

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF LEADERSHIP AND
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BY ACADEMIC
DEPARTMENT HEADS IN COLLEGES OF
AGRICULTURE AT LAND GRANT
INSTITUTIONS:
A QUALITATIVE
STUDY

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I'm on the journey like everybody, but I'm focused. I know where my strength comes from, and it doesn't have anything to do with me.--Michael W. Smith

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The role of an academic leader is complex. Leaders in higher education are challenged with balancing administrative control and faculty autonomy while creating an open and welcoming atmosphere for students to learn: not an easy task for the most educated, developed, and experienced leader (Brown & Moshavi, 2002). Add in the increasing paradigm of consumerism in higher education, coupled with the increase in technological innovation and utilization, as well as accreditation and financing issues, it is clear that higher education needs individuals with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead in an era of uncertainty and change (Tierney, 1999). Universities now “require leaders who thrive on the challenge of change; who foster environments of innovation; who encourage trust and learning; and who lead themselves, their constituents, and their units, departments, and universities successfully into the future” (Brown, 2001, p. 312).

The complexity of leading, specifically an academic department, is daunting. However preparing for academic leadership is not a priority for many faculty members (Land, 2003). Leadership development is not usually an activity that will lead to tenure and promotion. Not many faculty members begin their careers with the goal of becoming an academic leader; when it occurs, it is an evolutionary process (Hoppe, 2003). The “lack of preparation combined with adaptability requirements and other demands has caused the pool of potential academic leaders to decline in recent years” (Land, 2003, p.

13). Because of the lack of viable candidates, more and more administrative positions are being filled by those who are not prepared sufficiently for the complex job. To add to the difficulties of academic leadership, academic administrators are usually not chosen based solely on their leadership knowledge, skills, or abilities. As few academic administrators “possess the entire catalogue of leadership traits that the experts suggest exemplary leaders should have,” (p. 97) most are chosen because of their intellect, research abilities, and notoriety in their specific field (Gilley, 2003). This knowledge does not necessarily equate to effective leadership and the wisdom that effective leadership necessitates (Bass, 1990).

Department heads are often seen as the building block of academic leadership. They are the leaders who are in direct contact with faculty, staff, and students on a daily basis. Department heads have been described as the most important administrators at the university (Gmelch, 2004). Their impact is correlated with their influence on faculty and students regarding teaching and research, which are the core functions of the university (Bisbee, 2005). Department heads are challenged with a complex job where one must be both a manager and a leader. The responsibilities of a department head include, but are not limited to: “departmental affairs, academic affairs, faculty affairs, student affairs, external communications, budgetary affairs, office management, space management, and fundraising” (Hecht, 2004, p. 27). Department heads “function as leaders when they focus on key aspects of organizational culture: mission, vision, engagement, and adaptability” (Bowman, 2002, p. 159). Because of their lack of training in administrative issues and responsibilities, managing the tasks of the job can become difficult. Many

focus only on the managerial functions in order to keep the department functioning on a daily basis (Hecht, 2004).

Understanding Leadership in Higher Education

The definition of leadership is somewhat ambiguous. Some leadership researchers make an analogous comparison of leadership to beauty; everyone recognizes it when they see it but we all have different definitions and variations. Most leadership researchers and experts agree on the main components of leadership; it is a complex process that involves influence and goal attainment within the context of a group setting (Northouse, 2004; Bass, 1990).

“Defining leadership has been a complex and elusive problem largely because the nature of leadership itself is complex” (Daft, 2002, p. 45). Part of this problem with definitions is that the context in which a leader operates shapes the nature of her leadership. Bass (1990) avows “above and beyond personal attributes of consequence, the situation can make a difference” (p. 563) in how one leads. Because of context, being a leader in an academic unit is different than being a middle manager in a for-profit business. Child & Ellis (1973) studies seven-hundred-eighty-seven managers who led organizations which were defined as either manufacturing or service. They found that manufacturing managers conceptualized their roles in a more routine, formalized, and better defined way than managers who led service organizations. Bass (1990) also states that “leadership in an organization is determined by the organization’s legitimating principles and cultural norms and by the social structure within which it occurs” (p. 571). In order for department heads to lead effectively, they must understand what leadership means within the context of their own department and college.

Colleges of Agriculture in Land-Grant Institutions

In 1862, the Morrill Land-Grant Act established “the creation of a university in every state that would serve the needs of common people and teach the practical skills required by an increasingly industrialized economy, including that portion comprising the agricultural sector” (Herren & Edwards, 2002, p. 90). The passage of the Hatch Act (1887) and the Smith-Lever Act (1914) established the agricultural experiment station and the Cooperative Extension service, respectively. By 1914, the traditional tri-part land grant mission of education, research, and extension was formed. Ballenger & Kouadio (1995) note that it is the tri-part mission that “serves to define land-grant colleges of agriculture as unique within the broader system of higher education in the United States” (p. 1330).

Colleges of agriculture in land-grant universities are evolving. The National Research Council (NRC) has conducted numerous studies looking at the future of colleges of agriculture, specifically in land-grant institutions. The results of the 1995 NRC study challenged land-grant colleges of agriculture to “adopt curricula to the interest of today’s students and research programs to today’s agricultural and food problems” (Ballenger & Kouadio, 1995, p. 1330). Colleges of agriculture have also been challenged to look outside of the traditional tri-part, agrarian based mission and include industry, trade organizations, business firms, and other new alliances” (Campbell, 1995).

Department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions have certain responsibilities unique to their position (Ballenger & Kouadio, 1995). Not only do they have to lead their department in teaching initiatives, they must also focus on research and extension. Other smaller and non land-grant affiliated universities do not have the

formalized Extension Service and Experiment Station as influencing factors in leadership. For those department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions, all three legs of the traditional land-grant mission are priorities. This also may mean they not only report to the dean of the college, but also to the directors of the experiment station and extension service. As Campbell (1995) noted, change is occurring at a rapid pace within colleges of agriculture. With the pressure of change and the pressure to change, department heads must also look to the future and lead their departments towards the new initiatives in colleges of agriculture at land-grant universities.

Significance of the Study

“The position of department [head] is one of leadership, charged with the challenges of developing the department’s future and of building faculty vitality” (Gmelch, & Miskin, 1993, p. 3). In addition to competent faculty, strong department heads, who understand the complexities of the job as well as the means of how to perform to high standards, are needed to develop and move departments toward a vision. The issue is that most department heads are not chosen based on their leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities (Brown & Moshavi, 2002). Bass (1990) notes that “technical and professional competence often tend to be valued over competence as a supervisor and a leader,” (p. 813) leading to ineffective leadership and inability to change and develop the organization. The move from an autonomous, creative, and self-initiated faculty member to an academic leader whose focus is based more on rationality, efficiency and institutional directives is a difficult one (Del Favero, 2006). Pounder (2001) states that there is a “lamentable lack of leadership preparation” (p. 288) for

academic leaders. Understanding how department heads conceptualize leadership as well as their experiences with leadership development will aid those who seek to comprehend departmental leadership and leadership preparation. An investigation into the perceptions of department heads on leadership and leadership development is needed because the quality of leadership distinguishes effective departments from less effective ones (Martin, Trigwell, Prosser, & Ramsden, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Department heads are in a precarious position in the hierarchy of academe. They are the middle managers caught between the wants and needs of faculty and students, and the demands of upper administration. While there have been many studies on leadership in higher education, few have focused exclusively on the department head, and fewer still have focused on department heads' conceptualization of leadership and leadership development. This pattern is significant because department head leadership is an important part of a university. Department heads account for "as much as eighty percent of all administrative decisions made in colleges and universities...[but] they have seldom been trained as administrators" (Knight & Holen, 1985, p. 677).

Experts agree that a "working knowledge of leadership theory is an invaluable resource to a new leader" (Raines & Alberg, 2003, p. 34). But Brown and Moshavi (2002) conclude that most academic leaders emerge from the faculty ranks with "little leadership experience or training" (p. 90). The complexities of the department head position call these academic administrators to be both a manager of resources as well as a leader of the academic unit. Also, there is a lack of research on leadership at the department head level. Gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences in

leadership of department heads will not only add to the body of knowledge, but add to the understanding of the position. For these reasons, most academic leaders are often ill prepared to lead a successful department, and most do not understand what leading an academic department entails. This lack of knowledge often leads to ineffective leadership. Ineffective leadership interferes with maximizing organizational efficiency (Gill, 2006).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to explore how department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant universities perceive and conceptualize leadership and leadership development. Pfeffer (1977) stated that if a researcher wanted to understand the behavior of leaders, she must “begin by attempting to find out what they are thinking about the situation in which they would be a leader” (p. 106). This study will focus on the insight of department heads regarding their lived experiences of leadership and leadership development in academic departments in colleges of agriculture at land-grant universities. This study will “investigate a phenomenon [academic leadership] to get at the nature of reality with regard to that phenomenon” (Patton, 2002, p. 215).

Research Questions

1. How do department heads conceptualize leadership in their role as department head?
2. What investments have department heads had in academic leadership development?

Operational Definitions

Academic leadership- organizational transformation within the context of higher education (Bush, 2003, p. 1)

Bench science department- those departments in the college of agriculture that focus on the natural sciences in agricultural, i.e. agricultural engineering, animal science, horticulture, plant and soil sciences, entomology, and biochemistry.

Department chair- person who is rotationally selected to serve as department chair and then returns to the rank and classification of faculty

Department head- person who is hired by the dean “to supervise the translation of goals and policies of the university into actions within the academic department of the university” (Harris, 2004, p. 23)

Educational management- “an executive function for carrying out agreed policy” (Bush, 2003, p. 1)

Leadership- “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2004, p. 3)

Leadership development- “includes [leadership] activities that are both formal and structured as well as those that are informal and unstructured (from childhood development, education, and adult life experiences to participating in formal programming design to enhance leadership capabilities)” (Brungardt, 1996, p. 83) as well as contextual applications and reflection (Day, 2000; Conger 1992)

Leadership education- “includes those learning activities and educational environments that are intended to enhance and foster leadership abilities” (Brungardt, 1996, p. 83)

Leadership training- “refers to learning activities for a specific leadership role or job” (Brungardt, 1996, p. 83)

Social science department- those departments in the college of agriculture that focus on human sciences, i.e. agricultural education, communications, and leadership, agricultural economics, and tourism sciences.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to the scope of leadership development only as it has influenced the perceptions of the participants. No background studies were conducted to identify leadership development during childhood or adolescence. This study was also limited to the insights and lived experiences of department heads in this study.

Assumptions

The following assumptions are accepted in this study:

1. The department heads interviewed will be willing to share their conceptualization of leadership and leadership development.
2. The department heads interviewed will be honest with their insights on leadership and leadership development as well as their own ability to lead effectively.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Understanding how department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions conceptualize leadership is the first step in adding to the present body of knowledge. As Bass (1990) notes, it is the situation or context that dictates how a leader responds to followers. There have been studies that looked at the conceptualization of the phenomenon of leadership by middle managers in the context of business, but few have concentrated on the conceptualization of leadership by “middle” leaders in higher education. Fewer still have concentrated solely on the perceptions and experiences of department heads, and almost none have focused on academic department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions.

As the endless debate concerning the formation of leaders continues among leadership scholars, most believe that “much can be done with their development, education, and training to ‘make’ them leaders” (Bass, 1990, p. 807). Lee (1989) stated that the most effective leaders are “born with a predisposition for certain leadership abilities and they discover those abilities and work hard at improving them” (p. 20). Leadership development, formal or informal, can aid an aspiring leader in her development. Through training, education, and development, leaders can hone and polish leadership skills. Regardless of how one becomes a leader, it is imperative to understand

the “essential nature of leadership as a real and powerful influence in organizations” (Daft, 2002, p. 5).

Conceptual Framework

Leadership Training, Education, and Development

The conceptualization of leadership development is a trying task for most leaders. Differentiating between training, education, and development, Brungardt (1996) sets a framework for this conceptualization. The term leadership development is an all-encompassing concept. His holistic view of leadership begins at an early age and continues throughout adulthood and includes leadership education as well as leadership training. Brungardt (1996) states that leadership development “includes learning activities that are both formal and structured as well as those that are informal and unstructured (from childhood development, education, and adult life experiences to participating in formal programming design to enhance leadership capabilities)” (p. 83). Leadership development is the combination of experience, education, and training in the growth of a leader. Leadership education “includes those learning activities and educational environments that are intended to enhance and foster leadership abilities” (Brungardt, 1996, p. 83). Leadership education occurs in a more prescribed and controlled environment. In this environment, a leader is charged with understanding her leadership within the context of an organization in a collective manner. Leadership training is defined as specific learning activities designed to increase leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities in a particular task or job (Brungardt, 1996). This training is narrow in scope and includes most leadership development workshops that are task specific. Leadership education and training are important parts of the development of a leader that can be

influenced by participation in programming. “A number of studies have shown direct training in the techniques of leadership can improve trainees’ leadership and effectiveness in groups” (Bass, 1990, p. 839).

The formation of a leadership development program for academic leaders must take into account the past experiences of the leader and then take those experiences a step further. Conger’s (1992) framework for leadership development components includes those activities that promote personal growth, feedback, conceptualized understanding and awareness, and skill building. “Leadership training and education need to be designed around what will be required when trainees and students take on leadership responsibilities” (Bass, 1990, p. 855). This principle is the same for leadership programs based contextually in higher education academic leadership. As for academic leader development, the “best leadership development blends job experience, educational initiatives, guided practical experience, and targeted performance feedback into a systemic process for ongoing leadership development” (McDaniel, 2002, p. 81).

Components of Contextual Leadership Development

Day’s (2000) conceptualization of leadership development expands and operationalized the phenomenon of leadership development. Day emphasizes the need for leadership development to include the organizational environment and community in the enhancing of the leader while aiding the leader in the “integration and differentiation” of leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities (2000, p. 586). From this point of view comes Day’s six components of contextual leadership development: 360-degree feedback, coaching, mentoring, networks, job assignments, and action learning.

