 2), personal leadership starts with a personal relationship with yourself: an in-depth look at who you are inside and the mechanics of your emotions. Many adult learners find themselves fighting the same battle as the Cowardly Lion: a battle within themselves, a struggle of self understanding, and the desire to have the courage to explore it.

While courage is simply assessing risks and standing up to the hardships they may bring (Kidder, 2005, p. 9), having *moral courage* is the readiness to expose oneself to suffering or inconvenience which does not affect the body. It arises from firmness of moral principle and is independent of the physical constitution (p. 10). When the battle within is won, one sees a paradigm shift. This paradigm shift or "Aha!" experience (Covey, 1989, p. 29) happens when true understanding of one's self occurs and thus, the birth of personal leadership. Moral courage is a philosophical and psychological foundation of personal leadership and is the core foundation that Diverse

Educational Leadership Training Academy (DELTA) uses to teach personal leadership at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University in Oklahoma.

Northouse (2004) posited that leadership development is a growing trend in many organizations and universities today. Changing attitudes and values, new technology, and an influx of talented and innovative personnel are changing the way organizations operate and therefore, are changing the way universities educate their students with respect to leadership. Excellent problem-solving skills, superior technological abilities, and a healthy self-concept are industry standards in the workplace of today (p. 1).

DELTA Leadership Academy

Delta Leadership Academy at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University in Oklahoma is a training ground for that institution for students who wish to explore personal leadership. Many businesses today are looking for individuals who show personal initiative that stems from self-management and self-correction: In other words, knowing what needs to be done and doing it with personal conviction (Kidder, 2005). DELTA aims to equip students with tools necessary to meet the challenges of employers.

Personal leadership is a transformational process in which a person gains understanding of themselves to become a confident leader (Burns, 1978). In order to accomplish this goal, students must attain self-actualization through the understanding of themselves and the completion of their personal goals. Personal leadership involves a personal relationship with yourself; an in-depth look at who you are inside and the mechanics of your emotions. DELTA's basis for this concept is simple: moral courage, self-management, and self-correction through adherence of the five DELTA Core Values

established by the program. In the DELTA program, personal leadership starts with understanding yourself then moves into the work place by encouraging relationship building with peers, leaders and followers, internal and external to the organization. Love for colleagues and the organization build strong relationships which is healthy for all persons involved (Mahan, 2006).

DELTA places its foundation on moral courage and centers its teachings on five core values. DELTA defines its core values as "who we are and how we treat others. We practice these values at school, in our community, and we expect no less from our peers" (Mahan, 2006, p. 1). The five core values of DELTA are as follows (2006):

1. Discipline: NSU Delta Members will strive to raise the character standards for all NSU students by exhibiting a self-controlled pattern of behavior, submission to rules and authority, and a commitment to self-correction. Passion, diligence, and vision will be the motivation to developing and maintaining a strong character.

2. Excellence: NSU Delta Members will have an attitude of enthusiasm that fosters extraordinary courage, pride, and integrity to unleash their potential; adhering to an incorruptible code of values and ethics at all times.

3. Legacy: NSU Delta Members will reproduce and empower a legion of students to carry on the core values, integrity, and diversity which has been handed down from successors who continually invest in the future of our university.

4. Trustworthiness: NSU Delta Members will be conviction driven, dependable, honest, and committed to the care of other students; showing genuine empathy at all times.

5. Ambassadorship: NSU Delta Members will be diplomats for the university, always showing professionalism, stewardship, and tact in all endeavors; always being a person of positive influence.

Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations for DELTA and This Study

Student Development Theory

Student Development Theory is the approach that underpins self-management in personal leadership. In 1969, Arthur Chickering introduced seven vectors of student development in higher education. When Chickering released the first edition of *Education and Identity* (1969), many opposed the orientation that colleges and universities should be concerned with students' personal values and intercultural skills. Today many universities tout student empowerment and leadership, however, effective implementation has been a challenge, yet Chickering has maintained that "Student Development Theory must apply to this generation of students as well as to future ones" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 44). DELTA's foundation is moral courage and the self-exploration of personal core values. Chickering's vectors address these items and provide theoretical support for DELTA's design. Specifically, vector two, managing emotions; vector five, establishing identity; vector six, developing purpose; and vector seven, developing integrity are closely related to DELTA's goals of affirming core values and beliefs and establishing a healthy self-concept.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Self-correction is the mechanics of how a person functions and develops learning patterns (Covey, 1989). Rima (2000) labeled personal leadership and self-correction as "self-leadership" (p. 14). Transformational leadership theory is the approach that underpins the self-correction portion of personal leadership. Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people from within. Northouse (2007) described this type of leadership theory as grounded in emotions, values, ethics, standards and long-term goals which include assessing the students' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as a full human being (p. 175).

Leadership was central in the classic work of political sociologist James MacGregor Burns (1978). Burns connected leaders and followers by the needs of both. The motives of the follower were examined to reach the goals of both the leader and follower (p. 18). Burns (1978) specifically addressed the issue of raising the level of morality. According to Northouse (2007), this happens when connections are formed though engagement of the leader and follower which raises the level of motivation and morality in both (p. 176). This suggests that transformational leadership encourages support of the greater good rather than self-interest.

Some common assessment tools frequently used in transformational leadership environments as related to personal leaders are *Assessing the Learning Strategies of AdultS (ATLAS), Strengths Quest, ZINN Inventory,* and the *Enneagram* personality test. Knowing the intimate details about yourself through such learning instruments brings understanding of leadership situations or attitudes that may need to be adjusted. Through what Blake and Mouton (1964) called instrumented learning, self-correction becomes a

natural process in everyday life and is not seen as a personal flaw, but rather as a tool for staying focused and on track. This is a key element in personal leadership training and in the DETLA program.

Moral Development Theory and DELTA

When examining moral courage and its role in DELTA, it is appropriate to look at the Moral Development Theory which underpins it and provides theoretical support for this study. Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget was one of the earliest theorists to study development of moral judgment. His work on moral development was part of his study of human mental development that has become foundational in educational psychology. Piaget used a two-stage theory in which children are classified into two groups, one younger than age 10 or 11 and the other older. He reported that the difference in moral judgment between these two groups was that younger children based their moral judgment on the consequences involved, whereas older children based their moral judgment on intentions or motives (Piaget, 1932, p. 130). Lawrence Kohlberg became fascinated with the work of Piaget but felt his work was incomplete (Crain, 2005). This curiosity led to Kohlberg's landmark study of moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1970) and then to the development of his theory of six stages of moral development.

Kohlberg (1970) proposed the following six stages of moral development: Obedience and Punishment Orientation, Individualism and Exchange, Good Interpersonal Relationships, Maintaining the Social Order, Social Contract and Individual Rights, and Universal Principles. Kohlberg's passion was to see individuals reach their highest possible stage of moral judgment which would contribute to a society with a value for

moral thought (1970). In leadership terms, it can be hypothesized that individuals who have attained high levels of moral judgment on Kohlberg's theoretical model would be likely to engage in morally responsible personal leadership based on the principle of moral courage. Moral Development Theory as explained by Kohlberg goes beyond moral courage and reaches into the realm of reasoning, convictions, forgiveness, empathy and judgment. The DELTA program is based on this premise and is designed to help participants develop moral judgment and courage and apply these to personal leadership actions.

Adult Learning Theory

A primary pillar in the design of the DELTA program and the conceptual framework for this study is the application of adult education theory and the andragogy model of learning. Knowles (1980) described adult education as "the process of adults learning" or more technically "a set of organized activities carried on by a wide variety of institutions for the accomplishment of specific educational objectives" (p. 25). Merriam (2001) identified andragogy and self-directed learning as the "Pillars of Adult Learning Theory" (p. 11). Knowles (1980) described andragogy as the art or science of helping adults learn (p. 43). Adult education is comprised of theories, models, sets of principles, and explanations on which adult knowledge is based. Merriam (2001) considered the concepts of andragogy and self-directed learning to be critical elements to the understanding of adult learning (p. 3).

Andragogy

Knowles (1980) premised andragogy on four critical and distinct assumptions about the characteristics of learners as they mature:

1. As people mature, their self-concept moves from dependency toward increased self-directedness.
2. As people accumulate experience, this becomes a resource for learning and therefore, more meaning is placed on learning gained from experience.
3. Readiness to learn becomes more oriented to developmental tasks of their social roles.
4. Orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of performance-centeredness. (p. 44-45)

The andragogical model postulates that adult learners are active participants in their education. They forge the path to learning with the teacher as a facilitator (p. 45).

Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning was identified by Knowles (1975) as a critical part of the andragogy model of adult education. He described it as a process in which individuals take initiative in diagnosing their learning needs, forming learning goals, identifying resources for learning, choosing and implementing strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (p. 18). Tough (1967) claimed that self-directed learning develops learners to take responsibility for the planning and directing of their own learning.

Some may assume that self-directed learning begins and ends in isolation. However, Knowles (1975) stated that self-directed learning usually takes place in conjunction with teachers, tutors, mentors, resource people, and peers.

DELTA Leadership Academy is comprised of adult learners and therefore the andragogical model is used for instruction. Because the premise of DETLA is moral courage, self-correction and self-management, self-directed learning theory and moral development theory are appropriate theory applications. Self-directed learning theory places students into an environment where they take responsibility for their own learning. When this theory is applied, students become active participants in classroom and begin to take ownership of themselves (Knowles, 1975; Tough, 1967).

Learning Strategies Preference

It is a fundamental premise of DELTA that personal leadership illuminates the differences in individual leaders. Just as no one person is exactly the same as another, the same is true with leaders. Each leader has unique learning characteristics. There are many ways to conceptualize and measure learner differences, one of which has been termed *learning strategies*.

According to Fellenz and Conti (1993), "learning strategies are the techniques or skills that an individual elects to use in order to accomplish a learning task" (p. 3). Research on learning strategies is increasing and is currently providing insights into the differences in how individuals learn (Conti & Kolody, 1999a, p. 2). Learning strategies have been conceptualized into five main areas: Metacognative, Metamotivation, Memory, Critical Thinking, and Resource Management (Fellenz & Conti, 1993). These learning

strategies can be measured by the *Self-Knowledge Inventory of Lifelong Learning Strategies (SKILLS).*

Research with SKILLS identified three distinct groups of learners called Navigators, Engagers, and Problem Solvers (Conti & Kolody, 1998, p. 118). While SKILLS has been a useful assessment of learning strategies, it is lengthy and difficult to administer and score, thus limiting its usefulness in classroom situations. To address this problem, a much shorter form of SKILLS was developed called *Assessing and Learning Strategies of AdultS (ATLAS).* ATLAS was designed to "produce an instrument which was easy to administer, which could be completed rapidly, and which could be used immediately by facilitators and learners" (p. 109) as a tool for instrumented learning as defined by Blake and Mouton (1964). The derivation of ATLAS from SKILLS was accomplished through powerful multi-variant statistical procedures, cluster and discriminate analysis (Conti & Kolody, 1999). This process, and the validity and reliability of ATLAS, was extensively reviewed and documented by Ausburn and Brown (2006).

Theoretical and Conceptual Model

This study explores the perceived success in the DELTA leadership program through an examination of the design of DELTA Leadership Academy. Perceptions of the adult learners who completed the program were exposed through focus group interviews. The theoretical foundations of the design of DELTA in this study consisted of four main theories: Student Development Theory, Moral Development Theory, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Adult learning Theory. The first three theories

work collaboratively as a holistic approach to leadership utilizing three areas of thought: self-management, self-correction, and moral courage. This concept can be paralleled with a well-known metaphor: mind, body, and spirit (see Figure 1). DELTA's design then funnels the first three theories through Knowles' (1980) Adult Learning Theory in an attempt to produce a *holistic leader* (see Figure 2).

Self-management represents the mind and deals with the emotions, life purpose, and self-concept. Self-management explores the questions, "Who am I?", "What do I believe about myself and life?" and "How do I manage my emotions?" These questions tie closely to Maslow's theory, specifically the ego needs. Ego needs refer to self-respect, personal worth and autonomy (Maslow, 1954, 1970). Chickering's (1970) student develop theory is the approach that underpins the concepts of self-management.

Second, self-correction represents the body which reveals the mechanics of how a person functions and learns. Specifically, it asks, "What traits do I have and how do they impact learning and my ability to be socially acceptable?" This concept ties to Maslow's theory for social needs (Maslow, 1954, 1970). Northouse (2007) posited that transformational leadership theory is a process that changes and transforms people from within and is grounded in emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. Burns (1978) specifically addressed the issue of raising the level of morality and encouraged decision making which supported the greater good.

Finally, moral courage represents the spirit and explores the learners' convictions, character, and how they develop morally. Moral courage answers the question, "What principles do I believe in and am I willing to stand up for what I believe to be true?" This concept relates closely to Kohlberg's moral development theory. Kohlberg posited that

individuals who have attained high levels of moral judgment on his theoretical model would be likely to engage in morally responsible behavior. (Kohlberg, 1970). Kidder explained that individuals who exhibit moral courage are conviction driven and ethically responsible (Kidder, 2005, p. 70).

These three theories are used in the DELTA model through the application of Knowles' (1980) adult learning theory. DELTA is comprised of adult learners, and therefore the andragogical model is used for instruction and is an appropriate filter for the application of theory for this study. Figure 2 illustrates the theoretical and conceptual framework for the DELTA plan and for this study of its effectiveness.