The process of feedback, referred to as 360-degree feedback, allows a leader to receive feedback on leadership effectiveness from followers, peers, and superiors. This aids in the development of the human and social capital of the leader (Day, 2000). “Executive coaching involves practical, goal-focused forms of one-on-one learning and behavioral changes” (Day, 2000, p. 590). Day asserts that coaching should include assessment of the leader, challenge, and support. Mentoring is another component to Day’s leadership development model. Formal as well as informal mentoring also fosters human and social capital because the leader gains insights from a mentor who has been in the organization, or the position, long enough to guide the leader towards more effective leadership practices.

Networking, or broadening an individual’s network of people, moves leaders “beyond merely knowing what and knowing how, to knowing who in terms of problem-solving networks” (Day, 2000, p. 596). Day also ascertains that job experience and assignments are “among the most important teachers in the development of leadership” (2000, p. 598). Positive or negative experiences, while on the job, are utilized for reflection and analysis. The last component of leadership development is action learning. Action learning takes the outcomes of job experiences and allows leaders to utilize a “continuous process of learning and reflection, supported by colleagues, with a corresponding emphasis on getting things done” (Day, 2000, p. 601). When all six of these components of leadership development occur along with “consistent and intentional implementations,” (Day, 2000, p. 606) a leader can improve her leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities. In addition, the context in which one leads can influence development. For instance, political culture has changed in contemporary universities and

has influenced the roles and responsibilities of its leaders (Personal communication, J. Halligan, 2007).

Leadership and Middle Managers

Department heads are in a precarious position in higher education, as well as a position of great possibility and influence in this climate. They are the conduit between the needs and wants of the faculty and the rules and bureaucracy of the dean. Mintzberg defines a middle manager as one who is in “a hierarchy of authority between the operating core and the apex” (Mintzberg, 1989, p. 98). Clegg and McAuley (2005) state that we are currently in the fourth discourse of middle management. In this discourse, a middle manager is defined “as a transmitter of core strategic values through the enactment of the roles as mentor, coach, and guide” (Clegg & McAuley, 2005, p. 22). The following two selected studies on middle managers show the complexities of leadership demands made on this individual in the organizational structure.

Huy (2001) conducted a six-year study that focused on middle managers in for-profit organizations. He utilized observations, interviews, and document analysis to identify four major contributions of middle managers in organizations. These contributions have been categorized as the entrepreneur, the communicator, the therapist, and the tightrope artist. Middle managers can be classified as entrepreneurs because they are in the unique position of being close enough to frontline workers to understand what is going on and close enough to senior management to get a new idea passed. It is in this unique position that they can and should “solve problems and encourage growth” (Huy, 2001, p. 73). The role of communicator is imperative for middle managers because they usually have tenure within the organization and vast “webs of relationships” (p. 76). This

organizational knowledge leads to better communication between and among factions in the organizational system. The therapist contribution of middle managers is important for organizational stability. Middle managers “have no choice but to address their employees’ emotional well-being” (p. 77). Middle managers perform as the tightrope artist typology when they focus on moving the organization forward while “keeping the company moving” (p. 78). From his study, Huy (2001) concluded that middle managers are the “ones who can translate and synthesize; who can implement strategy...; and who can be persuaded to put their credibility on the line to turn vision into reality” (p. 79).

Charan, Drotter, and Noel (2003) identified six turns of a manager’s development “pipeline” in an organization. The authors determined that one must master each step before he could attempt the next. Passage one is identified as moving from managing self to managing others. Charan et al (2003) note this passage is when an employee moves to frontline manager. It is a difficult passage because “the highest-performing people, especially, are reluctant to change: they want to keep doing the activities that made them successful” (p. 173). The second passage moves one from managing others to managing managers. Managers at this level must be able to “help maintain and even instill values in those individuals who report to them” (p. 176) while coaching others. The third passage moves one from managing managers to functional manager. At this stage, managers “should become proficient strategists, not only for their function but lending their functional strategy with the overall business strategy” (p. 177). Passage four moves one from functional manager to business manager. This stage in the managerial pipeline is complex because it asks managers to “see a clear link between their efforts and marketplace results” and “requires a major shift in skills, time applications, and work

values” (p. 179). Managers at this stage must also be able to balance the future goals with the present needs of the organization. Passage five moves a manager from business manager to group manager. At this level, a manager values the success of others in the group more than his own personal success. The professional growth of his followers takes precedence in his managerial agenda. The last passage, passage six, moves a manager from group manager to enterprise manager. For many, this means moving from the ranks of middle management into the higher echelon of organizational leaders. With five of the six management passages focused on the middle manager level, one can delineate the complexities of the position. Charan, Drotter, and Noel (2003) also advocate that managers need help moving from one passage on the managerial pipeline to the next. They conclude that help, or development, for these managers is not occurring, so the pipeline of management is becoming severally clogged.

Training for Middle Management

Couch (1979) emphasizes the need for those who find themselves in a middle management role to change their perspectives, attitudes, and skills. Many academic middle managers stay placid in their development. Clegg and McAuley (2005) take placidity a step further by concluding that “heads of departments and other middle academic managers frequently disassociate themselves from managerialist practices” (p. 25) because they see themselves as actually having no authority. Why develop oneself if you do not have the power or the authority to enact change? This perspective has been challenged by numerous studies. Hancock and Hellowell (2003) found that department heads are charged with “making strategic decisions at their own level and operating both inside and outside their organisation” (p. 5).

The corporate world has generated a conceptual basis for the training and development of middle managers. Couch (1979) took the seminal work of Mintzberg (1973) and researched the applicability of Mintzberg's managerial concepts to learning to be a manager. Couch (1979) determined there were five ways that middle managers could be trained and developed. (1) Allowing insights into the nature of middle management aids potential middle managers by permitting them to know in advance what skills they need to develop in order to be effective as a middle manager (Couch, 1979). This also lets people know what they are getting themselves into when they take a middle management position. (2) An active desire to improve managerial skills is also needed. If one has no desire to improve, she is wasting time and space in development programs (Couch, 1979). (3) Introspection regarding interpersonal interactions will also aid in developing middle management effectiveness. Interpersonal relationships and the management of those relationships become imperative for middle management success (Couch, 1979). (4) Developing a network of peers is essential in developing a middle manager. This peer network allows for an open exchange of ideas and frustrations with others who can suggest strategies and empathize (Couch, 1979). (5) Personal assessment is continually needed for the development in middle managers, and becomes essential for the growth and success of the middle managers (Couch, 1979). If someone is not constantly developing, they are not improving management skills or the organization.

Development of leaders in higher education is imperative. Bisbee (2005) studied the current practices of Land-Grant Universities in identifying and training academic leaders. Participants of this study included department chairs in four colleges at sixteen land-grant institutions. A web-based survey was utilized to gather the descriptive and

quantitative data. Bisbee (2005) found that “over eighty percent of the participants had been identified as potential leaders sometime in their career” (p. 96). In regards to leadership training, “over eighty-nine percent of the participants found job experience to be their most valuable training when compared to mentoring, personal initiatives, and structured programs” (Bisbee, 2005, p. 96). Department chairs in the college of agriculture noted that on-the-job training was the most beneficial followed by structured programs. Bisbee (2005) also found that the department chairs “indicated that they were not prepared for leadership” (p. 98). This study provides a broad picture of leaders’ identified needs, however it gives little information on how the department chairs conceptualized and actualize leadership and leadership development.

Research Concerning Academic Leaders in Colleges of Agriculture

Tierney (1999) states that the task of a leader “is to interpret the internal and external environments to the members, create the ability for individuals to feel palpably toward the culture in which they reside, and to help set the processes that will be used to achieve significant goals” (p. 56). Leaders in higher education in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions must complete these tasks in teaching, research, and extension work. Colleges of agriculture provide a complex context in which leaders in higher education must lead.

In 2004, Moore and Rudd conducted a qualitative study that sought to find leadership areas, skills, and competencies needed by Cooperative Extension leaders. Their sample consisted of seven extension administrative heads in colleges of agriculture and land-grant institutions. Before the interviews took place, the researchers sent an abbreviated literature review that “described the [leadership] skill area and provided two

examples of specific leadership competencies within each skill area” (Moore & Rudd, 2004, p. 25). Semi-structured interviews via the telephone were used to gather data. From this data, content analysis yielded six leadership skill categories. These categories were classified as technical, communication, human, conceptual, emotional intelligence, and industry knowledge skills. Of those skills identified by the participants and coded by the researchers, communication was the only theme or category not imposed by deductive coding.

Jones (2006) built upon the Moore and Rudd (2004) study of Extension directors and sought to find the self-reported leadership skills and behaviors of academic deans in colleges of agriculture and life sciences at land-grant institutions. Using the categories as determined by Moore and Rudd (2004), Jones (2006) found that deans in colleges of agriculture rated human skills as the most important of the leadership skills needed in their job. Human skills were defined as those skills not equated to a technical expertise including: relationship building, being approachable, having cultural awareness, mentoring, coaching, and being a team leader. Emotional intelligence, conceptual skills, communication skills, and industry knowledge skills were also rated important. Technical skills were identified by the deans as only somewhat important in leading colleges of agriculture. Jones (2006) also found that “academic program leaders received [leadership] training from past leadership experiences, on-the-job-training, and institutional knowledge” (p. 163).

Looking specifically at department heads, Spotauski and Carter (1993) used the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) to study the self evaluation of leadership practices of department heads in agricultural education. Forty-nine department heads participated

in this quantitative study. The LPI instrument, as developed by Kouzes and Posner, measures the leader's self-reported ability to challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart. Spotauski and Carter (1993) found the department heads identified the Kouzes and Posner's leadership practice of enabling others to act as their most utilized practice. The mean for inspiring a shared vision was the lowest identified by the department heads in this study. Spotauski and Carter (1993) concluded that there is a "lack of consistency regarding the utilization of specific leadership practices in departmental leadership" (p. 23).

Specific leadership movements have also been researched in the context of the college of agriculture. Connor (2004) conducted a case study in the College of Agriculture's academic programs office at the University of Florida from 1991-2001. This case study focused on the potential benefits of using a more transformational approach to leading a college of agriculture. In his study, transactional leadership tasks were described as "hiring faculty, programmatic assignments, allocating resources, salary adjustments, promotions/tenure actions, counter offers, problem employee interventions, and academic governance" (Connor, 2004, p. 52). Transformational leadership tasks were defined as "strategic planning, cutback management, problem solving, leadership/personal development, requests for proposals, and grievance resolution" (p. 52). Because of diminishing funds and morale at the University of Florida, during that time period, college of agriculture administrators decided to begin acting with a more transformational emphasis (Connor, 2004). Faculty task forces were created to develop action plans for programs. A teaching resource center for the college was created to assist with improving teaching. Regular interactions occurred between deans and department

heads. And Academic Programs Committee on Organization and Policy (ACOP) scholars were asked to focus their internship special project on specific college of agriculture problems. Connor (2004) found that the transformational approach worked well for the college. Enrollment increased, additional funding was secured, and scholarships were expanded. Connor (2004) drew a direct correlation from the use of transformational leadership practices to the improvements in the college of agriculture.

As in business research, the majority of leadership research in higher education has been geared toward higher levels of leaders: deans, provosts, and presidents. Yet, the academic department has been described as the building block of academic leadership (Tierney, 1999). Changes in higher education including pressure on departments to bring in more funding and the privatization of higher education have increased the importance of the role of department head. While leadership is complex and content specific for all leaders, it is the intricacy of the academic department head position that this study seeks to clarify. A closer examination of the academic department as well as the leadership needed to guide this organization will show the intricacies of the organization and the leadership needed.

Academic Departments

Specified academic departments were not included in the original governance structure of the American higher education system. For the original universities, presidents held the job of leader, disciplinarian, registrar, provost, and department head over many disciplines (Rosovsky, 1990). As universities grew in size and stature, new governance roles were created to aid in the grouping of like disciplines for enhanced collaboration. Cohen (1998) notes that the department head position became a formalized

position of higher education administration sometime between 1870 and 1925. Currently, departments can be categorized into two different typologies. Pure departments contain faculty members who are “trained, have common backgrounds, and teach in the same discipline” (Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, & Tucker, 1999, p. 5). Mixed departments contain “several discipline programs housed in one department for administrative and economic efficiency” (Hecht et al, 1999). Whether pure or mixed, departments serve a distinct role in institutes of higher education. Academic departments “are the structural home bases for accomplishing the essential work of the college” (Barr & Tag, 1995, p. 19).

Academic Department Heads

For one who leads an academic department, the job is multifaceted. Whether the official title is department chair or head, this person must evaluate faculty and staff, oversee the budget, move the department forward, and serve as the figure head role of the department. Much like a middle manager, a department head/chair is challenged with leading the department into the future while simultaneously keeping the department working smoothly. This balance includes developing and working towards an idealized departmental vision while maintaining an everyday working budget (Cohen, 1998).

In some institutions, there is a clear and distinctive difference between a department head and a department chair. As Rosovsky (1990) notes, a department chair returns to the rank of faculty member when he completes his term as department chair. In colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions, leaders of departments are typically classified as department heads. This study focuses on those classified as department heads.

Higher Academic Middle Management

The position of higher education middle management is important to study because “the concept of middle manager is not well understood and that has a number of consequences” (Clegg & McAuley, 2005, p. 19). As department heads serve in the role of academic middle manager, Brown (2001) suggests that effective department heads can work and respect both cultures of faculty autonomy and administrative regulations and assessment. This pivotal task is not an easy one. It is full of stress and the feeling of being pulled in two different directions (Hellowell & Hancock, 2001).

Hellowell and Hancock (2001) conducted a qualitative study with fourteen deans, associate deans, and department heads in the United Kingdom regarding perceptions of the role of academic middle manager. The semi-structured interview methodology yielded several pertinent themes. One theme showed that the participants felt as if “they were being pushed by external and internal pressures to become more ‘managerial’, but the majority clearly wished to maintain some academic profile” (Hellowell & Hancock, 2001, p. 184). Being seen as a leader in the discipline was more important than the managerial tasks dictated by the job position. The academic middle managers also discussed other changing roles. They relayed the increased expectation to be “at least as much resource managers and fund-raising entrepreneurs as they are academic leaders” (p. 191). The middle managers also spoke of the rapid change in defined roles over the past few years. They conveyed that the job is becoming “more complex and multifaceted” (p. 194). One participant stated that he thought “the pace and range of things that I now have to deal with are just way beyond what they were in the past” (p. 195). As Hellowell and Hancock (2001) looked at the changing managerial roles of academic administrators, they

did not focus specifically on the department heads, nor did they actualize leadership behaviors or styles in the context of agriculture. The focus of this study was limited to specified leadership and managerial tasks in the United Kingdom.

The complexities of the department head's job, as noted by Hellowell and Hancock (2001) led other researchers to investigate what department heads needed in their jobs in order to effectively lead an academic department. In 2006, Kuhl conducted a survey of one hundred and sixty-five experienced department chairs in twenty-two community colleges in the North Central Region. Kuhl hypothesized that department chairs need an accurate position description, orientation to the university, and professional development in order to be successful. Her findings supported her hypothesis. Kuhl found that seventy-five percent of the chairs surveyed felt they were given enough information to complete their job. Kuhl (2006) also found that less than twenty-five percent of the chairs believed "they had adequate orientation to the institution" (p. 6).

Professional development or the lack thereof, was also apparent in Kuhl's analysis and results. "Less than twenty-five percent of these chairs received professional development in connection with their chair duties (i.e. budgeting, scheduling, leadership development, etc.)" (Kuhl, 2006, p. 6). Kuhl (2006) concludes that "if you have faculty members who have not had any management experience and put them in this position without mentoring, assistance, or training, you're setting them up for failure" (p. 6). Based on Kuhl's (2006) findings regarding the extent of leadership development occurring in higher education, it is useful for researchers to gain a richer picture of those leadership development activities as experienced by administrators in higher education.

Leadership and Administrative Tasks of Department Heads

The job and task description of department heads are complex. They are called on to be the administrative gatekeepers of the departmental resources as well as the visionary and motivational leaders of faculty, staff, and students.

Lucas (1994) suggested that the roles and tasks of department heads can be classified as either leadership or administration. After surveying department heads, he concluded that the leadership roles include those tasks that pertain to the development of the department or the faculty, staff, and students within the department. Department heads are charged with visioning, inspiring a shared vision, and empowering those around them to act on the vision (Lucas, 1994). Lucas (1994) delineates administrative tasks of department heads as either paper or personnel based. Paper tasks include budgeting, developing a teaching schedule, and managing the curriculum. Personnel tasks include those tasks of managing people including part-time faculty and staff as well as making decisions on annual reviews (Lucas, 1994).

Gmelch and Miskin (1993) classified the roles of department heads into four categories: faculty developer, manager, leader, and scholar. Their quantitative research on department chairs as well their extensive review of the literature showed that faculty development is perceived by department heads to be “their most important responsibility” (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993, p. 5). Recruiting, choosing, and evaluating faculty as well as mentoring them and creating high morale and developmental opportunities should all be high priorities for department heads. Management roles include the day to day procedures that keep the department functioning. These include, but are not limited to

budgeting, supervision of staff, facility maintenance, and completing academic reports for the dean (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993).

Gmelch & Miskin (1993) also classify leadership activities by department heads as either internal or external. Internal leadership activities include the facilitation of departmental visioning, evaluating curriculum development, and conducting departmental meetings (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993). External leadership includes being a figurehead for the department to external constituencies by participation in university committees as well as professional meetings and fundraising activities (Gmelch & Miskin, 1993). The department head must also maintain her status as a scholar in the discipline. This role is fulfilled by teaching, researching, publishing, obtaining grants, and attending discipline specific national meetings. Gmelch and Miskin's research finds that although department heads enjoy these types of activities, eighty-six percent of department heads reported their scholarship diminishes or ceases as they fulfill the many roles of department head.

Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros (1999) studied department heads in Australia and the United States. The focus of the quantitative survey research was task identification by department heads from both countries. After a factor analysis, Wolverton et al (1999) found that six themes emerged from the data with which both sets of department heads identified: administrative tasks, resource management, scholarship, leadership, and faculty development. The findings of this research study combined the department head tasks of Lucas (1994) and Gmelch and Miskin (1993).

Academic department heads hold a multifaceted job. It is a complex occupation that calls for the department head to function as both a leader of the department and a

manager of its resources. Not only are department heads called to be a leader and a manager but they are called to do so at the same time (Kekale, 1999). For this reason, understanding the thoughts of department heads regarding their leadership and leadership development becomes important in order to develop a deeper understanding of the complex phenomenon of leading an academic department.

Summary

The academic department is the building block of university governance (Rosovsky, 1990). Leading at this middle management level is complex. Attention should be given to the inner-workings of the department as well as the development of the department head. By gaining a deeper and richer picture of how department heads conceptualize and experience leadership and leadership development, one can begin to link the research done in higher education to leadership theory in order to gain a more complete understanding of leadership and leadership development as a phenomenon in an academic unit. Because the “higher education community continues to perceive the need to identify and prepare new leaders” (p. 22), it is imperative that leadership researchers find a way to deepen their understanding of the phenomenon of leadership as it relates to department heads (Chibucos & Green, 1989).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Designing a research study has been likened to creating art as well as science (Cronbach, 1982). Research scholars and practitioners have stated that the methodology chosen should fit the research questions and the purpose of the study presented (Babbie, 2004). Conger (1998) states that qualitative methodology is most useful in the exploratory phases of a construct. Because department heads in college of agriculture at land-grant institutions have not been studied in relation to their conceptualization and lived experience with leadership and leadership development, and empirical research has yet to capture the information sought by this study, qualitative methodology was the most fitting methodology to build the base for this line of research. This generative study seeks to describe how department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions conceptualize the phenomenon of leadership and experience leadership development.

Qualitative researchers who are interested “in investigating a phenomenon to get at the nature of reality with regard to that phenomenon” (p. 215) are engaging in the form of basic qualitative research (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) classifies qualitative research into five basic typologies: basic, applied, summative evaluation, formative evaluation, and action. This study is based on the typology of basic research. Basic research is disciplinary specific (leadership in this case) and “strives to make a contribution to

knowledge in that discipline” (Patton, 2002, p. 215). Because of the purpose and research questions of this study, a basic research type of qualitative methodology is the methodological type that is most fitting. Basic research is also characterized by the product of the research. The purpose of this study was to “investigate a phenomenon [academic leadership] to get at the nature of reality with regard to that phenomenon” (Patton, 2002, p. 215). By telling the stories of the lived experiences of the department heads in this study, the academic community will be able to have a better understanding of leadership and leadership development from the perspective of academic department heads in the college of agriculture at a land-grant institution.

Patton (2002) states “basic qualitative research is typically reported through scholarly monograph or published article with the primary attention to the contribution of the research to social science” (p. 434). The basic research design for this study is framed in the epistemological branch of postpositivism. Postpositivism is the “epistemological doctrine that social reality is constructed and that it is constructed differently by different individuals” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996, p. 19). In contrast with the epistemological tenets of positivism which posits a stable reality that can be explored, predicted, and understood with specific scientific methods, postpositivism approaches “reality” and knowledge claims as relative, inherently unstable, historically contingent, and therefore necessary to approach with multiple knowledge building tools. This study which focuses on the perception and lived reality of department heads is embedded in postpositivist approaches.

After reviewing the literature, it was apparent that studies which focus on department heads are few, but studies that concentrate on department heads in colleges of

agriculture are almost non-existent. Spotauski and Carter (1993) used the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) to study the self evaluation of leadership practices of department heads in agricultural education. And Bisbee (2006) studied the current practices of land-grant institutions in identifying and training academic leaders, but her sample included department heads and deans in all colleges at land-grant institutions. Neither study looked specifically at the conceptualization of leadership, and neither were conducted with qualitative methods. While both studies captured a general picture of leadership behaviors or training, neither gave no depth to the phenomenon of leading an academic department in a college of agriculture at a land-grant institution. It is the depth of understanding that this study addresses.

Qualitative studies are utilized not for generalization but for “deepening understanding” (Patton, 2002, p. 10). The researcher sought to explore and move towards understanding the experiences of department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions regarding leadership as they “were ‘lived’ or ‘felt’ or ‘undergone’” (Sherman & Webb, 1998, p. 7). Qualitative methods “capture and communicate someone else’s experience of the world in his or her own words” (Patton, 2002, p. 47). Patton (2002) states that “qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (p. 39). Qualitative methods allowed the researcher to inductively conduct research in a naturalistic manner so that themes would be emergent. We have yet to understand fully how department heads understand leadership, how and whether department heads in colleges of agriculture conceptualize it differently than

other department heads, and what elements, if any, department heads of agriculture identify as necessary for leadership development.

Because of the absence of research on how department heads conceptualize leadership and leadership development, there is a need to understand this phenomenon in more depth. In this study, 7 of 10 department heads, during the initial contact, remarked on the value of this line of inquiry. A department head with 5 to 7 years of experience stated that he has “heard people say that there are three KEY pressure points or three key slots in a university. They are department heads, deans, and presidents. But the research out there seems to only focus on the deans and presidents.” This statement is a confirmation of the literature review. Another department head with 3 to 4 years of experience stated that the “world of higher education needs to understand leadership at the department head level in order to train those who wish to move into that position.” Department heads perceive their position as a useful role to understand further.

Theoretical Orientation and Typology of the Study

This basic qualitative study is framed by the qualitative theoretical traditions of phenomenology and constructionism. Phenomenology explores “how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Whether a self chosen path or thrust into leadership roles because of contextual needs, the population for this study has directly experienced the phenomenon of leadership in an academic department. They are key resources for first-hand knowledge regarding this phenomenon. Patton states that in framing a study with constructionism, the researcher is looking to see the “reported perceptions, ‘truths,’ explanations, and beliefs” (2002, p. 132). According to this approach to understanding the social world,

perception is reality. Conger (1998) notes that the reported perceptions of leadership and the “interpretative dimension [play] a significant role in how leadership is defined and experienced” (p. 110). Guba and Lincoln (1985) combine phenomenology and constructionism by deducting that context is the basis for a phenomenon.

The Utility of Qualitative Methods in Leadership Research

Leadership is a complex paradigm in which just the term ‘leadership’ has hundreds of published meanings. These nuances merit exploration. Qualitative studies can aid in this process. According to Conger (1998), qualitative research “can be the richest of studies, often illuminating in radically new ways phenomena as complex as leadership” (p. 107). Conger (1998) compiles the findings of Bryman and Burgess (1994), Lundberg (1976), and Morgan and Smirchich (1980) into a list of five advantages of utilizing qualitative methodology in leadership studies: (1) qualitative methodology gives the researcher ample time and methods to explore, in depth, the complex phenomenon of leadership, (2) emergent design allows for new constructs to come from the data, (3) there is a greater probability that leadership processes can be examined in a “more effective manner” (Conger, 1998, p. 108), (4) contextual applications and factors can be more readily explored, and (5) qualitative methodology lends itself easier to the study of the symbolic nature of leadership.

Because of the ease and generalizability of self-reported leadership surveys, qualitative methodology has been “greatly underutilized in the field of leadership” (Conger, 1998, p.188). Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the phenomenon of leadership can be useful to tease apart its intricacies and add to the cumulative body of knowledge on this subject. For example, some of the most

noteworthy leadership theories started from a generative point by collecting qualitative data and then transferring the generative themes into reliable leadership instruments. The Ohio State and Michigan Studies both used this cooperative methodological design (Daft, 2002). In these two studies, the researcher asked participants to describe their experiences with leaders in regards to the task direction and relationship orientation. The descriptions of the leader given by the followers were then coded for themes. From these themes, quantitative questions emerged and were developed into instruments and models of leadership behavior (Daft, 2002; Gill, 2006).

Qualitative methodology has also been important in the contextualization of leadership theories and constructs. Bryman (2004) found that qualitative research on leadership has led to several contributions in understanding leadership in relation to the population being studied. Understanding how leadership “works” in different cultures is an example of the importance of context in understanding leadership (Nahavandi, 2006).

Research Questions

This research study was framed by two research questions:

1. How do department heads conceptualize leadership in their role as department head?
2. What investments have department heads had in academic leadership development?

These two questions guided the formation of the interview protocol (Appendix A) as well as served as a deductive frame when analyzing both the literature and the data.

Subject Selection

Population

Patton (2002) states that “the key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study” (p. 229). The population of this study consists of current and former department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions in the United States.

Sampling Procedure

Determining sampling becomes difficult when one is “studying complex action within a particular locale” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 233). Thomas (1995) adds “gaining access [to a population] can be a tough proposition, even when the points of getting in are innocuous, well-intentioned, or attractive to key people in the organization itself” (p. 4). Because of the daily responsibilities of department heads and other academic leaders, gaining access to this population can be particularly challenging.

Another challenge to gaining access to departments heads is that studying department heads from the position of a graduate student which is considered studying up. This is a situation in which the population is considered higher in status, or power, or other social characteristics than the researcher. To maximize access across such status differences and leadership responsibilities, the sampling method utilized in this generative study is snowball sampling. In contrast with other purposeful sampling techniques, snowball is classified as theoretical (Babbie, 2004).

Schwandt (2001) states that there are two general strategies for selecting a sample in qualitative research: empirical or statistical and theoretical or purposive. Participants in

this study were chosen from a theoretical strategy. In a theoretical strategy, “units are chosen for their relevance to the research question, analytical framework, and explanation or account being developed in the research” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 232). Deciding on how many participants to interview also falls under the strategy of the sampling. Because this study was looking for depth over breadth of information, the sample was ten department heads.

Snowball sampling allows the researcher to locate “information-rich key informants” (Patton, 2002, p. 237). With snowball sampling, the researcher “asks participants to recommend other individuals to study” (Creswell, 2005, p. 206). Snowball sampling was consistent with this study’s purpose and population, and allowed the researcher to gain access and begin to generate knowledge about this specialized leadership role. By opening the conversation with stating that the participant had been recommended for this study by a peer, those who find themselves in a position with minimal extra time are more likely to agree to participate in the research study (Thomas, 1995). Thomas (1995) notes that “unless you have some sort of leverage with which to get their attention [when you study “up”], chances are you will get it for only half the time you think you need” (p. 5). Beginning the conversation between researcher and participants by mentioning the person who recommended them for this study is a “way into” the world of the department head.