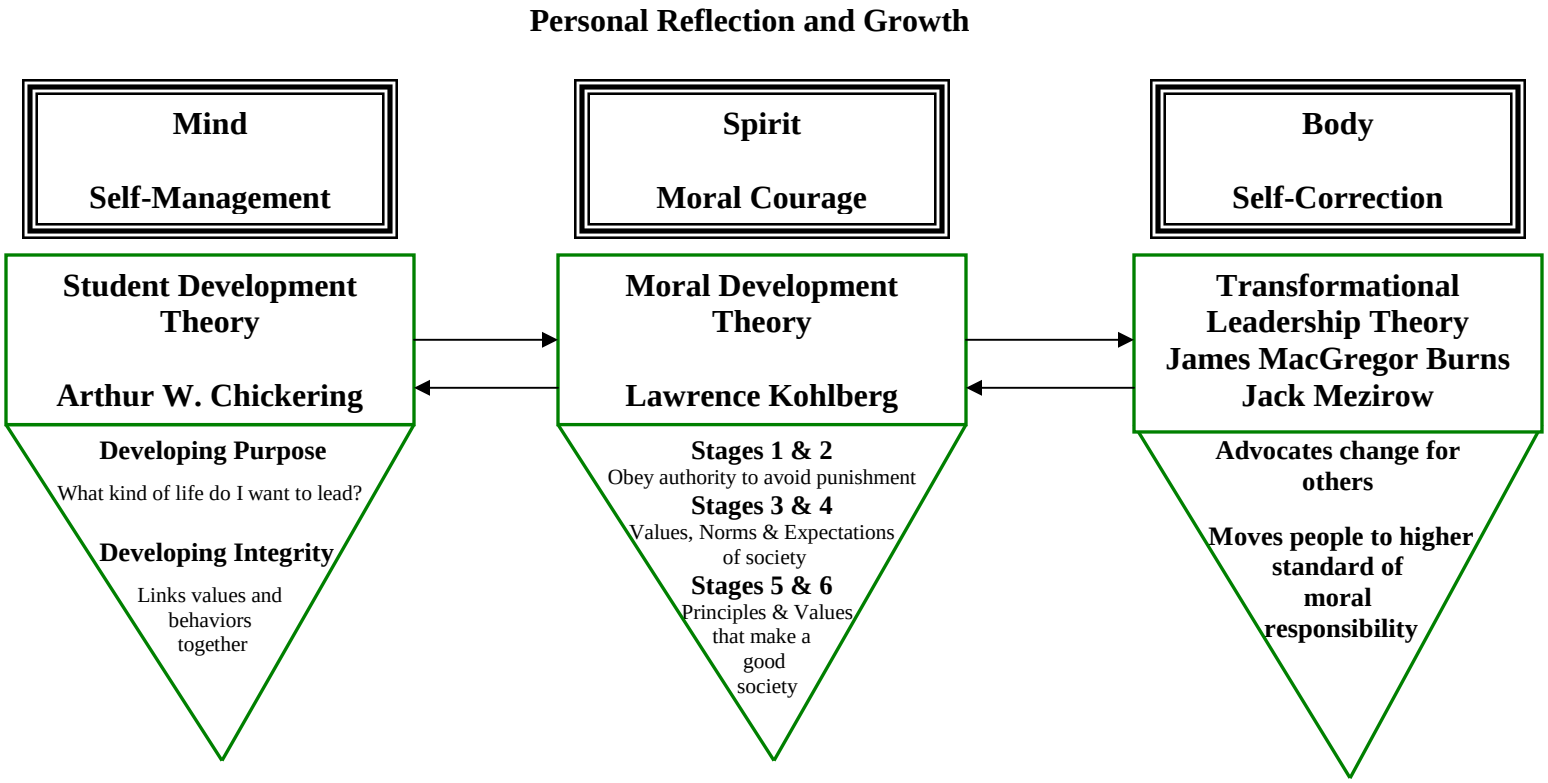

FIGURE 1: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework for Personal Reflection and Growth

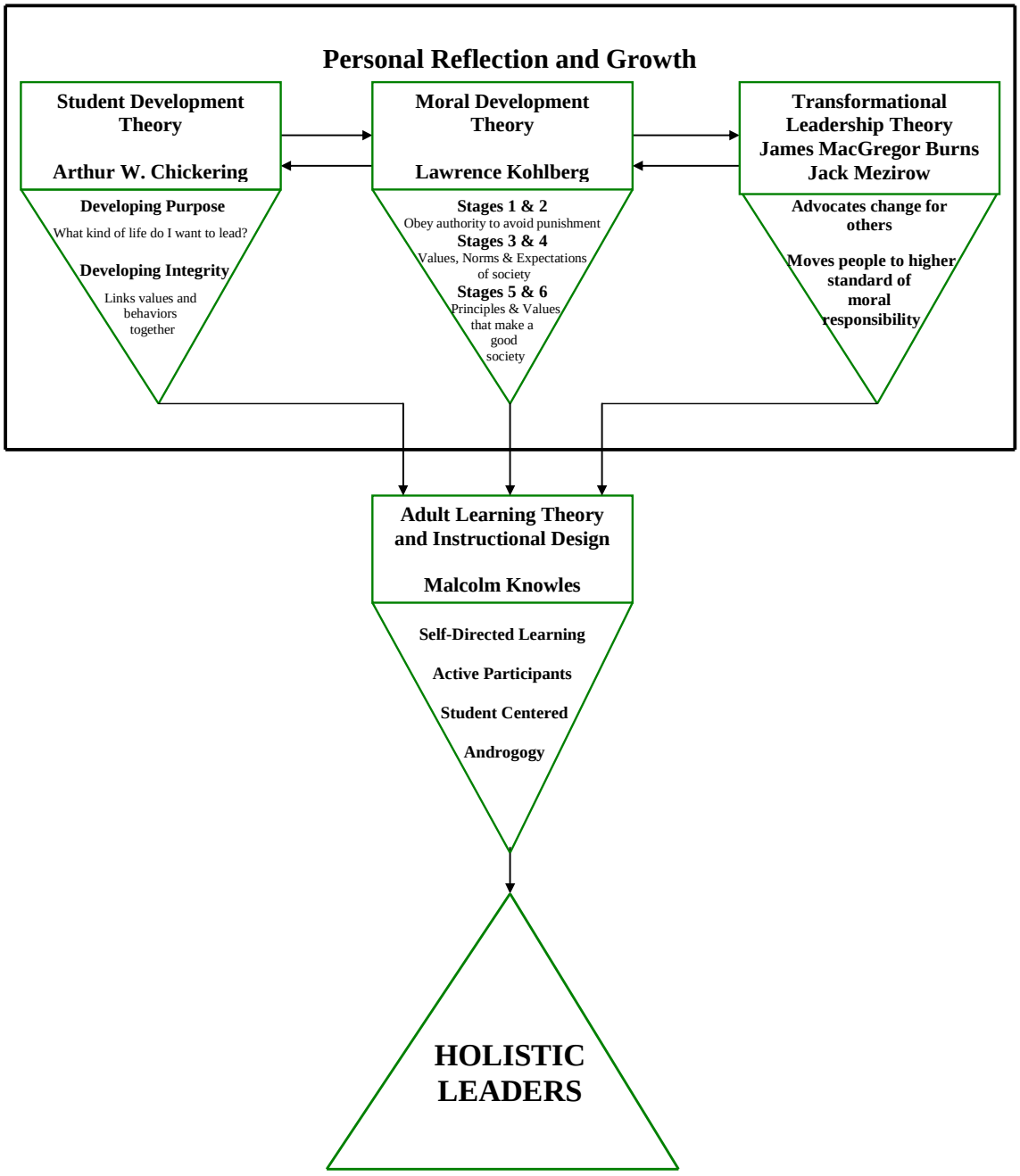

FIGURE 2: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework for DELTA Leadership Program and for This Study of Its Effectiveness

Statement of the Problem

Northeastern State University in Oklahoma is taking advantage of new industry standards in leadership by training their students who enroll in its DELTA program to recognize industry needs for leaders with new skills and capitalize on this need by developing a personal leadership philosophy. However, the future development and success of DELTA is currently hampered by problematic missing information.

DELTA has had tremendous success with the students and staff at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University. This success has been well documented by self-reported surveys given to past and present DELTA students as well as learning outcomes accomplished. The success of DELTA has left some puzzling questions for the college administration. This unique learning environment clearly has strengths, but these strengths have not yet been identified. The reasons for success of DELTA graduates are still unknown. The students completing the leadership academy report experiencing strong emotion and personal conviction about what they have learned. Many students who have completed the program have communicated they have never been exposed to this type of leadership training in the past and that they often refer back to the materials learned. The problem is that it is not known *why* the DELTA program has had such a strong impact on its graduates, and without this knowledge the facilitator is unable to capitalize on the program's strengths to ensure its justification, improvement, and perpetuation.

A second unknown for DELTA is the personal profile of its participants. Demographic studies have shown that part-time adult learners comprise more then 50% of the postsecondary student population and are the fastest growing segment of the

market (Ausburn, 2004). Female enrollment has increased almost four times as rapidly as male, and the representation of women and underrepresented minority groups continues to increase (Rhodes, 2006). As a branch campus, Northeastern State University-Broken Arrow Campus has demographics that reflect these reported trends and that are different than many traditional university settings (NSU, 2008). The majority of the students attending this campus are nontraditional working adults with a female population of about 70%. The average age is around 30, and most students are working adults with families (NSU, 2008). While these general demographic trends for the Northeastern State University-Broken Arrow Campus are known, the specific profile of the students who chose to participate in the DELTA program has not been identified. Neither the demographics or the preferred learning strategies of the DELTA participants have been identified. This is a problem because without this knowledge it is impossible to know how to best target the program or to understand how the characteristics of its participants might contribute to the success of DELTA.

Purpose of the Study

Nontraditional adult students are the new majority for universities and colleges, especially on branch and commuter campuses. These students tend to be more mature, older, and in need of flexible schedules. DELTA blends the needs of these nontraditional students with excellent problem-solving skills, self-management, and correction into a personal leadership philosophy.

However, very little is known regarding why the personal leadership philosophy of DELTA is effective. It is very difficult to maximize the benefits of this program

without clear identification of the strengths of the program and the clients it serves. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe the students in DELTA at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University and to identify what they perceive to be the characteristics of the program that elicit the emotion and conviction often expressed by DELTA graduates.

Research Questions

To examine reasons for the success of DELTA and describe its participants, this study was guided by the following questions:

1. What is the learning strategy preference profile of the participants in DELTA as identified by ATLAS?
2. How does the learning strategies profile of DELTA graduates compare to the established general-population norms for ATLAS?
3. What is the profile of DELTA graduates based on demographic, academic, and preferred learning topics variables currently available in institutional data?
4. What are the perceptions of DELTA and its characteristics by its graduates?

These research questions were addressed through the data sources and data analysis techniques shown in Table1.

TABLE 1
Data Sources and Analysis Techniques for the Research Questions

Research Question	*Data Sources and Analysis*
1. What is the learning strategy preference profile of the participants in DELTA as identified by ATLAS?	ATLAS instrument Frequency distribution
2. How does the learning strategies profile of DELTA graduates compare to the established national general-population norms for ATLAS?	ATLAS instrument Frequency distribution Chi-Square
3. What is the profile of DELTA graduates based on demographic, academic, and preferred learning topics variables currently available in institutional data?	Archived institutional data Descriptive statistics
4. What are the perceptions of DELTA and its characteristics by its graduates?	Focus groups Qualitative analysis using constant comparison method to identify themes, followed by descriptive statistics

Definitions of Key Terms

The following definitions were assumed in this study:

Conceptual Definitions

1. Adult education: The process of adults learning or more technically a set of organized activities carried on by a wide variety of institutions for the accomplishment of specific educational objectives (Knowles, 1980, p. 25).
2. Andragogy: the art of helping adults learn (Knowles, 1980, p. 43).

3. DELTA: An acronym for Diverse Educational Leadership Training Academy at Northeastern State University-Broken Arrow Campus (Mahan, 2006). The DELTA program uses personal leadership which involves a personal relationship with yourself; an in-depth look at who you are inside and the mechanics of your emotions. DELTA's basis for this concept is simple; moral courage, self-management, and self-correction through adherence of the five DELTA Core Values established by the program.
4. DELTA Core Values: Defined as "who we are and how we treat others. We practice these values at school, in our community, and we expect no less from our peers." The five core values are as follows: (a) Discipline - NSU Delta Members will strive to raise the character standards for all NSU students by exhibiting a self-controlled pattern of behavior, submission to rules and authority, and a commitment to self correction. Passion, diligence, and vision will be the motivation to developing and maintaining a strong character; (b) Excellence - NSU Delta Members will have an attitude of enthusiasm that fosters extraordinary courage, pride, and integrity to unleash his or her potential; adhering to an incorruptible code of values and ethics at all times; (c) Legacy - NSU Delta Members will reproduce and empower a legion of students to carry on the core values, integrity, and diversity which has been handed down from successors who continually invest in the future of our university; (d) Trustworthiness - NSU Delta Members will be conviction driven, dependable, honest, and committed to the care of other students; showing genuine empathy at all times; and (e) Ambassadorship - NSU Delta Members will be diplomats for the university,

always showing professionalism, stewardship, and tact in all endeavors; always being a person of positive influence (Mahan, 2006).

5. Learning strategies: "Learning strategies are the techniques or skills that an individual elects to use in order to accomplish a learning task" (Fellenz & Conti, 1993, p. 3).
6. Moral courage: The readiness to expose oneself to suffering or inconvenience which does not affect the body. It arises from firmness of moral principle and is independent of the physical constitution (Kidder, 2005, p. 10).
7. Self-directed learning: A process where individuals take initiative in diagnosing their learning needs, forming learning goals, identifying resources for learning, choosing and implementing strategies and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975, p. 18).

Operational Definitions

1. DELTA graduate: A student who has completed the DELTA program and earned a certification of nine hours of leadership training.
2. DELTA graduate profile: Data on each DETLA graduate which was self-reported on a survey.
3. Perceptions of DELTA graduates: Verbal and written expressions about the impact that DETLA program had on them personally; collected in focus groups.
4. Preferred learning strategy: Placement in one of three distinct groups of learners called Navigators, Engagers, and Problem Solvers (Conti & Kolody, 1998, p. 118) using the ATLAS learning strategy instrument.