For this research study, two department heads who participated in the field test of the instrumentation were identified as potential snowball starting points. The two department heads verbalized their interest in furthering this study beyond the revision of the instrument. These two department heads represented two different universities and

two different types of departments: bench and social. The two department heads were asked to identify other department heads who they believed would be interested in sharing their leadership experiences with the researcher. The snowball sample began with three names, one given by the first department head and two given by the second.

All of the department heads approached about participating in this study enthusiastically agreed to participate. The department heads expressed their interest in this line of inquiry and the value of someone researching their experiences. For example, a department head with over twenty years of experience said he not only was willing to participate, but pleased “someone in the college of agriculture was interested in studying leadership of department heads in the college.” All of the department heads who participated in this study asked to see the findings when the study was complete. Moreover, a former department head with 3 to 4 years of experience also suggested that this research might aid him personally in his leadership role. “It would be interesting to see what others have to say about this subject, because as a department head, I do not feel as if I could discuss most of my leadership issues with other department heads in this college.” Thus, research into the phenomenon of leadership may contribute to the very development and discussion of leadership that scholarly literature indicates is currently insufficient to address the complexities of the role.

Sample.

The sample for this study was department heads, both present and past in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions in the United States who were recommended by other department heads as participants in this study. Patton (2002) concludes that “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want

to know, the purpose of the inquiry, ...what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244).

Ten individuals participated in this study representing five different land-grant institutions. Eight males and two females were interviewed. For this study, to ensure anonymity, all participants are referred to as “he.” Four participants are department heads of social science departments in the college of agriculture, and six are or were department heads in bench sciences in the college of agriculture. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of department type.

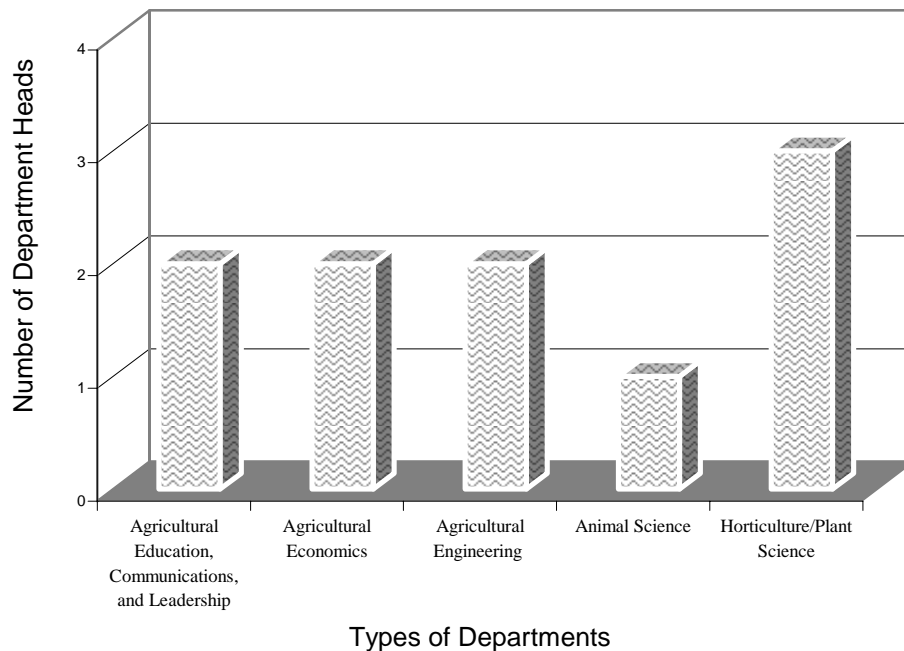


Figure 1. Typology and number of departments represented by the sample.

Eight current department heads and two former department heads were interviewed. Figure 2 shows the range of experience levels of the department heads, six months to twenty-four years. One department head had less than one year of experience, two department heads had 1-2 years of experience, three department heads had 3-5 years of experience, two department heads had 5-7 years of experience, one department head

had 7-10 years of experience, and one department head had over twenty years of experience being a department head.

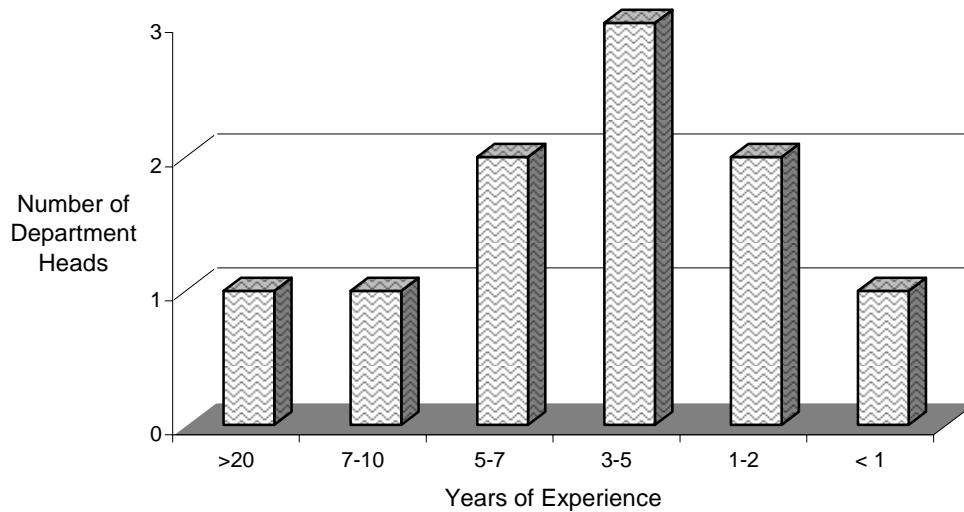


Figure 2. Years of experience as a department head categorized for the sample

The number of faculty supervised ranged from six to seventy. In this sample, two department heads led ten or less faculty, three department heads led fifteen to twenty faculty, two department heads led twenty-one to thirty faculty, and three departments heads led fifty plus faculty. The number of staff led by department heads in this sample range from three to seventy. One department head led ten staff or less, two department heads led fifteen to twenty staff, six department heads led twenty one to thirty staff, and one department head led over thirty staff members. Student numbers also have a large variance for this sample.

Numbers of students enrolled in the participants' departments range from fifty to nine-hundred. Two departments heads led fifty to sixty students, three led one-hundred to one-hundred-fifty students, one department head led one-hundred-fifty-one to two-

hundred students, two department heads led two-hundred-one to four-hundred students, and two department heads led over five-hundred students.

This sample captures a broad range of extremes. The characteristics of each department, typology, faculty, staff, and student numbers, shape the experiences of each individual. Having a broad range of characteristics in this study helps provide a broader picture of the phenomenon of leadership.

Instrumentation

Researcher as the Instrument

One characteristic which makes qualitative research unique is the role of the researcher. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. Because of this, a researcher must address her philosophy in her methodology. For this study, the researcher has adhered to the stance of empathic neutrality as a guiding principle to the research philosophy. Patton (2002) describes empathic neutrality as the ability to “take and understand the stance, position, feelings, experience, and worldview of others” (p. 52) while conducting research that “does not set out to prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths” (p. 51). The perspective of the researcher is not phenomenon to be avoided in qualitative inquiry, but an interpretive resource one brings to bear on a project (Patton, 2002).

Interview Protocol and Field Testing

The primary method of data collection utilized by the researcher was interviews. A semi-structured interview protocol was utilized. This protocol was developed by the researcher and the first set of questions was peer and expert reviewed in Fall 2006. Following Patton’s (2002) concept of “emergent design flexibility” (p. 40), the protocol

was field tested using two department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions and an associate dean at the same type of institution for subject triangulation purposes. The revised questions were peer and expert developed further in Spring 2007 and field tested with another department head in the college of agriculture at a land-grant institution. The interview protocol consists of a pool of fifteen questions (Appendix A), and was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Oklahoma State University (Appendix B).

Data Collection

The type of data collected should be emergent from the research design and the purpose of the research. Inductive qualitative analysis is built upon a “solid foundation of specific, concrete, and detailed observations, quotations, documents, and cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 58). Data collection for this study included interviews, observations, and document analysis of materials pertaining to the leadership development of department heads. Patton (2002) notes that “studies that use only one method [of data collection] are more vulnerable to errors linked to that particular method” (p. 248). Utilizing different types of data for analysis is a measure of triangulation. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) note that the “aggregation of data from different sources will unproblematically add up to produce a more complete picture” (p. 199). Because the researcher focused on the perceptions of department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions, interviews were the primary method utilized.

Data was collected during the summer of 2007. Seven interviews and observations were conducted in person. Three interviews were conducted via the telephone. Three land-grant universities were visited in order for both interview and

observations to occur. The audio files of the interviews were transcribed by the researcher immediately following the interview period. This transcription process is both a measure of validity and an instrument of analysis. Observations were also transcribed from fieldnotes immediately following the interview. Department heads provided some of the documents that were analyzed. Other documents came from university websites or training material that the human resource department supplied the researcher.

Interviews

As Useem (1995) notes, interviews are a technique that offer “insights into the culture, organization, and activity of the executive and their firm” (p.24) or for this study, a department head and her department. Once participants were identified, initial contact occurred to determine if the department head was willing to participate in the study (Appendix C). Following Institutional Review Board policy, the interviewees were sent a consent form before the interview (Appendix D). Those consent forms were either faxed back to the researcher or collected on-site when the interview occurred. The interviews were conducted with a semi-structured interview protocol. Probing questions were used to gain deeper understanding of the phenomenon investigated and to clarify responses provided by interviewees. To ensure that the researcher captured the responses accurately, member checks were conducted with all respondents. Members were offered the opportunity to edit and/or expand part of the interview thereby enhancing the quality and clarity of data. No respondents made material or conceptual changes to the transcripts.

Observation

Observation has been a fundamental aspect of traditional ethnography since its development in the late nineteenth century (Emerson et al, 1995). Observations were utilized to add to the richness to this study. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) note that “social scientists are observers both of human activities and of the physical settings in which such activities take place” (p. 673). The researcher observed department heads in their natural setting including, but not limited to, interactions with faculty and staff, the department, and “body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of the persons being interviewed” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 673). The natural setting for this sample included the department heads’ offices, departmental building space, and the college building and grounds surrounding. Special attention was given to describing the physical setting of the interview. The type and arrangement of the furniture in the department heads’ offices as well as the assistants’ placement gave a sense of the leadership style of the department head. Observation of the interaction between the department head and the faculty and staff yielded support for statements made during the interview by the department head. As Patton (2002) notes, “to understand fully the complexities of many situations, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest may be the best research method” (p. 21).

Document Analysis

Another data source utilized in this study were documents. Examining documents related to the role of department heads or considered useful by the department head allows the researcher to gain additional perspective on the phenomenon of leadership. Documents can be public or private in scope (Patton, 2002). Documents used for this

study were both public and private in nature. Documents also can “provide the advantage of being in the language and words of the participants, who have usually given thoughtful attention to them” (Creswell, 2005, p. 219). The documents used in this study include position descriptions for department heads, websites for universities, leadership programs for department heads, training materials, and any other information that department heads supplied during the course of the interview. One department head volunteered his notebooks from his leadership development program. Another department head copied the cover and title page to his favorite leadership book that was given to him by the provost of his university. These documents yielded information about how institutions conceptualized department heads and how at times, such public statements are at odds with department heads’ privately held sentiments. They also served as a triangulation point.

Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative analysis is the process of “transforming data into findings” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). Patton (2002) suggests a metaphor for qualitative data analysis. He says that the researcher “acts as a catalyst on raw data, generating an interaction that synthesizes new substance born alive from the catalytic conversion” (Patton, 2002, p. 432). “Throughout analysis, researchers attempt to gain a deeper understanding of what they have studied and continually refine their interpretations” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 141). The researcher utilized both inductive and deductive analytic procedures in the data analysis process.

Content Analysis

For this study, data analysis began with the interviews, fundamental to the incubation and immersion process necessary for sound qualitative analysis. Kvale (1996) concludes that if a researcher waits to analyze data until all of the transcriptions have been completed, he is losing the opportunity to become thoroughly familiar with that data. Because of this, analysis for this study began during the first interview, observation, and document analysis. Analysis continued during the transcription of interviews and observations. As the researcher listened and transcribed the audio files, she began to get a holistic sense of the data. Transcription gave the researcher the opportunity to become very familiar with her data. The researcher included descriptions of the surroundings as well as gestures, tone of voice, and pauses made by the interviewees. This nonverbal content enhanced analysis and helped solidify emergent themes.

Unitizing the data is a primary component of content analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Unitization of data refers to the process of teasing out information from interview transcripts, observation field notes, and documents analyzed. These units which consist of no less than a phrase and no more than two sentences must stand alone and still capture a complete thought, statement, or idea. For this study, the data units were extracted from the original data source, compiled in a new document, and then printed on individual index cards that identified the coded participant as well as the page number of the transcript where the data unit originated. There were a total of three-hundred-fifty-six data units.

Another step in content analysis is categorizing. This process involves bringing “together into provisional categories those [data chunks] that apparently relate to the

some content” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 347). These codes or categories must be defined. The definition should be used to “justify the inclusion of each card” (p. 347) so to increase the internal consistency of the data analysis process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Imperative to this process is multiple sortings of the data units so that new codes and categories emerge.

The researcher categorized the over three-hundred data units into forty-six different categories. The dissertation chair also sorted the data units to confirm findings and to add to the rigor and credibility of the study. Forty-seven different categories emerged from the dissertation chair’s categorization. Comparing the categorization and coding revealed similarities. This triangulation of analysis, in which “two or more persons independently analyze the same qualitative data and compare their findings” (p. 560) adds to the reliability of data analysis (Patton, 2002).

Memoing is also important at this stage of analysis because the researcher’s thoughts on how data units were placed will serve as an auditing trail for the researcher’s analytic train of thought (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). The researcher developed both analytic and descriptive memos from the emergent codes. These memos of the categories were then compared to the categories of the dissertation chair.