Overview of the Study

This study used a mixed methods research model. This research model provided a more complete picture of the situation of interest and enabled the researcher to incorporate important qualitative data with quantitative profile data. This study analyzed perceptions, demographics, and qualitative assessments of all DELTA graduates over the last three years (n = 68) and was therefore a census study. To qualify for acceptance into DELTA, students must have been classified as a junior or above and be enrolled at Northeastern State University.

This study used an explanatory design in which quantitative profile data were expanded upon by qualitative data from focus group interviews. Specifically, institutional data from Northeastern State University and focus group interviews with DELTA graduates were used. The institutional data collected consisted of the following: demographics, academic information, preferred learning topics, and learning style preferences as measured by ATLAS. Data collected from focus groups related to perceptions of the DELTA graduates about the programs effectiveness.

Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

The following limitations were accepted for this study (Creswell, 2003):

1. This study was limited to DELTA graduates at Northeastern State University in Broken Arrow, OK. Student at other universities were not included as participants in this study and results should not be generalized to other similar programs.

2. The institutional data collected from Northeastern State University were obtained from students who had graduated from DELTA Leadership Academy. The respondents comprised a population and were not considered to be a sample of a larger population and the findings cannot be generalized to any larger group.
3. The institutional data from Northeastern State University were self-reported by the participants and therefore subject to the potential inaccuracies inherent in all self-reported information. They were assumed to be truthful and accurate.
4. The responses from focus group participants were not independent. It is possible that a dominant focus group participant could have influenced the responses of others. The responses were assumed to be unbiased, truthful, and accurate.
5. It was assumed that the researcher, who conducted the focus groups and analyzed the obtained data, did so accurately and without bias.
6. The researcher was also the facilitator of the DELTA program. The researcher thus had an existing relationship with the participants which could have influenced the obtained focus group data in ways which could not be determined.

Significance of Study

This study illuminates the thought patterns and perceptions of adult learners in the process of personal leadership development. These students expressed strong emotion and personal conviction about what they had learned. Many students who had previously completed the DELTA program had communicated they had never been exposed to this type of leadership training in the past and that they often referred back to the materials learned. However, no attempt had been made to understand why the program had a strong

impact on its graduates, thus making it difficult to capitalize on the program's strengths to ensure its perpetuation and justification. Similarly, no effort had been made to use institutional data to develop a profile of those choosing to enroll in DELTA in order to both understand its participants and to better target recruiting and instructional design and presentation. This study addressed these informational gaps. The focus groups also revealed target topics for future DELTA programs and critiqued methods used in the program. These perceptions can be used to both strengthen DELTA and to guide development of similar programs in other university settings where adult learners are seeking leadership development opportunities.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Personal Leadership

Leadership has been conceptualized many different ways over the past decade. It has become a social phenomenon and bookstore shelves are filled with popular leadership books. A common definition of leadership is "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2007, p. 3). Four conceptualized components appear in this definition: (1) Leadership is a process, (2) leadership involves influence, (3) leadership occurs in a group setting, and (4) leadership involves the attainment of a goal (p. 3).

Northhouse (2007) defined leadership as a process and not as a trait which lies within the leader (p. 3). There has been much debate over whether leadership is a trait you are inherently born with or an "informational-processing perspective" (p. 1). *Trait leadership* conceptualizes leadership as residing in select people and only a select few have the ability to be leaders, while *process leadership* is something that can be learned and anyone can be a leader.

Leadership involves influence. In John Maxwell's book, *Becoming a Person of Influence*, he explained that "Everyone is an influencer of other people" (p. 2). Maxwell (1997) went on to quote Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Every man is an hero and oracle to

someone, and to that person, whatever he says has an enhanced value" (p. 3).

When speaking of influence, it is appropriate to also consider power. Northouse (2007) related power to influence: "Power is the capacity or potential to influence. People have power when they have the ability to affect others' beliefs, attitudes, and courses of action." (p. 7). According to Northouse, there are two types of power within an organization: position power and personal power. "Position power is the power a person derives from a particular office or rank in a formal organizational system" (p. 7). The president of an organization has much more position power and influence than a staff person. Personal power is "the influence capacity a leader derives from being seen by followers as likable and knowledgeable" (p. 7). Burns (1978) viewed power from a relationship perspective and asserted that power should be used to promote collective goals.

Personal leadership is a holistic approach to the way a person leads themselves through life. It is a personal relationship with yourself; an in-depth look at who you are inside and the mechanics of your emotions. Personal leadership is a transformational process in which a person gains understanding of themselves to become a confident leader. In order to accomplish this goal, individuals must attain what Maslow (1954) called self-actualization through the understanding of themselves and the completion of their personal goals. Schorpp (2008) reported on a study where applying "Maslow's (1954, 1970) theory to the educational environment, places responsibility on students and educators to acknowledge needs and to respond to the potential an individual has to succeed" (p. 63). This study illuminated the understanding that students need to recognize

and understand their needs and that this process requires reflection and evaluation on the students' part.

The DELTA program at Northeastern State University conceptualizes personal leadership in three areas of thought: self-management, self-correction and moral courage. One can easily parallel this concept with a well-known metaphor: mind, body and spirit. Self-management represents the mind and deals with the emotions, life purpose, and self-concept. Self-management explores the questions, "Who am I?", "What do I believe about myself and life?" and "How do I manage my emotions?" These questions tie closely to Maslow's theory, specifically the ego needs. Ego needs refer to self-respect, personal worth and autonomy (Maslow, 1954, 1970).

Second, self-correction represents the body which reveals the mechanics of how a person functions and learns. Specifically, it asks "What traits do I have and how do they impact learning and my ability to be socially acceptable?" This concept ties to Maslow's theory for social needs (Maslow, 1954, 1970).

Finally, moral courage represents the spirit and explores the learners' convictions, character, and how they develop morally. Moral courage answers the question, "What principles do I believe in and am I willing to stand up for what I believe to be true?" This concept relates closely to Kohlberg's moral development theory. Kohlberg (1970) posited that individuals who have attained high levels of moral judgment on his theoretical model would be likely to engage in morally responsible behavior. Kidder (2005) explained that individuals who exhibit moral courage are conviction driven and ethically responsible (p. 10).

Student Development Theory

Student Development Theory is the approach which underpins self-management in personal leadership. In 1969, Arthur Chickering introduced seven vectors of student development in higher education. When the first edition of Chickering's book, *Education and Identity* (1969) was released, many opposed his proposition that colleges and universities should be concerned with students' personal values and intercultural skills. Today many universities tout student empowerment and leadership, yet, effective implementation has been a challenge. However, Chickering has maintained that "Student Development Theory must apply to this generation of students as well as to future ones" (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 44).

DELTA's foundation is moral courage and the self-exploration of personal core values with the ability to self-manage and self-correct. Chickering's vectors address these items. Specifically, vector two, managing emotions; vector five, establishing identity; vector six, developing purpose; and vector seven, developing integrity are closely related to affirming core values and beliefs as well as establishing a healthy self-concept. Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (1989) wrote in their work, *Improving Higher Education Environments for Adults:*

> Each learner is unique; nevertheless, we suggest that interviews at random with any four prospective learners will reflect common needs for competence, autonomy, identity, relationships, purposes, integrity, and emotional development, as in Chickering's (1969) vectors of human development. (p. 36)

A person's sense of self changes as life unfolds. People frequently express the need for self-awareness and ponder the question "who am I?" Self-management is dissecting these thoughts and feelings, then honing in on any underlying issues that may be masked

by disappointment, illness or transition. Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (1989) addressed this concept and stated, “We suggest that the crisis of identity is reawakened whenever an individual experiences a major transition” (p. 37). They also suggested that adult learners often return to higher education because of a transition in their life.

Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (1989) asserted that self-esteem and self-acceptance involve judgments about personal value and worth. They reported that “Research indicates that students tend to develop a more positive sense of their academic and social competence, but also develop a stronger sense of self-worth, based not on comparisons with other students’ but on internal, personal standards” (p. 199). The implication here is that unless a sense of self-love is developed, students look to others for acceptance or turn to destructive behaviors to fill this need of self-worth.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Self-correction is the mechanics of how a person functions in regard to their ability to evaluate personal behavior based on internal moral values which could result in a changed behavior or action. Transformative learning (Cranton, 1994, 1996; Mezirow, 1991, 1995, 1997) has been described as the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. Mezirow (1997) explained that frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which adults understand their experiences. He believed that transformation theory encouraged critical reflection with the focus on discovering the context of ideas and the belief systems that shape the way adults think. The position here refers to an inherent logic, ideal, and purpose that involved transforming frames of reference through critical thinking and then taking action on the reflective insight (p. 12).

Thus, possible action taken can result in the self-correction of a behavior deemed inconsistent with one's moral values.

Similar to transformative learning theory, James MacGregor Burns (1978) coined the phrase *transformational leadership theory* as a process that changes and transforms people from within (p. 18). Transformational leadership theory is the approach which underpins the self-correction portion of personal leadership. Northouse (2007) described this type of leadership theory as grounded in emotions, values, ethics, standards and long-term goals which includes assessing students' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings (p. 175). Common to this literature are the findings that self-concept, emotions, and purpose in life are key elements in understanding oneself fully.

Leadership (1978) is the classic work of political sociologist James MacGregor Burns. Burns connected the leaders and followers by the needs of both. In Burns' (1978) analysis, the motives of the follower are examined to reach the goals of both the leader and follower (p. 18). Burns (1978) specifically addressed the issue of raising the level of morality. Northouse (2007) claimed that this happens when connections are formed though engagement of the leader and follower which raises the level of motivation and morality in both (p. 176).

When transformational leadership is brought down to a personal level, theory suggests that it encourages the creation of a personal vision. As the name implies, "transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people" (Northouse, 2007, p. 175). Bass and Avolio (1990a) suggested that transformational leadership can be taught to any person and that organizations that apply transformational

leadership have employees write vision statements, mission statements, and five-year goals.

Transformational leadership can be measured through the use of the *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (MLQ) which measures a leader's behavior in seven areas: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, management-by-exception, and laissez-faire behavior (Northouse, 2007, p. 202). However, for the purposes of personal leadership, the MLQ is not generally used. Skeptics of transformational leadership have expressed a concern for the instrument's use in conceptual research because the MLQ has been challenged by some as having "trait-like" qualities (p. 204). However, Northouse asserted that "Despite the weaknesses, transformational leadership appears to be a valuable and widely used approach" (p. 204). Some common assessments that have been used in a transformational leadership approach as related to personal leaders are Assessing the Learning Strategies of Adults (Conti & Fellenz, 1991), Strengths Quest (Clifton, Anderson & Schreiner, 2006), nventory (Zinn, 1998), and The Enneagram Personality Test (Riso & Hudson, 1999). The underlying assumption of all these instrumentations is that knowing the intimate details about oneself brings understanding to situations or attitudes that may need to be addressed or corrected. Self-correction thus becomes a natural process in everyday life and is not seen as a critical flaw in the individual, but rather a tool for staying focused and on track.

Moral Development Theory

When examining moral courage and its role in DELTA, it was appropriate to review literature related to the Moral Development Theory which underpins it. Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget was one of the earliest theorists to study development of moral judgment. His work with moral development was part of the study of human mental development that has become foundational in educational psychology. Piaget posited a two-stage theory in which children are classified into two groups: one younger than age 10 or 11 and the other older. He reported that the difference in moral judgment between these two groups was that younger children based their moral judgment on the consequences involved, whereas older children based their moral judgment on intentions or motives (Piaget, 1932, p. 130). Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987) became fascinated by the work of Piaget but felt his work was incomplete (Crain, 2005). This curiosity led to Kohlberg's landmark study of moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1970) and then to the development of his six stages of moral development theory. Kohlberg proposed the following six stages of moral development:

- Obedience and Punishment Orientation
- Individualism and Exchange
- Good Interpersonal Relationships
- Maintaining the Social Order
- Social Contract and Individual Rights
- Universal Principles.

Kohlberg's passion was to see individuals reach their highest possible stage of moral judgment which would contribute to a society with a value for moral thought (Kohlberg, 1970).

The literature on moral development theory can be related to the leadership concept relevant to this study. In leadership terms, individuals who have attained high levels of moral judgment on Kohlberg's (1970) theoretical model could be hypothesized to be likely to engage in morally responsible personal leadership based on the principle of moral courage. The DELTA program is based on this premise and is designed to help participants develop moral judgment and courage and apply these to personal leadership actions. However, moral development theory goes beyond moral courage and reaches into the realm of reasoning, convictions, forgiveness, empathy and judgment (Kurtines & Gewirtz, 1991).

Forgiveness has been defined as "forswearing of negative affects and judgment, by viewing the wrongdoer with compassion and love, in the face of the wrongdoer's considerable injustice" (Kurtines & Gewirtz, 1991, p. 123). Forgiveness is between two people, thus the need for understanding. Forgiveness in not an immoral action of disregarding wrong doing but rather "is superior to a strict and exclusive adherence to justice" (p. 134). "Forgiveness is the overcoming of negative affects and judgment toward the offender, not by denying ourselves the right to such affect and judgment, but by endeavoring to view the offender with compassion, benevolence, and love" (p. 126).

Hoffman (1970) hypothesized that abstract moral principles, learned in "cool" didactic contexts (lectures, sermons), lack motive forces. Empathy's contribution to moral principles is to transform them in to pro-social hot cognitions – cognitive

representations charged with empathic affect, thus giving them motive force (p. 239). Given empathy's pro-social motives, it is likely that empathy can make positive contributions to moral judgment.

Greenleaf (2002) spoke in his book, *Servant Leadership*, of four dimensions of moral authority (conscience): (1) The essence of moral authority or conscience is sacrifice, (2) Conscience inspires us to become part of a cause worthy of our commitment, (3) Conscience teaches us that ends and means are inseparable, and (4) Conscience introduces us unto a world of relationships and transforms passion into compassion (pp. 6-9). Greenleaf defined moral authority as "moral nature plus principles plus sacrifice" (p. 11). Within every human being is a struggle to do what he or she considers to be the right thing to do. Greenleaf made the point that it is the sacrifice which leads humans to behave in a way which aligns with their principles.

Adult Learning Theory

The proverb "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" resonates in the minds of many adult learners. This misunderstanding of adult learning has been brought to light by the renowned work of adult educator Malcolm Knowles. Knowles (1980) described adult education as "the process of adults learning" and further described adult education as "a set of organized activities carried on by a wide variety of institutions for the accomplishment of specific educational objectives" (p. 25). Adult education is comprised of theories, models, a set of principles, and explanations on which adult knowledge is based.

Brookfield (1987) viewed the process of adult education as "beginning not with subject matter, but with the situations and experiences which mold adult life" (p. 33). Brookfield (1986) contended that "when adults teach and learn in one another's company, they find themselves engaging in a challenging, passionate and creative activity" (p. 1). He believed the concept of andragogy to be key element in adult learning theory.

Merriam (2001) identified andragogy and self-directed learning as the "Pillars of Adult Learning Theory" (p. 11). Merriam considered the concepts of andragogy and self-directed learning as critical elements to understanding adult learning (p. 3). The andragogical model postulates that learners are active participants in their education. They forge the path to learning with the teacher as a facilitator. Knowles (1990) explained that "the education of adults has been a concern of the human race for a very long time, it is curious that there have been so little thinking, investigating, and writing about adults learning until recently" (p. 27). Knowles' work has given significant insight to the learning of adults.

Andragogy

In the 17th century, J.A. Comenius is credited as the founder of andragogy with a wish to provide comprehensive education and learning for all, urging the establishment of special institutions, methods and teachers for adults (Cooper & Henschke, 2006). Andragogy is derived from the Greek word meaning adult-leading. Alexander Kapp first used the word andragogy in 1833 to describe the educational theory of Plato (Cooper & Henschke, 2006). Eduard Lindeman was the first researcher to bring andragogy to the

United States in 1926 with his work, *The Meaning of Adult Education*. He viewed adult education as arising from specific situations in which adults find themselves that require adjustments and called for texts and teachers to give way to the primary importance of the learner.

Knowles (1975) launched the United States into adult learning research with his book, *Self-Directed Learning*. The andragogical model explains the teacher-learner process for adults, which postulates that learners are active participants in their education. Knowles (1980) premised his view of andragogy on four critical and distinct assumptions about the characteristics of learners as they mature:

1. As people mature their self-concept moves from dependency toward increased self-directedness.
2. As people accumulate experience, this becomes a resource for learning and therefore, more meaning is placed onto learning they gain from experience.
3. Readiness to learn becomes more oriented to developmental tasks of their social roles.
4. Orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of performance-centeredness. (pp. 44-45)

Pratt (1993) viewed andgragogy as being "based on five humanistic values including placing the individual at the center of education, believing in the goodness and potency of each person, in each person's potential to grow toward self-actualization, and in autonomy and self-direction as signposts of adulthood" (p. 21). The andragogical model can be utilized as a passageway in which adult learners can negotiate and realize their unique learning desires.

Andragogy became Knowles' primary focus, and in his final work he added two more assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners. His final set of six assumptions was:

1. The need to know: Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
2. The learners' self-concept: Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives.
3. The role of the learners' experiences: Adults come into an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from youths.
4. Readiness to learn: Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations.
5. Orientation to learning: In contrast to children's and youths' subject-centered orientation to learning (at least in school), adults are life-centered (or task-centered or problem-centered) in their orientation to learning.
6. Motivation: While adults are responsive to some external motivators (better jobs, promotions, higher salaries, and the like), the most potent motivators are internal pressures (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self-esteem, quality of life and the like). (Knowles, 1975, pp. 64-68)

Self-Directed Learning

Brookfield (1986) described "the most complete form of self-directed learning occurs when process and reflection are married in the adult's pursuit of meaning" (p. 56). Brookfield went on to describe the facilitation of self-directed learning as "assisting adults to free themselves from externally imposed direction in their learning and with encouraging them to become proactive, initiating individuals in reshaping their personal, work, political, and recreational lives" (p. 60). Self-directed learning was identified by Knowles, (1975) as a critical part of the andragogy model of adult education. He described it as a process in which individuals take initiative in diagnosing their learning needs, forming learning goals, identifying resources for learning, choosing and implementing strategies and evaluating learning outcomes (p. 18). Many assume self-directed learning begins and ends in isolation. However, Knowles (1975) stated that self-directed learning usually takes place in conjunction with teachers, tutors, mentors, resource people, and peers.

Tough (1967) claimed that self-directed learning develops learners to take responsibility for the planning and directing of their own learning. Lindeman (1926) described self-directed learning as:

> A cooperative venture in nonauthoritarian, informal learning, the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of experiences; a quest of the mind which digs down to the roots of the preconceptions which formulate our conduct; a technique of learning for adults which makes education coterminous with life and hence elevates living itself to the level of adventurous experiment (p. 166)

Adult learning theory asserts that learners must perceive their learning needs are in their own hands before a significant amount of learning will take place. Knowles

(1998) anchored adult learning in self-directedness and identified two components of self-directed learning with respect to how adults learn. He asserted first that "self-directed learning is self-teaching" and that adult learners have control over the tools necessary to learn (p. 135). Secondly, Knowles claimed that personal autonomy occurs when "self-directed learning is taking control of goals and purposes of learning" (p. 135).

Knowles (1975) established five assumptions about self-directed learning:

1. Learners become more self-directed as they mature.
2. Experiences are important learning resources.
3. Self-directed learning assumes individual learners learn what they need in order to complete tasks or solve problems.
4. Exhibit a natural tendency to learn by focusing on task and problems unique to themselves.
5. They are motivated internally by self-esteem, the desire to accomplish and grow, personal satisfaction, and curiosity. (p. 21)

Tough (1979) was highly influential in the research on self-directed learning. He concluded that many adults learn in informal settings. Reading, listening to experts, and participating in lessons are examples of informal ways of learning according to Tough. He also concluded that most adults undertake learning efforts on an annual basis. These types of projects usually stemmed from a real-life problem that needed to be resolved.

Learning Strategies Preference

Learners employ various types of strategies when they begin a learning objective. According to Fellenz and Conti (1993), "learning strategies are the techniques or skills

that an individual elects to use in order to accomplish a learning task" (p. 3). Learning strategies differ from learning styles. Learning styles are more fixed traits that people use to process information while learning strategies are more fluid and are considered a "matter of preference; they are developed throughout life and vary task by task" (1993, p. 4). Learning strategies are used in formal or informal environments and are "external behaviors developed by an individual through experiences with learning which the learner elects to use in order to accomplish a learning task" (Fellenz & Conti, 1989, p. 7). Fellenz and Conti (1993) claimed that the learning task can be influenced by the learning strategies employed by the learner. They stated that "the skills or techniques selected to accomplish the task often have a great influence on the success of that learning activity. Adeptness and insight in the use of learning strategies is a significant part of one's ability to learn how to learn" (Fellenz & Conti, 1993, p. 3). This was in agreement with Smith (1982) who stated that "Self-understanding links directly to learning how to learn when learners become sensitive to, and in control of, the learning processes, in other words, more aware of themselves as learners" (p. 57).

Learning strategies have been conceptualized into five main areas: Metacognative, Metamotivation, Memory, Critical Thinking, and Resource Management (Fellenz and Conti, 1993). These learning strategies can be measured by the *Self-Knowledge Inventory of Lifelong Learning Strategies (SKILLS)*, the reliability and validity of which have been well established through extensive research (Conti & Kolody, 1999).

SKILLS incorporates real-life scenarios to discover the learning strategies used by the learner. Fellenz & Conti (1993) explained that it "consist of a series of six scenarios

depicting real-life learning situations which necessitate various levels and types of learning" (p. 1).

Research with SKILLS identified three distinct groups of learners called Navigators, Engagers, and Problem Solvers (Conti & Kolody, 1998). While SKILLS has been a useful assessment of learning strategies, it is lengthy and difficult to administer and score, thus limiting its usefulness in classroom situations. To address this problem, a much shorter form of SKILLS was developed called *Assessing and Learning Strategies of AdultS (ATLAS)* which was designed to "produce an instrument which was easy to administer, which could be completed rapidly, and which could be used immediately by facilitators and learners" (p. 109). The derivation of ATLAS from SKILLS was accomplished through the powerful multivariant statistical procedures of cluster and discriminate analysis (Conti & Kolody, 1998). This process, and the validity and reliability of ATLAS, was extensively documented by Ausburn and Brown (2006).

Each ATLAS learning strategy has a unique profile. Navigators are "focused learners who chart a course for learning and follow it" (Conti & Kolody, 1999a, p. 9). Navigators always have the end in mind. They work the plan and avoid any deviations from the plan. "Navigators have a demand for order and structure, are logic oriented, are objective, and are perfectionist" (Conti & Kolody, 2004, p. 185). Navigators are learners who are considered to be "high achievers" or "driven" individuals and they thrive when faced with a deadline. "Navigators plan their learning schedule according to deadlines and the final expected result" (Conti & Kolody, 1999a, p. 9). Organization is a key element in the learning strategy of a Navigator. Colored pens, colored folders and organizers are often used to ensure the task is completed on time and in an organized

fashion. “Navigators become easily frustrated and impatient with a casual approach to teaching and can perceived a relaxed atmosphere as an ill-designed timewaster which is lacking in purpose” (p. 11).

Problem Solvers are critical thinkers. They continually ask the question, “What about this?” and they learn by testing assumptions, generating alternative solutions, and looking to external resources for assistance in their learning project. “These learners are best evaluated with open-ended questions and activities that use problem solving techniques rather than with multiple-choice problems” (Ghost Bear, 2001, p. 47). Problem Solvers think innovatively and “promote experimentation through practical experience and hands-on activities” (Conti & Kolody, 1999a, p. 13). Conti and Kolody (2004) contrasted Problem Solvers and Navigators: “While Navigators see trial-and-error as a failure, Problem Solvers view it as a process for generating more alternatives” (p. 185).

Engagers enjoy the journey of learning. They are “passionate learners who love to learn, learn with feelings, and learn best when they are actively engaged in a meaningful manner” (Conti & Kolody, 1999a, p. 14). Engagers must feel a connection to the material they are learning, are emotionally attached to the outcomes, and evaluate a learning task by the amount of enjoyment and reward gained in the process. Conti and Kolody (1999a) said of these learners, “If Engagers have begun a learning activity they find rewarding or enjoyable, they will completely immerse themselves in the activity to be able to fully experience the joy of satisfaction of the job well done” (p. 14).

Engagers also desire a personal relationship with those involved in the learning task. According to Conti and Kolody’s (2004) summary of the Engager’s strategy, “They

tend to develop an emotional affinity with the teacher and have a hard time separating themselves from their work" (p. 185).

Regarding the distribution of ATLAS groups, Conti and Kolody (2004) have established that "the distribution among the three groups is relatively equal" in mot populations (p. 185). By contrast, Ausburn and Brown (2006) reported that disproportionate numbers of Engagers are common among groups of non-traditional students such as those in career and technical education, at-risk youth, and first-generation community and technical college students.

Institutional Data

Institutional data, which were important in this study, consist of information from organizations, such as a university, for the purposes of providing knowledge about constituents. Volkwein (2003) suggested using institutional data "to inform external and internal stakeholders" (p. 194). According to Johnson (2005) and Mills (2003), an institution's existing documents, data, and records are considered to be accurate and suitable as research evidence.

Published literature shows that institutional data are commonly used among researchers to obtain historical information about students. These data can be obtained from many sources, such as institutional and national data bases. Several examples serve to illustrate use of institutional data in studies relating to university students.

Kellogg (2007) used an institutional data set to investigate why only 55% of the graduates from a Health Instrument Technician (HIT) program were sitting for the credentialing examination that would allow them entry into HIT specific jobs. The

variables used in this institutional data set were collected from institutions where an HIT program director or a graduating student responded to a survey. HIT academic programs had to be identified before the institutional data could be colleted; therefore, a survey was used to make these determinations. Once the institutions were identified, the researcher used COOL (College Opportunities Online Locator) online portal of the Integrated Post-secondary Education Data System (IPEDS), which is part of the National Center of Educational Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education. Kellogg pointed out that "since 1993 IPEDS has collected data from all institutions that participate in any student financial aid program authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965" (p. 43), and he was able to use archival data from this source to successfully address his research questions.

Chandler (2007) used institutional data to investigate associations between instructional practices and student performance and attrition in introductory level psychology courses. The archival data came from 60 Introduction to Psychology courses at a two-year college and were used "to determine associations between course characteristics and performance/attrition of students" (p. 83). Chandler explained:

> These data originated from systematically gathered institutional data that underwent numerous checks in the passage from the course instructor to the present analyses. The data are considered to meet the criteria for validity for qualitative and quantitative data. (p. 96)

The primary goal of Chandler's study was to turn institutional data into information that could be communicated to faculty to assist in decision making (p. 146).

Herrera (2007) used institutional data to investigate the relationships of student characteristics before university admission, their academic actions, and their educational achievement on their retention in higher education. Herrera suggested that historical

student records can help to understand the role of the other variables and provided this example:

> A profile can be generated from historical data for those students who have completed a degree despite being at-risk. These profiles can be use to answer question such as: Is educational resilience different among students from different colleges? And is "risk" a simple construct or a multidimensional one? A profile of successful students alone may not be enough to explain the complexity of the departure puzzle, but it can facilitated the early identification of common characteristics and help determine levels of risk. (p. 37)

All these examples from the literature illustrate that historical data can be use to identify clusters or patterns in behavior or characteristics, and to identify themes. Use of institutional data in the present study parallels these examples in many ways. This study used institutional data to profile DETLA graduates as Herrera (2007) did with at-risk students. The study applied existing historical data to identify common characteristics among the DELTA graduates and to compare learning strategies of DELTA graduates to the national norms.