Integrating categories and their properties is the next step in content analysis. This stage indicates a “shift from comparing incidents with other incidents classified into the same category to comparing incidents to the primitive versions of the rules describing the category” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 342). Properties of each category become distinct as some categories and codes are combined. At this point, the categories begin to formulate analytic reflections of the research questions. From the forty-six/seven

categories and memos, the researcher and the dissertation chair applied deductive analytic techniques to reduce the codes into themes that related specifically to the research questions.

As data analysis continued and the codes begin to take shape for the researcher, the process moved to the phase of delimiting the constructs. The researcher then organized these tentative codes and categories into more tangible themes and constructs. “It is common in qualitative analysis for mounds of field notes and months of work to reduce to a small number of core themes” (Patton, 2002, p. 7). The researcher also utilized another form of analysis called concept mapping as a means to visualize the data and constructs and the interplay between and among them. Appendix E shows the concept map and the pictorial representation of the themes and categories in relation to the two research questions. The researcher then developed the codes and concepts into the findings that are the basis of research study.

Credibility, Dependability, and Authenticity

A qualitative study based in the theoretical orientation of constructivism is subject to quality and credibility tests using the concepts of credibility, dependability, and authenticity. Credibility is a holistic view of validation and reliability. Patton (2002) dissects the concept of credibility into three different elements: rigorous methods, credibility of the researcher, and philosophical belief in the value of qualitative inquiry (part of authenticity). The researcher has been working on elements of this study for two years. In that time, the information has had ample time for incubation. As noted and described, rigorous methods were followed, and documented, for this study. Part of the two year incubation process for this research entailed participating in two qualitative

research courses, conducting a supervised pre-test of the study, and collecting and analyzing qualitative data. These activities speak to the credibility of the researcher. The researcher also holds a firm philosophical belief in the value and necessity of qualitative inquiry for this study.

Triangulation of information is also looked upon as a good source of gaining credibility in findings. Triangulation “increases credibility and quality by countering the concern that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders” (Patton, 2002, p. 563). Two types of triangulation were utilized for this study: triangulation of sources and methods triangulation.

Triangulation of sources is when the consistency of data is checked between and among the data sources. The sample represented different types of departments, different numbers of faculty, staff, and students led by the department head. All of these differences in the sources or population were used to triangulate the information. Both convergent and divergent information were gathered and analyzed. Triangulation of methods was also used in this study. Triangulation of methods involves insuring the “consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods” (Patton, 2002, p. 556). Both consistencies and inconsistencies across interview transcripts, observations, and documents were explored to enrich the analysis.

Dependability is the qualitative form of reliability (Patton, 2002). In qualitative methodology, reliability is gained by following a systematic process of data collection and analysis. The process of content analysis as delineated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was systematically followed for this study as well as incubation, immersion, and analytic memoing as described by Emerson et al (1995). Authenticity is defined in qualitative

methodology as the “reflexive consciousness about one’s own perspective, appreciation for the perspectives of others, and fairness in depicting the constructions in the values that undergird them” (Patton, 2002, p. 546). Authenticity of the researcher occurred at all points of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

We were seated at a twelve-foot in diameter oval oak table. The department head was sitting at the head of the table, and I was seated on his right, about three feet away. We were both in mauve colored cloth padded chairs with four rollers attached to a pine stained wooden bottom. During the interview, he sometimes would look out the window to his left or out the window at the south end of the room, often shifting in his chair by crossing then uncrossing his legs. At this point in the interview, he put both feet on the floor, placed his folded hands on the table and leaned toward me.

I've led my administrative life with a credo that I would NEVER take things personal and I would never make things personal. That's the only way I could do this job because I know I'm going to be called every name you could imagine. I told my faculty I'm going to make everyone of you unhappy at one time or another because I'm going to make decision in the best interest of the department. It's not that I don't love you or care for you or want to help you one-thousand percent, because I DO. But sometimes I'm paid to make decisions for the overall good of the department, so please try and understand. I'm not going to take things personal, so don't make things personal.

This passage from an interview with a department head with over twenty years of experience on the job is rich with personal leadership philosophy and practice. Even more, it is an example of the reflexivity, passion, and sometimes frustration about being a department head in the college of agriculture at a land-grant institution that all interviewees displayed. The following chapter details the findings of this study.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this generative study was to explore how department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions perceive and conceptualize leadership and leadership development and to contribute to a knowledge base consistent with basic research typology. Pfeffer (1977) stated that if a researcher wanted to understand the behavior of leaders, she must “begin by attempting to find out what they are thinking about the situation in which they would be a leader” (p. 106). Therefore, this study focused on the insight of department heads regarding their lived experiences of leadership and leadership development in academic departments in colleges of agriculture at land-grant universities.

Inductive and deductive analytic procedures led to eight identified themes and nine sub-categories for Research Question One and four themes and seven sub-categories for Research Question Two. The themes for Research Question One emerged inductively from the data. These themes, that looked at the conceptualization of leadership by department heads, include *the role of the tripartite mission, leadership tasks for department heads, identified leadership styles, leadership vs. management, managing human capital, how leadership in higher education is not like a business, and herding academic cats*. The findings for Research Question Two include those themes that

emerged both inductively and deductively. The inductive theme of *conceptualization of prior leadership* begins this section, while the deductive themes of *leadership training, leadership education, and leadership development* were developed by applying the conceptual framework to the data. Appendix E is a pictorial representation of the connectedness of the themes and sub-categories for this study.

Findings for Research Question One:

How do department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant universities conceptualize leadership in their role as department head?

We Not Only Have the College, But We Have Two Agencies

For this sample, the tripartite mission of a land-grant institution, teaching, research, and extension, adds a layer of complexity to the department head job in college of agriculture. Seven of ten department heads interviewed spoke specifically and spontaneously about the influence of the tripartite mission when leading departments. This is a significant finding because it shows that department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions perceive different lived experiences with leadership than, they believe, other department heads to have because of the added complexity of the tripartite mission.

Two department heads discussed the “work of the university.” For them, the tripartite mission is the foundation for which a department head must base their leadership decisions. It is not enough just to understand all three legs, but department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions must embrace the mission. A department head with 5-7 years of experience commented that no matter the management or leadership skill of the department head, if he does not understand “the real work of the

university which is teaching, research, and extension, then it is really HARD to inspire people.” The work of the tripartite mission is also seen in the mission and vision statements of the sample departments. Nine of the ten vision statements included becoming the national leader in teaching, research, and extension for their respective discipline. The one vision that did not specifically mention the tripartite mission in the vision used it in the mission statement. This mission said that the tripartite mission of the land-grant is also the mission of the department.

A department head with fifteen plus years of experience noted the basic function of his job was to “decide whether the classes get taught, whether research gets done, and whether extension programs are developed and delivered.” Five other department heads echoed this statement. These three activities play a large role in the perceived success of the department by the college. One department head with 3-5 years of experience stated during his yearly evaluation with the dean, departmental work in all three legs of the tripartite mission were evaluated.

One of the former department heads spoke openly about his view of colleges of agriculture and the role of the tripartite mission. He stated that there are “traditional land-grant institutions where the colleges of agriculture still perceive themselves to be somehow different than the rest of the university.” He went on to add that it is that self-perceived difference that adds job responsibilities to the department head. For another department head who has been in his role for 3-5 years, it is not just a perceived difference. He stated that “in the agriculture college, we have programs that have a much more complex job I think, than the English department or the Economics department because we not only have the college, but we have two agencies.” These two other formal

agencies of Extension and Experiment Station bring two more associate deans to whom the department head must be accountable. Department heads perceived these circumstances as increasing the pressure of their leadership role.

For this sample, being a department head of a bench science department in a college of agriculture at a land-grant institution is difficult because of off-site facilities that are included in the department's infrastructure. A former department head with 7-10 years of experience said that he was in charge of leading "the main group on campus and then the off-campus research and extension centers." It was because of the political and structural nature of the off-campus sites under the dean to whom he reported that he decided to leave the position. If he had just been in charge of the main campus, said he thought he still might be the department head. Another interview with a department head with 3-5 years of experience ended early because the department head had to go to a meeting about the use of the department's cattle pasture. The department head told the researcher that, the area had received more rain than usual that summer, so the pasture's grass had grown at a faster rate than normal and the cattle had not consumed all of the grass. The college that had land adjoining the pasture wanted to be given the cattle pasture because it was "obvious that the department wasn't using it because it was all grown-up." The department head joked that he had to go explain to a bunch of engineers that rain makes grass grow. Even though he was chuckling when he told the story, there was a sharp tone to his voice and a sense of frustration when he had to leave the interview.

Leadership Tasks of Department Heads

The department heads in this study saw leadership not only as leading a group of individuals towards a common goal, but also as specific tasks. When they spoke of their leadership style, initiatives, or behaviors, specific tasks were offered as supporting examples. From these, the inductive sub-categories of marching forward, shared vision, goals, storytelling, listening, and faculty success emerged as important aspects of leadership for department heads. Understanding what tasks leaders see as a function of their leadership helps the researcher gain insight into how they conceptualize leadership. It also aids those who develop leadership training programs understand leadership training needs through the vantage point of the leaders themselves.

Marching forward.

“Anybody can claim to be a leader, but it’s that marching forward that makes you one” stated a department head with over twenty years of experience. He also stated that “real leadership comes in moving the organization forward into the future and that is where a department head has to have some skill sets and understanding.” The constant need to move forward is important to the department heads interviewed. A department head with 1-2 years of experience adds that “an important role of the department head is to always be looking at the horizon to see what’s next.” Moving a collective body forward is not an easy task, stated one department head with 5-6 years of experience, but having a shared vision, mission, and goals will aid you in moving your department from point A to point B. A former department head with 3-4 years of experience leaned forward in his chair toward the researcher and said that “the minute you stop and rest on

your laurels, your department is in trouble.” The transactional leadership model of change with crisis is not a model to which the department heads in this sample adhered.

Shared vision and goals.

Eighty percent of the department heads interviewed said that developing and implementing a shared vision and/or shared goals was an essential leadership role of a department head. A department head with over twenty years of experience stated that “you have to be able to vision. You have to be bright enough to look at the bigger picture and try to put that together.” Some of the department heads interviewed placed visioning responsibilities solely on the department head. A department head with 3-4 years of experience said that “you have to have the backbone to say this is where we’re going and this is where we’re not.” Five of the ten department heads, with experience ranging from less than a year to ten years, said that you must facilitate a shared and collective vision with your faculty to be successful. This way of developing a vision is described by Senge (1990) as co-creating a vision. A department head with less than a year of experience said that he did not believe in “building those goals myself, but building those goals as a team within the department.” A department head with 1-2 years of experience had a similar idea but added why he thought it was important to have a shared vision. He said building a shared vision “helps hold us accountable to what we said we wanted to do as a group.” It is a means to obtain collective accountability. Obtaining a shared vision with the faculty and staff is also another way to keep the department moving forward. When one knows where one is going and why, it becomes easier for the leader to lead (Bennis & Goldsmith, 2003).

Storytelling.

For the department heads in this sample, strategic planning, visioning, and goal setting all work to tell the department's story and contribute to promoting a distinct departmental identity. Storytelling was identified by four of the department heads as an important leadership task. As a department head, "you've got to keep pulling people together and keep explaining what it is we're all about. Having them help create the story using strategic planning and visioning" stated a department head with 3-4 years of experience.

Storytelling is not only useful for leading the faculty and staff in the department, it is also a useful tool for communicating with the dean. A department head with 5-7 years of experience uses the story of his department when he meets with the dean. He stated that "putting together a fairly thoughtful and convincing piece [story] that can be trotted down to the dean and say; look at this, this is who we are, is very important." The story allows the dean to gain a different perspective on the department than she might have otherwise. It is also useful in alleviating some of the pressure that department heads feel as they serve both the faculty and the administration. When the same story is communicated to both factions, there is the sense of honesty and openness (Gmelch, & Miskin, 1993).

The promotion of departmental identity through a good story is a technique also used in fundraising efforts, a task which some department heads find themselves having to do more often than they have in the past. A department head with 3-4 years of experience conveyed that storytelling is the only way he is comfortable asking people for money. Another department head with over twenty years of experience echoed this idea.

Using the departmental story allows the department head to give potential donors a sense of what is happening in the department and why the department would be a good investment. A department head with 3-4 years of experience also stresses that storytelling and “explaining and articulating who we are and what we do is imperative for outside constituencies and ourselves.” The outside constituencies for this sample include former students and industry.

A department head with over twenty years of experience noted that the story must be accurate but inclusive of all components of the department. Making sure that the teaching, research, and extension stories are told but also including what the department does for students, the productivity of faculty and students, and the ties and potential impact on industry helps promote the real sense of the departmental story.

Facilitating Faculty Success.

Faculty emerge as a reoccurring theme in the data. Eighty percent of the department heads interviewed identified faculty success as an important leadership task. In this sample, the scope of faculty success was seen to be professional, not personal. All of the examples given for faculty success allude to faculty success meaning the attainment of tenure and promotion or the attainment of goals and performance standards which will lead to tenure and promotion.

A department head with 1-2 years of experience said that “as a department head, I think the number one job is to make your faculty successful. Just to do everything you can to make your faculty successful. You make your students and staff successful through successful faculty.” A department head with less than a year of experience said that the first step in facilitating faculty success was creating an environment “where the faculty

can sort out those academic goals.” Create a collaborative climate and then, the department head with over twenty years of experience avowed, “the best thing you can do is get the hell out of their way, literally. Just get out of their way and let them do their job.” Academic leadership for two of the department heads means working hard for the faculty to help them be as successful as they can be. These two department heads view all their decisions and actions as having direct effects on faculty. A department head with less than one year of experience was observed meeting with an associate dean to discuss facilities for a new faculty member. This department head persuaded the associate dean to allocate new lab space in the building as well as “up” the starting package of the new faculty member in order to give the new faculty the “right environment to be successful.”