Much like Chandler's (2007) application of institutional data, this study turned existing data into information that could be communicated to administration to assist in decision-making and justification for an academic program, with the purpose of capitalizing on the program's strengths to ensure its perpetuation and improvement.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are generally considered to lie within the tools of qualitative research. However, Calder (1977) asserted that focus groups should be classified based on the type of knowledge they generate. McLafferty (2004) described these classifications as "everyday knowledge" and "scientific knowledge." According to

McLafferty, everyday knowledge is how a person makes meaning of their everyday world, while scientific knowledge refers to "numerical measurements to test constructs and hypotheses" (p. 188). Calder argued that focus groups can be used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, while Basch (1987) viewed focus groups are relevant to only qualitative research. They were used in the present study to collect qualitative data as described by Basch (1987).

The nature of qualitative research was addressed by Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2006), who defined it as the collection, analysis, and interpretations of narrative and visual data in an effort to expose and understand a phenomenon. They stated that qualitative research is a quest for perceptions, thoughts and ideas of how people make meaning of the world. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian, 2006) qualitative researchers argue that all meaning is embedded in a particular perspective, meaning that different people view the world in different ways, none of which is more valid or true than another. Thus, bringing life to these differing voices provokes thought and moves society toward action (2006).

Two of the most commonly used approaches to qualitative research are narrative research and ethnographic research. "Narrative research is the study of how different humans experience the world around them; it involves a methodology that allows people to tell the stories of their 'storied lives'" (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006, p. 14). Ethnographic research is study in which cultural patterns and perspectives of participants are explored in their natural setting. Ethnography focuses on the site which provides a context for the researcher to study the setting and participants who inhabit it (p. 15). Focus groups are a technique used by qualitative researchers to explore the perceptions

and attitudes of the participants in a study, and therefore can be placed in the general category of narrative qualitative research.

The literature reveals different ways of describing focus groups. The descriptions differ depending on the role of the moderator. If the moderator's role is to *control* the topics discussed and the dynamics of the group, then the focus group can be defined as a "group interview" (Hughes & DuMont, 1993; MacTavish et al., 2000; Morgan, 1998). In contrast, if the role of the moderator is to *facilitate* discussion and exert less control, then the focus group can be defined as "group discussion" (Coreil, 1995; Kitzinger, 1995; Krueger, 1998). In the present study, the focus group was conceptualized as a planned "discussion" of the research questions with the aim of exposing the perceptions of the study's participants.

Krueger (1994) supported the concept of the focus group as a discussion group and described a focus group as a special type of "group discussion" with a unique purpose, size, composition, and procedures. According to Krueger, participants are typically selected by specific characteristics which are related to the topic of the focus group. The participants usually number 7 to 10 and the focus group is repeated several times with different people. Typically, a focus group study will consist of a minimum of three focus groups but could involve as many as several dozen. Krueger further explained that a focus group is a carefully planned discussion. The purpose of the discussion is designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment. Discussions should be comfortable and enjoyable for the participants in hope to gather ideas and perceptions. These discussions are a method of giving voice to the internal perceptions and feelings of individuals in a group setting.

Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments from others in the discussion (Krueger, 1994).

Krueger (1994) went on to explain that in the late 1930s focus groups were born out of necessity because of the limitations on traditional information gathering methods. Social scientists began investigating the value of nondirective individual interviewing . Krueger described the contrast between traditional interviews and nondirective interviews:

> The traditional individual interview, which uses a predetermined questionnaire with close-ended response choices, had a major disadvantage: the respondent was limited by the choices offered and therefore the findings could be unintentionally influenced by the interviewer by oversight or omission. In contrast, nondirective procedures began with limited assumptions and placed considerable emphasis on getting in tune with the reality of the interviewee. Nondirective interviews used open-ended questions and allow individuals to respond without setting boundaries or providing clues for potential response categories. (p. 7)

Robert Merton and Patricia Kendall developed the focus group method in 1946 (Merton & Kendall, 1946), and the technique was accepted into common practice by the landmark work, *The Focused Interview*, (Merton, Kendall, & Fiske, 1990/1956). Over the last decade focus groups have surged in popularity in the social sciences (Kitzinger, 1995; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Advertisers use focus groups because they are a cost-effective way to obtain believable results. They are an appropriate way to explain how people regard an experience, idea or event (Krueger, 1994).

The surge in focus group popularity as a crucial step in marketing strategies for products led to a rediscovering of focus groups by social scientists. Krueger (1994) claimed that for years qualitative research was delayed because of the "preoccupation with quantitative procedures, assumptions about the nature of reality, and a societal

tendency to believe in numbers" (p. 8). According to Krueger, the desire for more understanding of human experiences and the perceptions of the thoughts behind their behavior have helped to build the case for more qualitative research and the use of focus groups.

Focus groups work well for studying participants' attitudes, opinions and perceptions relating to concepts, services, or programs because they require human interaction. Krueger (1994) explained that people are a product of their environment and are influenced by others. The influences and opinions of people on each other, along with their comments, may change the opinions of others in the course of discussions (p. 11). According to Krueger, many research questions can be answered by one person in very limited conversation. However, when the same question is asked in a group setting, the answers tend to be more complex and the comments from the participants tend to building on the responses of others. This creates true dialogue and a much more rich insight into the souls of the participants. Because the true purpose of focus groups is to promote self-disclosure among the participants, an understanding that disclosure is easier for some than others. Human nature reminds us that trust, effort and courage are required for complete honesty in the responses of the participants (p. 11). This is not an easy task to accomplish by the researcher. This is one reason that a non-threatening environment is critical for focus groups (Krueger, 1994).

Krueger (1994) reported that Sidney Jourard (1964) pointed out that human beings tend to form ideas or concepts of how they want to be perceived by society. These concepts represent how they want to be portrayed. Therefore, many are selective about what they disclose about themselves. According to Krueger (1994), Jourard suggested:

> Our disclosures reflect, not our spontaneous feelings, thoughts and wishes, but rather pretended experience which will avoid punishment and win unearned approval. We say that we feel things we do not feel. We say that we did things we did not do. We say that we believe things we do not believe. (p. 11)

Focus groups have disadvantages as well as benefits. Kitzinger (1996) identified one of the disadvantages of using focus groups is the fact that individuals with dissent could be silenced. If the majority of the focus group is in agreement with a topic, it may be hard for one individual to speak out in opposition to the group consensus.

Krueger (1994) described six distinct limitations to using focus groups:

1. The control the researcher has on the group interview as compared to individual interviews can be problematic. Focus group interviews allow for interaction among the participants which can influence the direction of the discussion. Detours from the questions and irrelevant issues can send the discussion into an opposite direction from where the focus group should be heading.
2. The data is difficult to analyze. Comments and interaction within the group must be interpreted within that context. The researcher must be careful not to lift comments out of context and out of sequence or coming to premature conclusions.
3. The interviewer must be carefully trained and this is not an easy technique to master. It is important that the interviewer know how to use open-ended questions, use probes after answers, and knows how and when to move to new topic areas.

4. Focus groups can vary considerably and have unique characteristics. One group may be very excited and energetic while the next group may be bored and lethargic. Enough groups should be used to balance the idiosyncrasies of the groups.
5. Focus groups can be very hard to assemble. It requires participants to take time to gather at a location with others and can be time consuming. Many do not wish to dedicate this amount of time to participate in a focus group interview.
6. The environment must be conducive to conversation.

These six factors can present logistical problems as well as require participant incentives to obtain participation in the group (p. 36).

Krueger (1994) also claimed that preparing focus groups can be broken down into three phases that helped to identify procedures for effectiveness and accuracy when interviewing focus group participants. Krueger's first phase is the development and planning of the study, which he felt will invite others to provide corrective feedback and insight as well as forcing the purpose of the study to be a written plan of action. Failure to clarify the problem can result in a sizable investment of time that misses the mark you intended to hit. It is important to ask yourself this question, "Will having a focus group help answer my research question?" Because focus groups require considerable time and money to implement, it is critical that a complete conceptualization and plan be made of the study before focus groups are started (pp. 42-43).

Krueger's (1994) second phase is conducting the interviews. He asserted that great questions result in great answers and that it is vital that the interview questions in

the focus group are thought through carefully and are phrased in advance to elicit the maximum amount of information (p. 53). According to Krueger there are several types of questions and each serve a distinct purpose. The categories are:

1. Opening Questions: These questions are designed to be answered quickly and create a feel for the audience. These questions should be factual and not of an opinion.
2. Introductory Questions: These questions introduce the topic that will be discussed in the focus group. Typically these questions are not critical to the analysis, but foster conversation.
3. Transition Questions: These questions move the conversation into "key questions that drive the study". They are broader in scope and reveal to the participants "how others view the topic".
4. Key Questions: These questions are designed to drive the study and typically only consist of two or three key questions. These questions will need the most analysis.
5. Ending Questions: These questions close the interview and discussion and are designed for the participants to reflect back on the interview and comments. These critical questions consist of "all things considered questions", "summary questions" and "final question" (pp. 54-59).

According to Krueger, when asking these questions the interviewer needs to avoid dichotomous questions and "why" questions. These types of questions will not provoke the rich answers that open-ended questions will stimulate. Successful focus group

interviews are a result of well-thought-out questions that are appropriately sequenced (pp. 54-69).

Krueger's (1994) third phase of focus groups is the analyzing and reporting. He asserted that analysis must have a system and reason behind how the data are gathered and handled. "The analysis must be verifiable-a process that would permit another researcher to arrive a similar conclusions using available documents and raw data" (p. 129).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study used a descriptive design employing institutional data and additional qualitative data. The study employed a mixed methods research model. This type of research can provide a more complete picture of a situation than would be obtained by either type of data by itself. A mixed method study enabled the researcher to incorporate important qualitative data from focus groups with quantitative profile data from institutional archives.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), there are three types of mixed-methods designs. In the *triangulation design* the researcher simultaneously collects both qualitative data and quantitative data and then uses those findings to see whether they validate each other. In the *explanatory design*, the researcher collects and analyzes quantitative data and then obtains qualitative data to follow up and refine the quantitative findings. In the *exploratory design*, the researcher first collects qualitative data and then uses the findings to give direction to quantitative data collection.

This study used what Frankel and Wallen (2006) called an explanatory design in which quantitative data about the participants was used to explore and describe the profile of the DELTA graduates and then expanded upon by qualitative data from five

focus group interviews. Specifically, the researcher obtained data from tow sources in this design: (a) institutional demographic and descriptive data from Northeastern State University-Broken Arrow Campus, and (b) group interviews using focus group techniques. The institutional data were collected and analyzed through quantitative methods to create a descriptive profile of the study population. The data included demographic information, academic information, preferred learning topics, and learning strategy preference as assessed by Assessing Learning Strategies of Adults (ATLAS). The follow-up qualitative data obtained from five small focus groups were analyzed using thematic qualitative techniques to describe a set of perceptions of the population.

This study described the profile of the DELTA Leadership Academy graduates over the past three years and the perceptions of these students about the effectiveness of program. The perception data were used to identify the strengths and characteristics of the DELTA program that elicit the emotion and conviction often observed among the graduates.

Population

A population is a group with similar characteristics which the researcher wants to study or the group to which the researcher would like the results from a sample to be generalized (Gay, 1987, p. 102-103). This study was a census study in which the entire population was studied. The population size was 68. “When a cross-sectional study attempts to collect data from each and every member of a population, as in the U.S. census, the survey is called a census survey” (Gay, 1997, p. 162). The population for this study (N=68) consisted of students who had graduated from the DELTA leadership

program at the Broken Arrow campus of Northeastern State University in Oklahoma. To qualify for acceptance into DELTA, students must be classified as a junior or above and must be enrolled at Northeastern State University. The DELTA students came from a wide range of occupational programs in education, business, human services, technology, and criminal justice. Because the Broken Arrow Campus is a branch campus of Northeastern State University, the demographics were different from those of a traditional university setting. The majority of the students attending this campus were nontraditional working adults with about 70% female representation. The average age of students on this campus was approximately 30, and most students were working adults with families.

Data Sources

Institutional Data

One source of data for this study was institutional data available for DELTA graduates. The institutional data were obtained by the researcher from the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University after obtaining the school's permission. The data about the DELTA graduates used in this study consisted of the following: demographics, academic information, learning style preferences as measured by ATLAS, and preferred learning topics identified or recommended for the DELTA program.

Demographics. The demographics variables for the DELTA graduates obtained from institutional archives were age, gender, and address.

Academic Information. The academic variables retrieved were grade point average, major field of study, and graduation date.

Learning Strategy. ATLAS is a learning strategy instrument that classifies adult learners into three categories based on their preferred approach to learning. Navigators are highly organized, structured, and results focused. They demand order and prefer a direct and specific learning plan. Problem Solvers are opposed to rigid structure. They use critical thinking and explore multiple options before making decisions. Engagers are concerned with the relationships they build with people. They love to learn and enjoy the excitement of new adventures (Conti & Kolody, 1999, 2004). ATLAS data had been obtained for DELTA participants as they went through the program and were available in the institutional archives.

Preferred Learning Topics. The preferred learning topics for DELTA by participants had also been collected from students at the end of their participation in the program. Participants had been asked to choose their preferred learning topic and what they thought were the most significant topics to be continued in the program. These preferences were available in the institutional data base.

The institutional data were used to develop a descriptive profile of the DELTA population. Because this was a census study of an entire population, no inferential statistics were needed. The profile of the population was developed with descriptive statistics. However, a comparison of the ATLAS distribution of the study's population to that of the national general-population norms was made. A chi-square test was used to compare the ATLAS distributions.

Focus Group Data

Interview protocols were developed to obtain input from the population of DELTA graduates in focus groups. These protocols used numerous open-ended questions to ensure the maximum freedom of input from the participants. A copy of the group interview protocol appears in Appendix A. The focus group interviews were conducted by the researcher, and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis and coding and frequency counts for recurring themes.