Leadership Style

Identifying leadership styles came from both inductive and deductive techniques: (1) a direct question: how would you describe your leadership style, (2) through observation of the department head, and (3) by analyzing examples given when the department heads answered other questions. A department head with less than a year of experience stated that “there are different leadership styles and there are different times that are appropriate for different leadership styles. That is what makes this leadership thing so complicated.” Because leadership style is complicated, the broader theme of leadership style was sub-categorized into several inductive categories using emic language and concepts from the interviews. These included *identified styles*, *model the way*, and *pick the collective brains of faculty*. Comprehending how leaders conceptualize their leadership style allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how the department head conceptualized the phenomenon of leadership. An identified leadership

style is the framework for how the department head leads. This information could also be beneficial to those training faculty to be academic leaders. If there are certain leadership styles that are not identified as being important, it would not be beneficial to teach those approaches to leadership. This information is also imperative to know for those who participate in the selecting department heads. Asking one to identify her leadership style suggests not only what she believes, but also may tell how much leadership training, education, and development that person has experienced.

Identified styles.

Some department heads self-identified their leadership styles. While some were specific and used theoretical leadership style terms, others offered generalized and popularized terms to describe their leadership style. Using a theoretical but also popularized typology of leadership style, three of the ten department heads described themselves as a servant leader. Department heads with varying experiences, from three to over twenty years of experience, not only said servant leadership was their leadership style but also gave examples of how they conceptualized the term. A department head with 3-4 years of experience spoke about his motivation in becoming department head. Being a faculty member in the department for many years, he said that “he felt a need to repay the department.” It is that repayment or service mentality that helps guide many of his decisions. He stated that he chooses assistant department heads who share his service-to-the-department mentality. He also described himself more of a coach and less of a policeman in his leadership style.

A department head with over twenty years of experience describes himself as a servant leader first and then a situational leader as a secondary leadership style. He said

that “if you are going to help people, you’re going to have to say hey, everybody’s my boss and I have to help them because I want to help them.” As one department head walked the researcher around the department, some of his behavior was congruent with his definition of leadership. We stopped and spoke with many of the faculty and he made sure that the labs were working correctly and that everything was going well for the faculty member. Each faculty or staff member was asked different questions. In some interactions with faculty, he was more task oriented (How is that research on the [the specific study going? What can I do to help?). For others, he asked more relational questions. He inquired about one of the staff member’s personal opinion about a local restaurant. She seemed willing to give her personal opinion freely. These interactions with the faculty and staff did not seem to catch them off guard, so the researcher concluded that walking around and speaking with the faculty and staff regarding task and relational types of issues is a normal occurrence in this department.

Three of the ten department heads described their leadership style using other leadership theory terms. A department head with 1-2 years of experience was categorized by the researcher as a situational leader. He relayed that “[faculty] can’t figure out my style totally because I come from different points at different times.” He explained further that every faculty and staff member was different, so he must change his leadership style to best match the individual faculty or staff member and the situation at hand. A department head with 1-2 years of experience laughed as he said he’d “really like to be transformational” in his leadership. “It’s what I’m trying really, really hard to do.” But goes on to say that he also sees himself as a team leader; one that makes sure that he is inclusive in decision making and makes time for the personal and professional

development of his faculty. A department head with 5-6 years of experience describes himself as a charismatic and facilitative type of leader. The support staff who were working in his front office told me, as I waited, that he was the best department head for whom they had ever worked. The charisma was evident as he walked into the main office of the department. He was energetic, friendly, and the researcher could sense a positive change in the atmosphere when he entered the room.

The other four department heads did not name a specific style of leadership but explained how they see themselves leading an academic department. One department head described his leadership style as inclusive, honest, as open as possible, and willing to make a decision and move forward. A former department head with 7-10 years of experience was adamant that “leading by example” was the best and only leadership style that would work for department heads. He repeatedly stated that he never asked his faculty or staff to do anything that he was not willing to do himself, and modeling good practices was the best way to lead. A department head with 3-4 years of experience describes himself as a “fairly casual leader” who does not micromanage but prefer to “synthesize” the situation before he acts. A former department head with 3-4 years of experience never specifically stated what his leadership style was. He discussed facilitating faculty and making sure he had their “buy-in” before making any decision.

Model the Way.

Congruence in words and actions as well as authenticity in leadership style was important to several of the department heads interviewed. A former department head with 7-10 years of experience said that “in an academic setting more than a lot of other settings, there’s this sense of you’ve got to walk the walk, you can’t just talk the talk and

get people to do things.” Other department heads added that before you can judge someone on their teaching, research, and service, you must become outstanding in all three of those categories yourself.

A department head with 1-2 years of experience explained that he “tries to lead by example. If there’s something that I really think we need to be doing, I go out and start the movement.” The department head with over twenty years of experience also spoke about leading by example. He told a story about literally building the gardens at his institution. Because the department head wanted this to be a community experience, he asked the faculty to help build the school’s garden. He was the first one to start laying the pavement stones around the garden area. Even with an injury, he worked outside in the gardens with the students. He expressed that he wanted to set a good example for the rest of the faculty to come out of their offices and labs and work with the soil. He emphasized that his vision for good leadership is not to ask anyone to do anything that he himself would not do. For this sample, congruence in words and actions is imperative for quality academic leadership.

Pick the collective brains of faculty.

All ten of the interviewed department heads spoke specifically about their approach to decision making. The majority of the department heads in this sample expressed their interest in faculty input in important departmental decisions. Gaining faculty input into the decisions is clearly a leadership decision. It is gaining that faculty buy-in that impacts the effectiveness of the decision (Austin, 1999). A department head with 1-2 years of experience stated that “we make decisions together, particularly the big decisions.”

The department heads did differ in how much faculty input they wanted in decision making. A department head with 5-7 years of experience said that he is “not an autocrat type, so I believe in trying to pick the brains, the collective brains of the faculty when we look at issues.” Both a department head with 5-6 years of experience and a department head with 1-2 years of experience recognize that they do not possess all of the knowledge it sometimes takes to make a decision, and going to those people around them will aid in building a stronger foundation to make a decision. The department head with 5-6 years of experience stated that he “is pretty good at recognizing that other people in the room have all these great ideas and pulling all those people in together and then asking them what they think we should do.”

A former department head with 7-10 years of experience did not rely on collective brain picking to make decisions. “I tried to sample a number of people whose opinions I respected rather than trying to get a majority rule thing.” No matter how many faculty members a department head surveyed, there was consensus that some collectivity was needed in order to move the department forward. A department head with 5-7 years of experience stated that “we’ve got to get everybody’s oars in the water and moving the same direction” and asking for their input is one way to do so. The department heads in this sample emphasize the importance of gaining faculty buy-in.

Leadership vs. Management

In an academic department, “you have to be able to manage and lead. You can’t just do one or the other” stated a department head with 5-6 years of experience. The rest of the department heads had similar sentiments. It is the marriage of leadership and management that makes the job difficult for many department heads. Many see the

dailyness of the job as the management function of the job and moving the department forward as the leadership function. A department head with 5-6 years of experience said that “when it’s coupled correctly, it will fuel the whole machine, but if you don’t couple it correctly, then it can really drag you down.” This is a different perspective than one might believe if one reads the scholarly contributions of Warren Bennis on the subject of leadership and management. Bennis repeatedly states that there is a clear-cut difference between leaders and managers. He states having both is imperative, but the organization should not rely on a single person to inhabit both qualities (Bennis, 1989).

Some department heads in the sample consider themselves to be academic middle managers. As a former department head with 3-4 years of experience describes them, department heads “are where the water meets the wheel.” A department head with 1-2 years of experience and a department head with 3-4 years of experience described academic middle management as a department head sandwich. A department head with 3-4 years of experience explains that he feels like a department head sandwich when he “catches it from the faculty when they don’t like what’s going on and catches it from the dean’s office when they don’t like what’s going on.” Four department heads describe similar issues of having to serve both the faculty and dean. A former department head with 3-4 years of experience expressed his frustration with being a department head sandwich by giving this example: “you can’t go down to the dean’s office when the faculty are giving you grief and tell the dean this guy is just out of control because the next week, you may have to argue for some support for that person from the dean. You also can’t complain to your faculty about what a jerk the dean is because it will always get back to him.” A department head with less than a year of experience stated that a big

part of his job “is to communicate with the department and to always understand and know what they want and communicate that as accurately and professionally as possible with the dean’s office.” It is the feeling of being the sandwich meat in a department head sandwich that this sample of department heads express as frustrating about their jobs.

Managing Human Capital

A department head with 5-6 years of experience stated that leadership is “about the people. That’s your greatest resource, human capital, and if you can really understand that, then everything else relates back to it.” All ten department heads stressed the importance and sometimes frustration that stems from faculty and staff relations. Hiring, mentoring, and supporting faculty were mentioned repeatedly as an essential leadership functions. Frustration with people management was also a topic of discussion. A department head with over twenty years of experience avows that “what runs most department heads off is personnel management.”

Hiring and mentoring faculty.

Eighty percent of the department heads interviewed specifically mentioned the importance of hiring faculty as one of the leadership tasks of a department head. Department heads with one to over twenty years of experience all said that spending the resources, both monetary and time, is worth getting the best faculty members. A former department head with 7-10 years of experience concluded that “if you for some reason can’t recruit well-qualified, hard working faculty, then your department is absolutely doomed.” Another department head agreed that the job involves more than just recruiting and hiring, you must “help them because they’re going to achieve more than anybody can.”

A department head with 1-2 years of experience emphasizes the importance of mentoring faculty. He reported that he spends at least one hour per week with each individual faculty member in a mentoring-type of relationship. A department head with 5-7 years of experience tries to “foster an environment of collaboration and facilitative environment where people can reach their full potential.” A department head with 3-4 years of experience stated that “I think another leadership part of the job is certainly evaluation and motivation of people; engaging them on a regular basis.” But, as a department head with 5-6 years of experience said, “keeping people moving forward and motivating them” can be a difficult job.

Sometimes they act worse than my kids.

“As a department head, more than fifty percent of what you do is dealing with people” stated a department head with 1-2 years of experience. The department head with over twenty years of experience quipped that “you need to have a whole secondary major in counseling” when you become a department head. He goes on to say that “you can only take so much of this [shifts into a high-pitched whiny voice] they put a stick in my spoke, they put a stick in my eye.” A department head with 3-4 years of experience said that “sometimes, I think [faculty and staff] act worse than my kids.” Dealing with the autonomous and sometimes high-strung faculty is difficult. A department head with over twenty years of experience lamented that “as an administrator that cares about every one of these individuals, how do you get them untangled?” It is that statement that captures the significance of this theme. When those chosen to lead are chosen based on their research ability, “untangling” the human emotions inherent to leading a department of

individuals with varied personalities, interests, and priorities can be a challenging enterprise.

It's Not Like a Business

The majority of the leadership literature and leadership theories are based on a business model (Gill, 2006). This says that leaders are charged with moving an organization forward to, usually, make money (Daft, 2002). The business model of leadership also takes into account that the leader has many power-bases at his disposal. They have the power to hire and fire those (reward and coercive power base) at will (Raven & French, 1958).

Four of the ten department heads interviewed spoke specifically about the difference between academia and the business world. This inductive theme is significant because document analysis of leadership development programs geared toward academic leaders showed a distinct focus on a business model paradigm when implementing their curriculum. A former department head with 7-10 years of experience stated that “academic leadership is different than the leadership in a business.” He went on to explain that statement further by saying “if you were a corporation the corporation would set this as a corporate goal and then throw some money behind it and then everybody would work toward that goal.” But it does not work that way in academia. A department head with 1-2 years of experience said that part of a leadership training program in which he was involved gave books to the participants and “one of the books they gave us was from a business model [of leadership] and I found it absolutely useless.” Many of the department heads lowered the tone of their voices and frowned when they spoke about lack of funding to use as a source of power or reward. “You set policies but in terms of a

reward system; most academic institutions are like ours. With budget cuts and low pay increases, there isn't a lot to be able to reward faculty with" stated a department head with 1-2 years of experience. A department head with 5-6 years of experience described higher education as a hyperdemocracy that is not authoritarian. For him, that was the antithesis of business mode of operandi. Department heads in this sample often found it difficult to connect to leadership theories and practices of which they were informed, via books or formalized courses, because they see a disconnect from the business-based leadership theories and the actuality of their leadership functions in higher education.

One department head offered a different view. He concluded that "there's some parallel between universities and companies but not totally. We're more like a church, and I think you have to think about that if you want to be successful." The profit verses nonprofit differences are still there, but he believes that the system of higher education is becoming more and more like a business. This idea is paralleled by some researchers in higher education that site examples like the University of Phoenix as the new models of successful higher education (Bush, 2003).

Herding Academic Cats

For the department heads interviewed academic leadership at the department head level is not like a business. Because of this, leading a group of autonomous faculty sometimes seemed impossible for some of the interviewees. All ten department heads lamented about the difficulties of leading "their" faculty and staff. As some described academic leadership as herding cats, there was more to this theme than a simple colloquial statement.

Fifty percent of the participants in the study used the term “herding cats.” A former department head with 7-10 years of experience stated

when you’re trying to lead an academic department, it’s like herding cats. You’re dealing with a group of independent faculty who are getting their own grant money, who are organizing their own program and you’re encouraging them to be creative and innovative. They have a great deal of academic freedom in terms of what they want to pursue but you still have to keep everyone on the same page.

A former department head with 3-4 years of experience said that academic leadership is “like herding cats you know. You don’t really have control. You can’t fire them. So you just try and move things around a little bit, move them around.”

But there is more to herding cats than the phrase implies. All ten department heads spoke about the role that faculty play in academic leadership. A department head with 3-4 years of experience described faculty “as an unusual bunch. They’re already pretty independent to begin with. They like to deal with students, but they don’t like any authority figures.” Because of the autonomy of faculty coupled with the lack of a coercive or reward power base afforded to the department head, a different strategy must be utilized to lead (herd) faculty. Faculty respect and buy-in were mentioned as mechanisms to achieving departmental unity. “Once you get the respect of your faculty, they’re more likely to accept a decision they didn’t agree with or do something they don’t really want to do” stated a department head with 5-7 years of experience. A former department head with 3-4 years of experience noted that “if you don’t get faculty buy-in, it’s not going to work.” Respect and buy-in are important tools for department heads to utilize because, as one stated, “you can’t get them on board by bullying them around.” A

department head with 5-7 years of experience added that “you’re not going to crack the whip. If you go in saying I’m the boss damn it and I don’t care what you think, you may win a battle but you’re going to lose a war.”