During the interviews, notes and observations of the subjects such as body language, behavior, and attitude were documented. All interviews were tape recorded for accuracy. Each interview ranged from 45 – 60 minutes. Throughout the course of the discussions, the participants were attentive and spoke candidly about their view of the DELTA program. After the focus group, transcriptions and interview notes were reviewed and divided into units. Units were then sorted into categories to allow themes and patterns to emerge.

Focus Group Interviews

The participants from the focus group interviews were selected using a stratified sample drawn from the population consisting of participants from each graduation year of DELTA and administered by the researcher. A stratified group is defined as (Gay and Mills and Airasian, 2006) "the process of selecting a sample in such a way that identified sub-groups (strata) in the populations are represented in the sample in the same proportion in which they exist in the population" (p. 103). The strata's consisted of participants from each graduation year of the DELTA program. Interviews were coded

and frequency counts of recurring themes were grouped for content analysis. Interviews were conducted at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University in the study area of building A. This was a quiet area where the participants were recorded for accuracy. Qualitative data were summarized with the use of a tape recorder, field notes, and observation records. These records were reduced and coded to check for patterns. Recorded tapes were transcribed by the researcher.

The focus group data were explored by examining the data for broad trends, reading through the data making notes, and developing a preliminary understanding of the data. In the general review of the data, all forms of data were reviewed, including field notes, minutes of focus group meetings, and general observations of the participants during the focus group interviews.

Analysis of the qualitative data began with coding the data, dividing the text into small units, and assigning labels to each unit. The researcher assigned code words to text segments in the margins of the printed transcript and recorded broader themes on a separate sheet.

Triangulation was used to provide a more complete picture of the perceptions of DETLA students and the effectiveness of the DELTA program. This consisted of cross checking, peer review, and constant comparison of the data. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) describe triangulation as "the use of multiple methods, data collection strategies, and data sources to get a more complete picture of what is being studied and to cross-check information" (p. 446).

Procedures

Institutional Profile Data

Institutional data were mined by the researcher from Northeastern State University Broken Arrow Campus institutional records from the Assistant Vice President for Administration. These data were collected from DELTA students during the course of the program and kept in the student affairs department, where the program is administered. The data were analyzed with statistical procedures.

Focus Group Data

Focus group interviews were administered by the researcher. A stratified sample was drawn from the DELTA population to form five focus groups. A stratified group is defined by Gay, Mills, and Airasian, (2006) as "the process of selecting a sample in such a way that identified sub-groups (strata) in the populations are represented in the sample in the same proportion in which they exist in the population" (p. 103). Interviews were analyzed for emergent themes. Themes were then coded and frequency counts of recurring themes were grouped for content analysis. Interviews were conducted at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University in the study area of Building A. This was a quiet area where the participants were audio recorded for accuracy and was a natural setting in which the participants were comfortable.

Data Analysis

Statistical data were coded and entered into the SPSS computer program. All descriptive statistics were calculated by using SPSS analysis tools and presented in both tables and text. Tools used to summarize the qualitative data were tape recorder, field notes and observation records. These records were reduced through thematic analysis. Themes were then coded to check for patterns that emerged. Triangulation was used along with peer checking to compare themes for accuracy. Recorded tapes were transcribed by the researcher and used to cross-check field notes and observations. Once all the qualitative data were analyzed, the emergent data were put into tables and figures as needed for summary presentation.

The institutional data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies, means, medians and modes for variables were calculated as appropriate as well as standard deviations.

A chi-square test was used on the ATLAS results to compare the distribution of learning strategies of the DELTA population to the known national general-population norms.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Delta Leadership Academy at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University in Oklahoma addresses the leadership development needs of students who wish to explore personal leadership. This census study of the DELTA graduates (N=68) used a mixed method design combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to develop a profile of the DELTA graduate population and to explore their perceptions regarding reasons for the program's effectiveness. Data sources included institutional student records and targeted focus groups. Research questions addressed were:

Research Question 1: Learning Strategies Preference Profile of DELTA Participants

The first research question in this study dealt with the learning strategies profile of DELTA participants. Institutional data from the *Assessing the Learning Strategies of AdultS* (ATLAS) were used to construct this profile. The learning strategies of the DELTA graduates were measured using ATLAS at the time they participated in the program. This instrument places people into three distinct categories: Navigator, Problem Solver, and Engager. Of the 54 DELTA graduates who completed ATLAS, the

Engager group was somewhat smaller (28%) than the Navigator (35%) and Problem Solver (37%) groups, which were relatively equal (see Table2).

TABLE 2
ATLAS Profile for DELTA Graduates (N=54)

Variable	Number	Percent
Engager	15	27.80
Navigator	19	35.20
Problem Solver	20	37.00
Total	54	100.00

Research Question 2: Learning Strategies Profile of DELTA Participants Compared to the General-Population

In order to identify if any meaningful differences appeared in the distribution of ATLAS categories of DELTA participants compared to known norms, the DELTA graduate responses were analyzed using a chi-square test. The expected norms for the general population for ATLAS are: Navigators, 36.50%, Problem Solvers, 31.70%, and Engagers, 31.80% (Conti & Kolody, 1999, p.18). Using chi-square, the results revealed that there was not a significant difference between the DELTA graduate ATLAS distributions and the general population norms for ATLAS at the .05 level of significance (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
Distribution of ATLAS for DELTA Graduates Compared to the General Population Norms

	Observed		Expected			Chi-Square
Variable	Number	%	Number	%	Difference	Statistics
Engager	15	27.80	17.2	31.80	-2.2	$x^2 = .786$
Navigator	19	35.20	19.7	36.50	-0.7	$df = 2$
Problem Solver	20	37.00	17.1	31.70	2.9	$p = .675$
Total	54	100.00	54.0	100.00		

Research Question 3: General Profile of the DELTA Graduates

The third research question in this study asked, "What is the profile of DELTA graduates based on demographic, academic, and preferred learning topics variables currently available in institutional data?" Descriptive statistics were used to address this research question. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the demographic information, academic information, preferred learning topics, and general information about the participants that was provided by Northeastern State University from existing institutional data.

At the time of this study, DELTA had 68 graduates for the program over a time period of three years. The institutional information provided by Northeastern State University contained demographic and academic information for all 68 graduates. However, Northeastern State University only had 54 students who submitted information on their preferred learning topics and other general information. Of the 68 DETLA graduates, over 88% were women and over 70% were over the age of 25. These results were fairly reflective of the demographics at the Broken Arrow campus of Northeastern State University. This campus is made up of about 70% women and an average age of about 31. Demographic data for the DELTA population (N=68) are shown in Table 4. The age groupings in the demographics were determined by quartiles.

TABLE 4
Demographic Profile of Study Population of DELTA Graduates (N=68)

Demographic Variable	Number	Percent
Gender		
Male	8	11.80
Female	60	88.20
Total	68	100.00
Race		
Caucasian	57	83.30
Native American	6	8.80
African American	4	5.90
Asian	1	1.50
Total	68	100.00
Age Groups by Quartiles		
20-24	20	29.40
25-30	17	25.10
31-37	14	20.50
38-59	17	25.00
Total	68	100.00

These data indicate that the DELTA graduates were largely female and Caucasian. They were fairly equally divided between a younger (≤ 30) age group (55%) and an older (31-59) group (45%). Academic data were available on all 68 DELTA graduates and are summarized in Table 5. The DELTA program was marketed to all degree fields on the Broken Arrow Campus and all faculty were encouraged to promote the program. As shown in Table 5, a variety of degree fields were found in the data among the participants. The College of Education had the most DELTA participants with over 55% of them seeking a degree in education. Although this number is larger than expected, it should be noted that the College of Education has the largest enrollment of students on the Broken Arrow campus of Northeastern State University. Grade point average was another academic variable in this study. Grade point average was not a determining factor on admission into the DELTA program, and Table 5 shows that the

participants had a range of GPA's. All students were encouraged to participate regardless of their field of study or grade point average. The diversity of participants in terms of degree fields and GPA levels is shown in the data presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5
Academic Profile of the Study Population of DELTA Graduates (N=68)

Variable	Number	Percent
Major		
American Studies	1	1.50
Biology	1	1.50
Business	12	17.60
Education	38	55.90
English	1	1.50
Family Consumer Sciences	1	1.50
General Studies	1	1.50
Political Science	2	2.90
Psychology	3	4.40
Social Work	6	8.80
Technology	2	2.90
Total	68	100.00
GPA		
2.59 – 3.10	18	26.50
3.18 – 3.50	20	29.40
3.54 – 3.70	14	20.70
3.73 – 4.00	16	23.40
Total	68	100.00

General information about themselves and the DELTA program was gathered by Northeastern State University from the DELTA graduates. The total population for this study was 68; however, only 52 participants turned in general information to Northeastern State University. Several elements of the available general information are presented below. All data are shown in Table 6.

First, the data revealed that 61.5% of the participants were first generation students. A first generation student is someone who is the first in his/her family to attend college. Second, while about 69% of the participants felt they had some knowledge of

personal leadership prior to attending the DELTA program, almost all (92.3%) expressed being very knowledgeable about personal leadership after they completed the course. Third, over 90% of the participants reported that the DELTA program gave them ownership in the Northeastern State University campus community and helped them feel part of the campus. Fourth, an overwhelming 98.1 % of the participants expressed they had a better understanding of their self-image or self-esteem after completing the DELTA program. Fifth, the DELTA learning topic that was most important to the participants was Legacy. This concept deals with the importance of leaving a lasting mark on the people you influence. Finally, 100 % of the participants said they would recommend the DELTA program to another person.

TABLE 6
Distribution of Available General Information for DELTA Graduates (N=52)

Variable	Number	Percent
General Information		
Are you a first generation college student?		
Yes	32	61.50
No	18	34.60
Not Sure	2	3.80
Total	52	100.00
How did you hear about DELTA Leadership Academy?		
Friend	18	34.60
Flyer	11	21.20
Email	1	1.90
Professor	10	19.20
Advisor	5	9.60
Staff Member	7	13.50
Total	52	100.00
What factors contributed to your enrollment into DELTA Leadership Academy?		
Wanted better leadership skills	40	76.90
Looks good on resume`	2	3.80
Knew the instructor	1	1.90
Thought it would be fun	2	3.80
Recommended by advisor, instructor, or staff member	7	13.50
Total	52	100.00
Was the instructor adequately prepared and organized for class?		

Yes	51	98.10
No	0	0.00
Most of the time	1	1.90
Total	52	100.00
Was the instructor passionate about the materials taught?		
Yes	51	98.10
No	0	0.00
Most of the time	1	1.90
Total	52	100.00
Was the instructor genuinely concerned about you as an individual?		
Yes	51	98.10
No	1	1.90
Total	52	100.00
What was your knowledge of personal leadership before you attended DELTA Leadership Academy?		
No Knowledge	8	15.40
Some Knowledge	36	69.20
Very Knowledgeable	8	15.40
Total	52	100.00
How would you rate your knowledge of personal leadership after you completed DELTA Leadership Academy?		
No Knowledge	0	0.00
Some Knowledge	4	7.70
Very Knowledgeable	48	92.30
Total	52	100.00
While in DELTA Leadership Academy, do you feel you bonded with the group?		
Yes	44	84.60
No	8	15.40
Total	52	100.00
Did DELTA Leadership Academy make you feel like you were part of NSU, Broken Arrow?		
Yes	47	90.40
No	2	3.80
Not Sure	3	5.80
Total	52	100.00
Do you have a better understanding of your self image after completing DELTA Leadership Academy?		
Yes	51	98.10
No	1	1.90
Total	52	100.00
Do you have a written personal mission statement?		
Yes	37	71.20
No	15	28.80
Total	52	100.00
Did you define your core values?		
Yes	49	94.20

No	3	5.80
Total	52	100.00
Do you handle issued better internally after completing DELTA Leadership Academy?		
Yes	30	57.70
No	0	0.00
Sometimes	22	42.30
Total	52	100.00
Do you feel you were equipped through DELTA Leadership Academy for Self Management and Self Correction?		
Yes	40	76.90
No	0	0.00
Sometimes	12	23.10
Total	52	100.00
How would you rate the materials learned in DELTA Leadership Academy?		
1. Able to apply what you learned		
Excellent	43	82.70
Good	8	15.40
Fair	1	1.90
Poor	0	0.00
Total	52	100.00
2. Overall Quality		
Excellent	46	88.50
Good	5	9.60
Fair	1	1.90
Poor	0	0.00
Total	52	100.00
3. Presentation of the materials		
Excellent	45	86.50
Good	6	11.50
Fair	1	1.90
Poor	0	0.00
Total	52	100.00
Do you feel you hold yourself to a higher standard because of the training you received in DELTA Leadership Academy?		
Yes	49	94.20
No	1	1.90
Not Sure	2	3.80
Total	52	100.00
Would you recommend DELTA Leadership Academy to a friend or student?		
Yes	52	100.00
No	0	0.00
Not sure	0	0.00
Total	52	100.00
Which of the following topics meant the most to you?		
Influence	11	21.20
Legacy	19	36.50

Trustworthiness	8	15.40
Empathy	4	7.70
Character	10	19.20
Total	52	100.00

Research Question 4: Perceptions of DELTA and Its Characteristics by Its Graduates

This research question required an examination of the perceptions of the DELTA participants. To accomplish this, focus group interviews were conducted with 15 participants as a planned "discussion" of the study's research questions to reveal the perceptions of DELTA Leadership Academy graduates.