Moving the department toward a common goal is difficult for many department heads. A former department head with 7-10 years of experience said that the “challenge is trying to get thirty of those people [faculty] to think outside of themselves and make an outstanding department.” The department head with over twenty years of experience lamented that with faculty

it’s me, me, me, to a high degree. But the department head then has to take all of these individuals who are generally highly trained, highly skilled, highly intelligent individuals and say ok. We live within this world called departments and this is where we need to go.

Findings for Research Question Two:

What experiences have department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions had with leadership development?

“Tell me about your journey to becoming department head” the researcher asked all of the department heads. “What made you cross the great divide?” A department head with 5-6 years of experience uncrossed his legs, leaned forward in his seat, lowered his voice and stated “yeah, go to the dark side.” While one may be conjuring images of Luke Skywalker (faculty) fighting to the death with Darth Vader (department head) on the Death Star (academic departments), this is a perception of the leadership war that is raging within academic departments held by many in higher education. Three department heads in this study used the “dark side” phrase, while a former department head with 7-10

years of experience quipped that as a faculty member, he thought that “you have to have part of your brain removed if you’re going to go into administration.” Both analogies seem to tell of the perceived struggle not only to move into administration from a faculty position, but allude to the struggle of good verses evil once you get there. As Kuhl (2006) noted, department heads are seldom developed as leaders before they assume their academic leadership position.

For this research question, four categorical themes were found. The first theme emerged from inductive analysis. The experiences with prior leadership development theme emerged from the data analysis and coding exercises. The department heads were candid about their past leadership development, which gave the researcher a more developed picture of their lived experiences with leadership development. The other three themes of leadership training, education, and development were captured via a deductive lens. Utilizing Brungardt’s (1996) definition of these concepts, codes were deductively analyzed into the three themes. Sub-themes indicated the complexity of the themes and offer a more focused view of the department heads.

Experiences with Prior Leadership Development

Each department head was asked to talk about their leadership preparation before they became department head. A department head with 1-2 years of experience chuckled as he stated “I think I’m learning as I’m going along.” This statement, although said with a chuckle, is indicative the experiences of many of the department heads interviewed. The key word in the prior quote is “think”. All department heads interviewed expressed at one time or another during our conversation a frustration and an uncertainty with and

in their job. Several cited the lack of leadership preparation as a factor influencing this frustration and uncertainty.

Whether they had been on the job six months or twenty-four years, “baptism by fire” was normal and almost seemed expected by some department heads. All ten of the department heads expressed the need for leadership development for department heads: formal and informal. A department head with 3-4 years of experience, who leads at a large land-grant institution with over fifteen departments in the college of agriculture, stated that “in terms of administrative training in departments in our college, I don’t think any of them had any.” While many universities have recognized the need for leadership development in their department heads, this development usually does not begin until after the department head has assumed his new academic leadership role.

School of hard knocks.

Six of the ten department heads surveyed stated that they had no leadership training or development before they became department head. A department head with less than a year of experience laughed when he stated that he “did not go to department head school”. But the lack of training and development seemed to be an issue for a department head with 3-4 years of experience. He mentioned twice during the interview that he felt as if his training came from the “school of hard knocks.”

Learning as you go is a way of life for many department heads in this sample. A former department head with 3-4 years of experience recalled walking in on his first day as department head only to find a stack of papers that needed his signature. As he relayed this story, he began to shake his head from left to right and his eyebrows furrowed

revealing a look of frustration. He went on to say that he was told just to “sign them” and “figure out what it meant later.”

For two of the department heads, the only help and development came from their administrative assistants. A former department head with 7-10 years of experience stated that “the way you got most of [your training] was on the job from your chief administrative assistant. So they really bring people in and then plunk them down in place and assume that they’re going to know how to do the right thing without a lot of telling them what the right thing is.”

The other six department heads spoke about finding informal guides. A department head with over twenty years of experience stated that “you learned to talk to the department heads and talk to the dean in those early days. There was no formal mentoring, no formal education process.” Informal guides or mentors had to be sought out by the department head. The college did not assign them. This is significant because the higher education academic leadership literature stresses the need for mentoring in higher education administration (Chibucos & Green, 1989).

It’s your entrance exam.

Seventy percent of the department heads interviewed conveyed that they believed that being a faculty member was their leadership preparation before becoming department head. A department head with 1-2 years of experience stated that he does “feel like I’ve been kind of preparing for it all my life through my experiences as assistant, associate, and full professor.” A department head with less than a year of experience shared a similar thought. He said that he “had that preparation experiencing all the trials and tribulations and challenges that faculty members have.” This finding is

significant because it shows that the department heads with less experience believe that their role as faculty member is the only leadership training and development necessary to becoming a successful academic leader.

Department heads who have been leading for at least five years have a different perspective on the role that being a faculty member plays in developing as a leader. A department head with 5-6 years of experience conveyed that he believed that being a faculty member was an important part of preparation for the position of department head, but that being a faculty member was not enough to make you a successful department head. Being a faculty member is “kind of like your entrance exam. It doesn’t mean you’ll be good at [being a department head]. It doesn’t mean that you’ll get the job. It does mean that they’ll now look at you.” He also warns that “success in teaching, research, or extension does not mean that you’re going to be a successful administrator.” This statement reflects on the ascertainment by Kuhl (2006) that the disconnect between how academic leaders are chosen and their actual leadership preparation is an issue in higher education.

Leadership Training

The department heads in this study were asked to discuss any formalized leadership development in which they had taken part. From this question, two sub-categories emerged: national leadership programs and on-campus training opportunities. Both types of leadership “development” programs were described by the participants but because of content and the information participants got out of the program, fit most appropriately in the leadership training section as defined by Brungardt (1996), not leadership development.

National programs.

Only two different formalized leadership programs were mentioned by the participants of the study. Four of the ten participants were fellows in the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) sponsored Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy (ESCOP)/ Academic Programs Committee on Organization and Policy (ACOP) leadership development program (now named LEAD 21). A department head with less than a year of experience explained the program as a “leadership training program which was for faculty members that someday wanted to be in administration.” A department head with 1-2 years of experience explained that the ESCOP/ACOP program is a two year commitment from the faculty member. A department head with 5-7 years of experience described the program in three phases. The first phase of “discussions, workshops, team building and things of that nature” occurred in Indiana. The second phase, or what the department head with 5-7 years of experience “would kind of call an internship with an administrator down in the college,” gave the fellow the opportunity to work on real issues within the college. The third phase consisted of going to Washington DC to meet with legislators and learn about the legal side of administration. Of the four who participated in the program, three conceptualized the program as helpful in development, while one found it to be “of not much use once I got into my department head position.” A department head with 5-6 years of experience stated he thought the program was good for some specific job training issues, but felt like it was not a true leadership development program; it was more managerial in nature.

A department head with 5-7 years of experience gave the researcher his notebook from the ESCOP/ACOP leadership program. The first phase of the program included lectures and activities in leadership. For six days, the participants learned about principles of leadership such as, motivation, crisis management, ethics, and group dynamics. The participants also were part of a three-hundred and sixty degree feedback leadership assessment and received a health screening. The second phase of the program was an internship at the home institution of the participant. The internship was to give the participant experience working in the dean's or experiment station office. For some reason, the department head with 5-7 years of experience's Phase II section of his notebook was empty. The researcher asked the department head who shared his notebook why the section was empty. He said he could not remember if there had ever been any information given about the specification of the internship. Phase III sent the participants to Washington, D.C. for a three day workshop as a "capstone experience." It provided opportunities for interaction with leaders in government and agricultural research administration.

The other national leadership development program mentioned by a participant of this study was the Harvard Academic Managers Development Program. The department head with over twenty years of experience was chosen to attend this program. "I went through the Harvard management development program in [19]95 and that was for university administrators, but I was already a department head for twelve years before I attended that program." Even though he could not remember any specific leadership theories covered in the program, he relayed that he remembers the experience as being a very beneficial one. These two programs, however, do not include all of the components

required for academic leadership development, as defined by McDaniel (2002).

McDaniel (2002) states that a quality academic leadership development program which will develop academics into better leaders must “blend job experience, educational initiatives, guided practical experience, and targeted performance feedback into a systemic process for ongoing leadership development” (p. 81). These two programs show elements of McDaniel’s paradigm, but fall short in ongoing leadership development.

Once the program is over, it is over.

On-campus training.

Waiting to train department heads until after they have accepted their academic leadership role is a trend in this sample. The department head with over twenty years of experience stated that “now they’re taking [training] a little more seriously. I know they are here at [his university]. They are trying to meet with the department heads and run them through the ropes.” While waiting until a leader has been given the opportunity to lead is not an ideal form of leadership development (Brungardt, 1996), this suggests some progress in the understanding by colleges and universities that some form of leadership training should be provided to academic leaders.

All ten department heads in this study mentioned activities at their home institution that were geared towards the training of department heads. A department head with 5-7 years of experience stated that “each semester all administrators at the university are required to go to I think they call them executive briefings.” Documents from this university give the titles of these executive briefings. The briefings include: *change management, human resources and the law, hiring without a hitch, communication skills, policies, litigation landmines, respect for diversity, and safety is everybody’s business.*

Using the deductive lens of Bennis (1989), many of these briefings are more managerial than leadership in content and practicality.

Training for department heads at selected institutions tends to be task specific. A department head with less than a year of experience described the content of some of the programs to include “various offices on the campus you might deal with, personnel offices, legal offices, and they were talking about some of the things administrators have to deal with.” A former department head with 7-10 years of experience described the training on his campus as “occasional, task specific training events like how to manage the promotion and tenure process or going to an orientation to find out how the experiment station financial thing works.” Time management and managing stress were also two specific topics that three department heads mentioned during their interviews. While these trainings may be helping to build some specific leadership skills needed by department heads, they are not developing the leader in a holistic manner (Conger, 1992).

There was a trend in the data that suggested that deans expect their department heads to attend these university trainings. A department head with 5-7 years of experience stated “they’re pretty insistent on us going. I mean they kind of do a head count.” A department head with less than a year of experience said that “I know my dean’s office encouraged all unit administrators to go, so I went to that training.” At the institution of a department head with 5-6 years of experience, the dean conducts “two retreats each year for department heads. Sometimes they’re topics where they need input, and sometimes, it’s training.” Yet, scholarship indicates that mandated leadership training seldom works (Cummins, 1995). The participants do not retain much of the information given to them. Because of this, when a dean pressures a department head into attending a

skill building workshop, or leadership training, the training is often not as useful as when the leader seeks out the training opportunity (McDaniel, 2002). This is because training opportunities sought out by the leader often have more direct application for the leader's organization.

Two department heads, a department head with 5-6 years of experience and a department head with 1-2 years of experience, referred to formalized programs their universities had for incoming department heads. A department head with 5-6 years of experience described the program at his institution by stating that "when you come in as head, there is a year-long training program where they walk you through the cycle so you know what it's going to be like in February when you're doing performance letters and what hell that can be." A department head with 1-2 years of experience sees the program at his institution as very good. The provost of this institution leads a program for administrators at least three times a year. The "leadership training goes on for four full days and then a few activities outside of those four days." These two examples were the only examples of formalized programs and not just training seminars. As a department head with 5-6 years of experience stated, "we are different as an institution because we do have all this kind of stuff." Some institutions are beginning to develop actual leadership development programs for their department heads, but those programs still have a lot to add in order to be classified as an academic leadership development program as defined by Brungardt (1996), Day (2000), and McDaniel (2002).

Leadership Education

Brungardt (1996) defines leadership education as "those learning activities and educational environments that are intended to enhance and foster leadership abilities" (p.

83). As the department heads told of their experiences with leadership development, deductive coding was used for the theme of leadership education and inductive coding split the leadership education theme into three sub-categories: *observing and osmosis*, *leaders are readers*, and *learn by doing*. Although the leadership education for these department heads did not come from a leadership theory course, they all have learned principles of leadership from different areas in their professional career.

Observing and osmosis.

“We all pick up things by observing and osmosis you know. When we’re in the academic setting in a department, we have to, well you know I’ve had several department heads and I’ve watched others” stated a department head with 5-7 years of experience. Learning by watching other department heads is a mechanism of leadership education that was identified by department heads in this study. According to Brungardt (1996), observing good leadership practices and bad leadership practices is not enough to be classified as leadership education. The osmosis component of the above statement entails the reflection that must happen in order for a department head to understand and appreciate the good leader from the bad leader. A department head with 1-2 years of experience echoed that thought when he stated that “I’ve been under enough leadership to know what’s good leadership and what’s bad leadership [laughs] and I’ve had both.” A department head with 1-2 years of experience summed up the category when he stated “I’ve watched people and learned from good examples and bad examples.” It is the reflection and application of the observation and osmosis that makes this activity as a faculty member leadership education.

Leaders are readers.

Thirty percent of the department heads interviewed mentioned books as an important source of information while they were department heads. Reading, reflecting, and then applying the leadership concepts that were gained from reading the leadership books are ways of developing as a leader (Conger, 1992). A department head with 5-6 years of experience said that his dean gave books to him, as well as to the other department heads in the college. He went on to say that “I don’t always like them but they’re usually leadership books, and that’s a good thing.” A department head with 1-2 years of experience keeps his leadership books at the office and by his bed. That way he “can periodically leaf through or take time to read some sections.” He specifically mentioned books by John Maxwell. The department head with 1-2 years of experience agrees with Maxwell’s developmental principles and has worked through some of his leadership books. A department head with less than a year of experience spoke about leadership books written by someone in his discipline who was a department head. “I’ve actually read a couple of books written by a well known [discipline] on what it means to be a department head, and it is much different than a dean or different from a president.” When asked what he would advise aspiring department heads to do in preparation for the position, a department head with 3-4 years of experience stated that “reading leadership and academic department leadership books and interviewing a couple of other department heads around the country” would be a good educational exercise.