Focus Group Participants

The 15 participants in the focus groups included 4 males and 11 females with ages ranging from 23 to 52. Most of the participants were Caucasian with only one African American and one American Indian interviewed. The participants were diverse in background, socioeconomic levels, marital status and family background. Participant data and descriptions are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7
Description of Focus Group Participants

Participant Number	Gender	Age	Race	Martial Status	Notes
1	Female	23	Caucasian	S	Full time student with good family support.
2	Male	26	Caucasian	S	Full time student with good family support.
3	Male	47	Caucasian	S	Single dad working full time and attending school full time.
4	Male	26	Caucasian	M	Married with two small children, working full time and attending school full time.
5	Female	30	Caucasian	M	Was a teen mother. Recently married with four small children and little family support. Working full time and attending school full time.
6	Female	26	Caucasian	M	Mother of two small children. Working part time and attending school full time.
7	Female	24	American Indian	M	Attends school full time with good family support. No children.
8	Female	52	Caucasian	M	Large family and currently raising some of her grandchildren.
9	Female	35	Caucasian	S	Single, no children. Working full time and attending graduate school.
10	Female	28	African American	S	Single mother of three grade school children. No family support. Lives in section 8 housing and works part-time. Attends school full time.
11	Female	39	Caucasian	S	Single working full time. Attending graduate school part-time.
12	Female	27	Caucasian	M	Recently married. Great family support. No children. Attends school full time.
13	Male	33	Caucasian	S	Single, helps care for terminal father. Works part-time and attends school full-time. Good family support.
14	Female	39	Caucasian	S	Single and no children. Works part-time and attends school full time.
15	Female	26	Caucasian	M	Mother of two small children. Good family support. Attends school full-time and works part-time.

Emergent Themes

The focus group interviews revealed five distinct themes:

1. Self-Confidence and Self-Worth
2. Legacy
3. Connection and Reflection
4. Moral Courage and Modeling Behavior
5. Community Service

Theme One: Self Confidence and Self-Worth

The most common theme graduates expressed from the focus group interviews was that of increased confidence/self-worth after completing the DELTA program. Many graduates expressed this training increased their self-worth and confidence in their ability to succeed in life challenges. Several specific quotations from the interviewed participants serve to illustrate the general feelings and impressions about self-confidence and self-worth.

Participant 14

"DELTA helped me learn so much more about myself. It gave me the confidence and the self-worth to know what I'm capable of…… doing anything."

Participant 8

"A moment in class where you [facilitator] said "you saw great things in us". I think having someone in class who saw my potential and then stating it to me really made me think, maybe I can be a great leader."

Participant 5

"It [DELTA] helped me learn that I could unleash some things inside me. On a very personal note, I did not have as much confidence in myself before DELTA. After the training, I felt like more courageous about who I am. This is who I am and I do not need to mute it and I can be myself. DELTA gave me strength. I'm more patient with people. I'm confident that everyone has something to contribute. It may sound bad, but at times I would just write people off, but now what it gave me is that if I am patient I will see what they have to contribute and that person [whom I would write-off earlier] becomes stronger because they have not been muted."

When participants were asked "*How important is it for people to be told they have potential*," they responded in a very emotional way in words such as:

Participant 9

"Many times we do not see our own potential and having someone voice positive comments and building us up give me the confidence I need to do great things. This program challenged me and reminded me that I can do it."

Participant 7

"I would have never seen my potential if it had not been voiced to me in DELTA."

Participant 10

"Coming from someone outside my circle was huge for me. I have failed in the past but to hear someone tell me over and over that I have potential is like a plant which starts to take root. It was very important to be spoken to in this way. Even

today, this group [DELTA] is a reminder to me that I can do great things…..

DELTA came to me in a season of life where I had been going in circles. Coming back to the same old struggles. During our sessions at times I felt like I was hearing from God, a message of hope. A message that I can get out of the pit and be successful ."

Another question asked of the focus group participants was *"Tell me your thoughts of DELTA and the materials you learned."* Responses reinforced the inspirational effects of the program:

Participant 14

"It built my self-worth and self-esteem. It was aimed to everyone and not just a select group."

Participant 11

"Just all of us coming together and sharing our needs, struggles, it was so helpful. What I love about DELTA curriculum and the course is that it is not like every other class you take, it is a whole other level of understanding and we do not have enough of this in our lives. I think DELTA enables people to 'throw off the world' and come together with others and just be who they are without the pressures of life. It was a safe place to just be me and embrace my uniqueness. It gave me wholeness."

Participant 8

"In my academic studies we focus on learning what we study, but in the DELTA environment we learned so much more than what we were studying. There was a learning that we received that was beyond on what we studied, things you can not

get out of a book. It was an experience of learning where *you are the subject*. Limitless possibilities."

Participant 5

"DELTA was a blossoming of my self-confidence. I knew I had these things inside of me but they were hidden underneath this shell that had hardened because of the negative things people said to me during the years. DELTA gives you the ability to have confidence in yourself. I was given the strength to manifest this confidence."

Participant 6

"I wish I had this class as a freshman going into college because you do not know who you are and are confused coming into college. I think we are yearning for something to hold on to. You are trying to figure out where you belong and we get lost and caught up in the wrong things. It gave me confidence and helped me know who I am. I think it is so important for younger students to get this training to build their confidence so they do not take the wrong path like I did."

When asked *"What aspect of this class have you used"*, several participants showed great emotion with their words in comments such as:

Participant 5

"Everything I do involves the things I learned. When I come to the decision of do I radiate or just sit back and do nothing? I think about it everyday and I choose to live it out. It gives me the reassurance that I can do anything."

Participant 6

"I shine now. It was such a confidence boost to me. I radiate, everyday life. I carry myself differently and are more apt to do things I would not have done before. I feel more confident going up to people or coaching my kid's soccer team. I know I can lead them and set a new example. Before, I never would have been able to do those type of things."

Theme Two: Legacy

Legacy is one of the core values in the DELTA program and was one of the preferred learning topics among the graduates (see Table 5, p. 64). The core value of legacy states: "DELTA members will reproduce and empower a legion of students to carry on the core values, integrity, and diversity which has been handed down from successors who continually invest in the future of our university" (Mahan, 2006). Legacy appeared to go beyond the university setting for these participants. Many spoke of the legacy they would leave to their children and those coming behind them. One participant in particular, participant 10, was brought to tears by the discussion of legacy. Participant 10 was an African American female who lived in Section 8 housing. She worked part-time and was raising three children alone with no family support or support from any of the three fathers of her children. She grew up in a cycle of poverty and was struggling to complete her bachelors' degree in psychology.

Participant 10

"The life application I took away from DELTA was key. What stands out to me is the lesson on Legacy. Whether I do nothing else in my life, I have three

children that I have to leave a legacy for in life. I always say to my kids, don't undo what has already been done. We live in low income housing and have struggled to get this far. We do not want to undo what we have already done. Even when the electricity was turned off, I got up and went to school. My kids were watching me. I have to pass on hope to my kids and others and the legacy I leave behind needs to be positive, not woe is me…negative. I am modeling to my kids that we can overcome. We can break the cycle of poverty in my family."

Participant 7

"I had never thought about legacy before this class. It really had a powerful impact on my life."

Participant 9

"Legacy made me realize that I will be leaving something behind so what do I want to leave behind?"

Participant 14

"I remember the one session where you stood in front of the class and passed the baton. It was an illustration of leaving a legacy. I will always remember that."

Participant 13

"The legacy part stirred the most emotion out of me. The thought of "what I'm going to leave behind" really made me think. I can start something and watch it ripple. You can cause a whole wave of change."

Participant 5 almost leaped across the table trying to explain how the legacy theme has had a lasting impact on her life. With tears in her eyes she said,

"I remember in our classes the emotion and power of our sessions. It was so exciting to hear these "almost scriptures" being spoken of leadership and things that are within us. The tears we shead…...of yes, this is right. This is how leadership should be and its this leadership that we can pass on to our heirs and leave a legacy behind to the next generation that we are leading. What a wonderful thing this is for us. It was phenomenal."

Theme Three: Connection and Reflection

During the focus group interviews the connection theme kept emerging as wanting more time to be connected with the group. The participants appeared to yearn for connection with each other and many have reported they are still in contact with each other. DELTA graduates formed an alumni association so they could continue the connections they made during the program. Several participants spoke of the comfort they received from being among people of like thoughts and values. Many reflected upon what they had learned and how to apply the concepts in real situations. However, most of their reflection was about the connection with the group. This was illustrated in several comments:

Participant 6

"It was so refreshing to see those who will stick with it and get things done and to know there are others like me, who believe what the same kind of leadership I know is possible. Being together with people who have gone through DELTA is so motivational and it raises me to a higher standard of living."

Participant 2

"I would like to see a continuation of the DELTA program even if it is just a social thing. To share our experiences and partner with new DELTA members."

Participant 13

"It was not often enough. I wanted more time with my DELTA family."

Participate 1

"I would like to get together now that we are out of the program. I think DELTA Alumni will give us the opportunity to see how we are using the information we learned in real life. I think it will help keep us connected."

Participant 6

" I'd like for the class to be longer. I felt like the food [dinner in the classroom] could have been cut out and more time to discuss leadership and bond with the group. I wanted more. People wanted to be there."

Participant 5

"It seemed like you [facilitator] had so much to share and I wanted more of what you had to say. More time to bond. When we spend more time, then we became friends. I felt like I was *becoming something*, not just learning material."

Theme Four: Moral Courage and Modeling Behavior

The fourth theme which emerged out of the focus group interviews was the need for personally modeling the behavior you desire from others and standing firm on moral convictions. The DELTA program is based on moral development and is designed to help participants develop moral judgment and apply these concepts to personal leadership

actions. When participants were asked "what is leadership to you", several participants supported the moral development theme and expressed having the courage to stand up for what you think is morally correct and being consistent in your behavior, modeling the way for others:

Participant 5

"Staying with what you truly believe in and not letting external factors influence your decisions. Being true to yourself and having the courage to stand up for your moral values."

Participant 6

"Being strong, trustworthy, and honest. Must be consistent in your actions. Should not change your views for people. Someone you can count on and who models good behavior."

Participant 1

"I feel pressure sometimes. I know I am leading all the time, but in the corporate world I know my actions affect others. It is so frustrating to me for those that do not model their expectation to those they are leading."

Participant 2

"Leaders should never ask anyone to do anything they are not willing to do themselves."

Participant 9

"They are ordinary people who set their minds to do *extraordinary* things."

Participant 7

"A leader is a role model for people to follow."

Participant 5

"I have something that is required of myself. Let those values and attributes always show. I have a duty to those people around me to be true to myself because if I'm not I'm harming those around me that could be learning something from me. I have a duty to be who we are and to be the leaders we are called to be. The guest speakers really showed us the real life experiences. It affects your life forever. I remember conversations from the classes two years ago."

Participant 2

"Not to teach others by word, but showing them the core values in my actions. The instructor [facilitator] modeled the behavior we were learning."

Theme Five: Community Service

Participants expressed the desire to perform community service and to focus on service to others and be less inwardly focused. Many voiced that they had never felt a need to give back to their communities before completing the DELTA program. After completion of the program participants expressed they enjoy giving back and doing community service:

Participant 1

"I really enjoyed DELTA because it was so focused on others. I've been to other leadership development events and most other trainings have been centered on yourself. Everything was self focused. It didn't teach you how to work with others. This was much more focused on how I can help serve others."

Participant 2

”DELTA renewed my perspective and showed me that leadership has more to do with being in charge and bring out the best in others. To develop young leaders into being all they can be.”

Participant 3

“DELTA helped reinforce some things I already know and how to help others do their job.”

Participant 4

“Leadership to me is directing and guiding people by helping others to a certain path. DELTA has encouraged me to want to get involved in local government and help my local community.”

Participant 5

“Looking back, I don’t think I did any community service before. Now I’m in school and still have school and yet I make time for community service. Now I’m motivated to do service. You need leadership ability to take the step to serve others.”

Participant 7

“DELTA helped me so much to be a more effective community leader.”

Participant 10

“I want to use my leadership skills I learned in DELTA to really influence those people living in the projects. I can show them how I came out of that environment and they can too.”

Participant 11

"For people who did not get a affirmation of who they are or what their passion is or can be, this program helped me to communicate these things to those I come in contact with. My heart for being in the DELTA program has the compassion to do more for others. I have more of a heart for instead of just a head for it. A paradox I learned intellectually about leadership but my heart opened more and it took a different meaning."

Participant 2

I'm more willing to jump in even if it is just a small thing. I'm very willing to help out."

Finally, one participant shared a very personal story that had occurred a few days before she took part in the focus group. With tears streaming down her face she shared this very emotional experience and the impact DELTA has had on her life:

Participant 12

"What I do now in my job is connections with the community. An example is I'm on a team who has gone into a home of a single parent who just lost her husband to a long illness. She has three kids and the youngest is six years old and has cancer. And we are going to give her home a makeover. Her youngest child, the one with cancer, doesn't even have a bed. So we are providing them with a bed. This past Wednesday I worked with a group and we distributed packed lunches to people in the downtown area. We just talked to them and got to know them. I'm not sure if it was DELTA or the passion that you [facilitator] showed to us when you delivered the materials to us. It was so encouraging to me to see someone

who was *passionate about me* and *who cared about me*. You [facilitator] modeled the behavior before me and now I show it to others."

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Overview of the Study

Delta Leadership Academy at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University in Oklahoma is a training ground for that institution for students who wish to explore personal leadership. DELTA blends the needs of nontraditional students with excellent problem-solving skills, self management and correction into a personal leadership philosophy. However, very little is known regarding why the personal leadership philosophy of DELTA is effective. It is very difficult to maximize the benefits of this program without clear identification of the strengths of the program and the clients it serves. The purpose of this study was to describe the students in DELTA at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University and to identify what they perceive to be the characteristics of the program that elicit the emotion and conviction typically expressed by DELTA graduates.

This study used a mixed methods research model. This research model provided a more complete picture of the situation of interest and enabled the researcher to incorporate important qualitative data with quantitative profile data. This study analyzed perceptions, demographics, and qualitative assessments of all DELTA graduates over the last three years (n = 68) and was therefore a census study. To qualify for acceptance into

DELTA, students must have been classified as a junior or above and be enrolled at Northeastern State University.

This study used an explanatory design in which quantitative profile data were expanded upon by qualitative data from focus group interviews. Specifically, institutional data from Northeastern State University and focus group interviews with DELTA graduates were used. The institutional data collected consisted of the following: demographics, academic information, preferred learning topics, and learning style preferences as measured by ATLAS. Data collected from focus groups related to perceptions of the DELTA graduates about the programs effectiveness.

Summary of Principle Findings

The first research question in this study dealt with the learning strategies profile of DELTA participants. Data from the Assessing the Learning Strategies of AdultS (ATLAS) were used for this profile. The results revealed that Problem Solvers had the highest number of participants while Navigators and Engagers had a slightly smaller number.

The second research question compared the ATLAS scores of the DELTA graduates with the ATLAS scores of the general population. In order to identify if any meaningful differences appeared in the distribution of ATLAS categories, the DELTA graduate responses were analyzed using a chi-square. The results revealed that there was not a significant difference between the DELTA graduate ATLAS distributions and the general population norms for ATLAS. According to Conti and Kolody (2004), “the distribution among the three groups is relatively equal” (p. 185).The DELTA graduates

who completed ATLAS were closely aligned with the national distribution. The Engager group was smaller than the Navigator and the Problem Solver groups because of the high number of adult learners in the population.

The third question identified the demographics and academic profile of the DELTA graduates. The institutional data from this study revealed that the graduates of DELTA were varied in age, sex and major and represented the Northeastern State University, Broken Arrow campus demographics. The high percentage of women participants was representative of the university demographics. The data showed that the DELTA program appears to be accomplishing its learning outcomes by the high number of participants who expressed being very knowledgeable about personal leadership after they completed the course. An overwhelming number of participants documented that the DELTA program gave them ownership in the Northeastern State University campus community and felt part of the campus. Participants expressed they helped them feel better about their self-concept and had an improved self-esteem after completing the DELTA program, which is consistent with the emotional reaction the DELTA graduates typically express after completing the course.

The most preferred learning topic for DELTA was Legacy. This concept requires the participants to examine their personal purpose in life and to evaluate what impact they wish to deposit on their sphere of influence. This was a key topic in the DELTA program and was one of the emergent themes which appeared in the focus group interviews, and participants were very passionate about this topic. Lastly, it is important to mention that all of the participants said they would recommend the DELTA leadership program to another person.

The fourth research question explored the perceptions of the DELTA graduates through focus group interviews. The interviews revealed five distinct themes: self-confidence/self-worth, legacy, connection/reflection, moral courage/modeling behavior, and community service.

The most common theme graduates expressed from the focus group interviews was that of increased confidence/self-worth after completing the DELTA program. Many graduates expressed this training increased their self-worth and confidence in their ability to succeed in life challenges. The participants expressed having little confidence before completing the program due to past struggles and failures. This venue acted as a vehicle for participants to explore past hurts and failures in a safe environment. Many participants voiced they did not feel worthy of success and that no one had ever asked them what they wanted in life. DELTA required participants to write down their core values and mission statement. This exercise helped the participants to hear their own voice and to understand that they are worthy of accomplishing great things. The emotional reaction that DETLA participants express was a result of their internal understanding of themselves.

The focus group interviews also reveled that once the participants had explored and valued their self-worth, they become very focused on their life purpose. They became very passionate about what legacy they would be leaving after they were gone. This supports the finding that legacy was the preferred learning topic among the participants in DETLA.

Another strong theme which emerged out of the focus group interviews was the need for personally modeling the behavior they desired from others and standing firm on

their moral convictions. When asked "what is leadership to you", several participants expressed having the courage to stand up for what they think is morally correct and being consistent in their behavior; modeling the way for others. Once the participants became confident in themselves and understood their core values, they appeared to become able to stand firm in their convictions, and many expressed holding themselves to a higher standard of living; thus, wanting to be contributors to society by exhibiting community service and being active participants in campus initiatives. This transformational experience is one that James MacGregor Burns (1978) coined as a process that changes and transforms people from within (p. 18).

Conclusions and Discussion

Several major conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study.

1. DELTA attracts a wide range of participants which is consistent with the demographics of Northeastern State University, Broken Arrow. Participants varied in age, gender, ethnicity and educational degree major. There were a high number of female participants and Education majors which is typical for the Broken Arrow campus. The demographic variables of the participants in DELTA parallel the demographic data of Northeastern State University, Broken Arrow.
2. DELTA successfully used a broad recruiting focus for participants, and this practice should continue. All students were encouraged to participant in DELTA. All faculty and staff were recruited to recommend the program to students. Administration supports the DELTA program with funding and participation in

events. This is probably the reason a broad representation from the campus community participated in DELTA.

3. DELTA successfully used a variety instructional methods, and this practice should continue. DELTA participants were varied in age, learning strategies and educational backgrounds. This diversity made it critical for the instructional methods to be broad. The techniques used were lecture, guest speakers, interactive projects, team activities, and written assignments. Some of the video presentations focused on the internal emotions and reactions of the participants in an effort to facilitate meaningful discussions relevant to individual needs. DELTA participants voiced feeling comfortable discussing sensitive topics in the environment and felt it was a safe place to be vulnerable about their feelings. Many of the materials and classroom lessons gave the students an opportunity to explore their personal worth and value. All students were continually praised and reassured of their value to society. Schorpp (2008) reported on a study where applying "Maslow's (1954,1970) theory to the educational environment, places responsibility on students and educators to acknowledge needs and to respond to the potential an individual has to succeed" (p. 63). One of the techniques used in DELTA as a catalyst for exploration was *appreciative inquiry*. According to Whitney and Bloom (2003) appreciative inquiry "is the study and exploration of what gives life to human systems when they function at their best. This approach is based on the assumptions that question strengths, values, hopes, and dreams" of the individual (p. 1). This approach allows students the ability to explore their inner most feelings, dreams and desires while in a safe environment. This

emergent theme is also supported by the institutional data which showed that 98% of the DELTA gradates felt they had a better understanding of their own self-concept after completing the program.

4. DELTA has been an effective tool for leadership development for Northeastern State University. Informal data collected outside this study has shown that many faculty have expressed that students who have been through the program are more disciplined in class and voiced the need for all students to gain this training. Students who complete the DELTA program have written core values, a mission statement, goals for the future, and a purpose for life. DELTA students are the leaders of the campus and the program has been an asset for the university. The researcher has observed that several DELTA graduates have continued their education at Northeastern State University in the graduate college and that DELTA graduates are very self-directed and the DELTA alumni are presenting DELTA students with scholarships and have a vast networking community. Brookfield (1986) described "the most complete form of self-directed learning occurs when process and reflection are married in the adult's pursuit of meaning" (p. 56).

DELTA participants also voiced they had gone through a transformation during the process of the course. Transformative learning (Cranton, 1994, 1996; Mezirow, 1991, 1995, 1996) is described as the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. Mezirow (1997) explained that frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which adults understand their experiences. Mezirow believed that transformation theory encourages critical reflection with

the focus on discovering the context of ideas and the belief systems that shape the way adults think. The position here refers to an inherent logic, ideal, and purpose that involved transforming frames of reference through critical thinking and then taking action on the reflective insight (p. 12).

Recommendations

This study supports several recommendations for both practice and further research.

Recommendations for Practice

1. DELTA should be expanded into a three hour credit class for incoming transfer students and used to help retention rates. This program could help transfer students become connected to the university while modeling the expectations for successful students.
2. Continue to increase awareness and marketing of the program. Many students do not know the program exist. Support from faculty and staff is critical in marketing the program.
3. DELTA should be expanded to the home campus in Tahlequah and marketed to at-risk sophomore students. DELTA could be an effective way to increase the retention rates of sophomore students while giving these students tools for success.

4. DELTA should continue its broad-based recruiting practices and diversity of instructional strategies. These appear to have been successful in attracting a diverse participation base and meeting the learning needs of diverse students.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Further research is needed to determine if students who have had a significant life transition may be a factor in the perceived need for personal leadership training. Schlossberg's Transitional Theory should be explored for possible connections.
2. Research is also needed in the area of Social-Cultural Theory (Sfard, 2001) on the effects of learning from each other and if this could be a contributing factor in personal leadership training.
3. Research is needed on why more females than males choose DELTA. Carol Gilligan (1982) might give some insight into this factor.
4. Research is needed to see the effects on outcomes and demographics when the program is offered in different terms and formats and to explore if DELTA would benefit "at-risk" students with lower GPA's.
5. Finally, a longitudinal study is needed to track changes in moral philosophy as a result of being in the program, engaging in reflections, and future experiences.

Conclusions

Most are familiar with the mathematical meaning of DELTA, which is change. The DELTA program is designed to facilitate transformational change in the participants who graduate from program. The exploration of why DELTA Leadership Academy is

working at the Broken Arrow Campus of Northeastern State University has uncovered three critical elements of the leadership development and transformational change. First, a person's sense of self changes as life unfolds because of life events and circumstances. People frequently express the need for self-awareness and ponder the question "who am I?" The implication here is that unless a sense of self-love is developed, a person looks to others for acceptance or they turn to destructive behaviors to fill the need of self-worth. Everyone has something of value to contribute to society and their voice is worthy of being heard. This concept ties closely to Maslow's theory, specifically the ego needs, which refer to self-respect, personal worth and autonomy (Maslow, 1954, 1970).

Second, human beings are born with an internal need for relationships. The DELTA graduates expressed a deep desire to connect with others who were perceived to have life beliefs, convictions and moral values. Specifically, students voiced "What traits do I have and how do they impact learning and my ability to be socially acceptable?" This concept ties to Maslow's theory for satisfying social needs (Maslow, 1954, 1970). This only happens after a healthy self-concept is formed. Northeastern State University, Broken Arrow is comprised largely of adult learners and commuter students. These students often find it very difficult to connect with other students. These student populations can be easily overlooked and very little programming is designed for them. While DELTA attracts a wide variety of participants, its design meets the social needs of commuter students and adult learners. With increased numbers of adult learners entering higher education, it is critical we hear their voice and attempt to meet their needs.

Finally, everyone has a moral responsibility to serve others. Without the help of others, most of us would not be where we are today. We all need encouragement and a

helping hand at some time in our lives. One of the characteristics of adult learners is that many are returning to college because of a life trauma or life-changing circumstance. Many students have a difficult time navigating through these life situations. My analogy of this process is a merry-go-round. We all rode them as kids and had great fun in the process. However, after several minutes going round and round you begin to feel sick and need some help getting off the merry-go-round. Many people do not know how to break the cyclical behaviors that hinder their success. Everyone needs help "stopping the merry-go-round" occasionally. DELTA provides this type of support; a loving, safe, and supportive place to find out what the desires of your heart are, and then make a road map to reach the destination of your dreams. It is the premise of DELTA that everyone has a responsibility to help leave the world a little better than they found it.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Focus Group Interview Questions

"This interview is with participant numbers ____" (add the subject's personal number).

1. "I would like to find out more about your experiences with the DELTA Leadership Academy. Have you had any previous experiences with personal leadership?
    A. If yes, ask the probe question: Please describe them for me"
2. What is leadership to you?
    A. How do you recognize it?
    B. What does it look like?
    C. How does it feel?
3. Have your views on what people can do to solve problems changed? If so, how?
4. Do you think that you are more likely or less likely to get involved in community service after you graduate, given your experience in DELTA? Why? What kinds of things do you think you'll do, if any, for the community?
5. "Many participants in the DETLA program are very emotional and passionate about the materials. Tell me your thoughts of DELTA Leadership Academy and the materials learned?" After their response, as this Probe: Did you have any difficulty with the program?
    A. What aspect of DELTA did you like the best?
    B. What did you like the least?
    C. What aspects stirred the most emotion from you?
6. "Tell me about a lesson that you thought was really effective?"
7. "What are your perceptions of the core values?
    A. What do you think when you see the core values posted?
    B. What do these words mean to you?
    C. Would you change any of the core values? Why or why not?
    D. Do you think these core values reflects what you know about the purpose of DETLA?
8. What aspect of this class have you used?"
9. "Finally I would like to know, if you could make any improvements to the program, what would they be?
10. Is there anything else you want to tell me?"

VITA

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Title of Study: DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING ACADEMY AT NORTHEASTERN STATE UNIVERSITY-BROKEN ARROW CAMPUS IN OKLAHOMA: WHY IS IT WORKING?

Pages in Study: 100 Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Occupational Education

Scope and Method of Study:

This study used a descriptive design in which quantitative subject profile data were expanded upon by qualitative data from focus group interviews. Specifically, institutional data from Northeastern State University and focus group interviews with DELTA graduates were used. The institutional data collected consisted of the following: demographics, academic information, preferred learning topics, and learning style preferences as measured by ATLAS. Data collected from focus groups related to perceptions of the DELTA graduates about the programs effectiveness.

Findings and Conclusions:

DELTA attracts a wide range of participants across age, gender, ethnicity and educational degree major. There were a high number of female participants and Education majors which is similar to the demographic data of Northeastern State University, Broken Arrow.

DELTA used a variety of instructional methods, which contributed to its effectiveness. DELTA participants were diverse in age, learning strategies and educational backgrounds. This diversity made it critical for the instructional methods to be broad and inclusive. DELTA participants voiced feeling comfortable discussing sensitive topics in the environment and felt it was a safe place to be vulnerable about their feelings. One of the techniques used as a catalyst for exploration was appreciative inquiry. This approach allows students the ability to explore their inner most feelings, dreams and desires while in a safe environment.

DELTA has been an effective tool for leadership development for Northeastern State University. DELTA participants voiced they had gone through a transformation during the process of the course. Transformation theory encourages critical reflection with the focus on discovering the context of ideas and the belief systems that shape the way adults think. The DELTA program uses techniques which explore critical reflection and thinking and then moves the participant to taking action on the reflective insight. The effectiveness of the program in promoting transformational learning and leadership in a relatively short period of instruction is an important contribution of the study.

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