Learn by Doing.

Out of the sub-categories of leadership education, learning by doing was the category all ten department heads thought as the best way to educate oneself. This is

consistent with the findings of McDaniel (2002). All ten of the participants in this study said that they, like many professionals, felt like they learned how to be a good academic leader by doing the job. Three of the department heads were assistant or associate department heads before they accepted their role as department head. A department head with 3-4 years of experience stated that he “learned [academic] leadership by doing it for twenty years as associate head.” According to Bass (1990), it is the blending of job experience with leadership education that yields the most successful leaders. When asked about leadership development for aspiring department heads, a department head with 1-2 years of experience stated that he would tell those aspiring to be a department head to intern with the dean’s office or be his assistant if they wanted to learn what it was like to be an academic leader. Because the aspiring department head would have an appreciation for the faculty side of the department head sandwich, developing the view of the dean would be the other side to truly understanding the department head as a middle manager in higher education.

A former department head with 7-10 years of experience advocates that leadership experience should start before you take the position of department head. “You need some kind of leadership training; I mean you really need some kind of leadership experience.” Many of the department heads cited specific examples of experiences that they had which aided them in their preparation for the job. The department head with over twenty years of experience was the teaching program coordinator and oversaw the teaching faculty in the department before he was a department head. Because of this, he understood how to put together teaching loads and the impact percentage appointments have on teaching. A department head with 3-4 years of experience was the chair of an

intercollegiate faculty and was section leader for his discipline before he was department head. A department head with 3-4 years of experience cited working “on a lot of college and agency level committees including chairing search committees” as having added to his preparation and experience prior to becoming a department head.

Specific and formalized job titles were not the only learning by doing examples given by this sample. A department head with less than a year of experience included being the administrator on several grants as his administrative preparation. A department head with 1-2 years of experience had a mentor who made sure he had administrative experiences while performing his duties as a faculty member. “He had always included me on things. I never really felt like he was doing it to prepare me to be a department head or administrator but looking back on all those experiences, that was really important and that was really informal stuff.” Experience, be it formal or informal, when reflected on and learned from, becomes a dynamic example of leadership education (Conger, 1992).

Leadership Development

Leadership development is the combination of experience, education, and training in the growth of a leader (Brungardt, 1996). Two of the ten department heads interviewed spoke about experiences that can be categorized as leadership development. A former department head with 7-10 years of experience said “I have always been involved in leadership activities since FFA. I was a FFA state officer and went through all their leadership training.” He talked about how his leadership ideals were shaped by his training and education in FFA. He went on to talk about the other offices in organizations he had and how those experiences led him to become the leader he was when he was

department head. He also reflected that even some of his decisions could be linked to his prior leadership experiences. A former department head with 3-4 years of experience spoke about leadership development that occurred once he had taken the position as department head. “There’s a national department heads’ organization in [discipline] that is run by our professional society.” This organization provided training, education, and support for department heads. It also provided support for the significant others of the department head. The organization was mindful of both the professional and personal development of the department head. It is the holistic perspective of leadership development that is a crucial element in a leader’s success (Bass, 1990).

Summary

“The significance of effective leadership and management for the successful operation of schools and colleges has been increasingly acknowledged during the 1990s and into the twenty-first century” (Bush, 2003, p. ix). The understanding of how department heads conceptualize leadership is imperative when trying to capture the essence of leadership in an academic setting. The department heads in this study see leadership in certain tasks, base their leadership on certain styles and theories, struggle with managing human capital, feel as if they are both a leader and a manager, understand that academia is not like a business so managing and leading faculty is like herding academic cats.

Experience in leadership development in higher education is varied and multifaceted. Elements of leadership training, education, and development are evident in this sample. While some department heads had no formal leadership training, others received training after they assumed their academic leadership position. The fact that

leadership training is available at all in higher education is a step in the right direction for leadership development. Examining the responses from the sample deductively, however, indicates that these leaders would benefit from more developmental opportunities in their training. Educational initiatives with theoretical backing would strengthen the development of department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions.

Leading an academic department is complex. A department head with 1-2 years of experience summarized the findings when he concluded that “academic leadership is management, it’s a sandwich, and it’s herding cats because it’s not like a business where you can lay out exactly what somebody should be doing. You’ve got programs, you’ve got general ideas of what you want people to be doing their research but in academic institutions, egos are large and they will do what they want to do.” The phenomenon of academic leadership for department heads is complicated because they are charged with managing human as well as monetary capital, leading in a middle-management position, while at the same time, working on personal leadership development. This study will contribute to efforts to explore the phenomenon on a deeper level.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The complexity of leading, specifically an academic department, is daunting. Universities now “require leaders who thrive on the challenge of change; who foster environments of innovation; who encourage trust and learning; and who lead themselves, their constituents, and their units, departments, and universities successfully into the future” (Brown, 2001, p. 312). Not an easy task for even the most experienced and developed leader. The issue is that most department heads are not chosen based on their leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities. Bass (1990) notes that “technical and professional competence often tend to be valued over competence as a supervisor and a leader,” (p. 813) leading to ineffective leadership and inability to change and develop the organization. Strong department heads who understand the complexities of the job as well as the means of how to perform to high standards are needed to develop departments into strong entities.

While there have been many studies on leadership in higher education, few have focused exclusively on the department head, and fewer still have focused on department heads’ conceptualizations of leadership and leadership development. This is significant because department head leadership is the building block of university administrative success. The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions and conceptualization of department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant universities, regarding

leadership and leadership development. Pfeffer (1977) stated that if a researcher wanted to understand the behavior of leaders, she must “begin by attempting to find out what they are thinking about the situation in which they would be a leader” (p. 106). This study explores just that.

Lack of training and development for leaders leads to the inability of the leader to lead (Bass, 1990). This study is significant because ineffective leadership, at a departmental level, leads to a breakdown of organizational success. This is important because department heads are the first line of academic leadership who have daily access and interactions with faculty, staff, and students. The findings of this research can be utilized by those who seek to understand the phenomenon of leadership at the departmental level, those who select department heads, those who develop or have developed academic leadership development programs, those considering a department head position, and those who interact with department heads on a daily basis. Findings can also be utilized by faculty to gain a deeper understanding of the position and function of department heads.

Research Questions

1. How do department heads conceptualize leadership in their role as department head?
2. What investments have department heads had in academic leadership development?

Methodology

Research scholars and practitioners have stated that the methodology chosen should fit the research questions and the purpose of the study presented (Babbie, 2004; Creswell, 2005; Patton, 2002). Because of the purpose and research questions of this study, a basic research type of qualitative methodology was the methodological type which was most fitting for this research study. Qualitative studies are utilized not for generalization but for “deepening understanding” (Patton, 2002, p. 10). Also, qualitative methodology is most useful in the exploratory phases of a construct (Conger, 1998). Because empirical research has yet to capture the information sought by this generative study, qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to inductively conduct research in a naturalistic manner so that themes would be emergent.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of current and former department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions in the United States.

It was determined that a snowball sampling technique would allow the researcher access to department heads. The sample for this study consisted of ten current or former department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions in the United States. Two of the ten department heads were women, but to insure anonymity, all were referred to as “he” in this document. Six of the department heads led bench science departments, while four led social science departments. Two of the ten department heads in the sample were former department heads. One had retired and the other went back to being a professor after he chose to step down from his position. Three of the department heads supervised over fifty faculty, four department heads supervised twenty to thirty faculty,

two department heads supervised ten to fifteen faculty, and one department head supervises less than ten faculty. Student numbers in the departments ranged from fifty to over nine hundred.

Conclusions and Discussions for Research Question One

We Not Only Have the College, But We Have Two Agencies

It can be concluded, for this sample, the tripartite mission of a land-grant institution of teaching, research, and extension adds a layer of perceived complexity to the department head job. Seven of the ten department heads interviewed spoke specifically and spontaneously about the influence of the tripartite mission when leading departments. One department head stated that his job entailed “deciding whether the classes get taught, whether research gets done, and whether extension programs are developed and delivered.”

It can also be concluded that the implications of having to report to not only the dean but also the directors of the two other agencies was an issue for some of the department heads in this sample. One department head commented on the feeling of “disjointment” that comes with having to answer to a dean and two directors. Another department head notes that one must understand the “pressures and constraints and all the dynamic forces that are going on within the college.”

Many of the bench scientists also mentioned having to lead their home department as well as off-campus facilities that were either extension stations or experiment stations. For some in this sample, this was a complicating factor in their leadership. One department head made the decision to move back into the ranks of faculty because of the issues he had with off-site facilities. He found himself “having to handle all of the

professional development of the faculty members at the research and extension stations” without being anywhere close to the stations.

The work of the tripartite mission in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions is an important element of this study. This interaction between and among the three agencies adds complexity to an already complex job. The sample perceived that they are the only department heads who must deal with this added job stress. None of the department heads mentioned engineering colleges which often have similar experiences with the tripartite mission at a land-grant institution. A department head with 3-5 years of experience stated that “in the agriculture college, we have program that have a much more complex job I think, than the English department or the Economics department because we not only have the college, but we have two agencies.” This finding supports the work of Jones (2006). Via his research on deans and directors in colleges of agriculture, he concluded that the tripartite mission adds a layer of complexity onto the administrative leader.

Leadership Tasks of Department Heads

It can be concluded the department heads in this study conceptualized leadership not only as leading a group of individuals towards a common goal, but also as specific tasks. When they spoke of their leadership style, initiatives, or behaviors, specific tasks were offered as supporting examples. From these examples, the inductive sub-categories of *marching forward*, *shared vision*, *goals*, *storytelling*, *listening*, and *faculty success* emerged as important aspects of leadership for department heads. Understanding what tasks leaders see as a function of their leadership helps the researcher gain insight into how they conceptualize leadership. It also aids those who develop leadership training

programs understand leadership training needs through the vantage point of the leaders themselves.

Marching forward.

Six out of ten of the department heads in this sample identified moving the department forward as a leadership skill that is imperative for a department head to possess. A department head with over twenty years of experience stated “real leadership comes in moving the organization forward into the future and that is where a department head has to have some skill sets and understanding.”

It can be concluded the constant need to move forward is important to the department heads interviewed. This finding is consistent with Huy (2001). In his study of middle managers, Huy (2001) concluded that one of the essential roles of a middle manager is to “keep the company moving forward” (p. 78). Leadership theory literature addresses the leader’s role in change by the continuum of transactional to transformational leadership (Howell & Avolio, 1993).

It can also be concluded the department heads in this sample have an internal locus of control when it comes to the change movement because they see change and moving the department forward as one of their responsibilities. They do not wait for someone else to initiate the change process. One department head stated that “looking to the future is one of the most important leadership functions of this job.” Howell & Avolio (1993) avow it is the internal locus of control that aids the leader in becoming a more transformational leader. The transactional leadership model of change with crisis is not a model with which the department heads in this sample agree. The implications for this finding are that those who develop or implement leadership development programs for

department heads should focus on the characteristics of a transformational leader in order for the department head to ignite change. As Connor (2004) found, transformational leadership has a positive impact on administration in colleges of agriculture.

Shared vision and goals.

It can be concluded that developing shared vision/goals is an important leadership function for the department heads in this sample. Eighty percent of the department heads interviewed said that developing and implementing a shared vision and/or shared goals was an essential leadership role of a department head. Five of the ten department heads qualified the shared vision conceptualization by adding that leaders must facilitate a shared and collective vision with faculty to be successful. A department head with less than a year of experience said that he did not believe in “building those goals myself, but building those goals as a team within the department.” This way of developing a vision is described by Senge (1990) as co-creating a vision. Senge (1990) goes on to say that co-creating is the best way to implement a shared vision.

It can be concluded that developing and implementing a shared vision and goals are important leadership tasks for a department head. Bowman (2002) lists engagement in the department and the development of the mission and vision of the department as key elements of departmental leadership. Spotauski and Carter (1993) studied department heads in agricultural education using the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and found that inspiring a shared vision was the lowest leadership practice identified by department heads. This could mean that department heads recognize the importance of shared visioning, but do not understand how to accomplish the shared vision. The implications

for this finding include the need for education for department heads on how to develop a shared vision.

It can also be concluded that there is interconnectivity between moving forward and shared vision and goals for this sample. By building and implementing a shared vision or shared goals, the department marches forward towards that new idealized picture of the future. One department head stated that “academic leadership means moving the department and higher education as a whole forward in how it engages citizens and students.” By understanding the importance of building a shared vision, and then implementing the shared vision, leaders are able to take their organization to the next level (Senge, 1990).

Storytelling.

For the department heads in this sample, strategic planning, visioning, and goal setting all work together to tell the department’s story. Storytelling was identified by four of the ten department heads as an important leadership task and technique for advancing the departmental identity. It can be concluded, for this sample, that storytelling is a way to promote the departmental identity to internal and external constituencies. As a department head, “you’ve got to keep pulling people together and keep explaining what it is we’re all about” stated a department head with 3-4 years of experience.

The technique of storytelling is not only useful for leading the faculty and staff in the department, it is also a useful tool for communicating with the dean. Storytelling was also used in fundraising and communicating the story to other external constituencies. A department head with over twenty years of experience noted that the story must be accurate but show all aspects of the department. Making sure the teaching, research, and

extension stories are told but adding what the department does for students, the productivity of faculty and students, and the ties and impact on industry must also be told in order to gain the real sense of the departmental story.

Hecht (2004) notes that the responsibilities of a department head include internal communications, external communications and fundraising. It can be concluded for this sample, storytelling is a leadership task and skill that is an effective way to communicate with internal and external constituencies. For internal use, i.e. communicating with the dean and faculty, storytelling can be valuable to the department and the leader. When the same story is communicated to both factions, there is the sense of honesty and openness (Gmelch, & Miskin, 1993). Huy (2001) also notes the importance of communication for middle managers. The “webs of relationships” (p. 76) that the middle manager weaves leads to better communication between and among factions in the organizational system. Honesty and openness with the both factions lead to added trust in the leader (Bennis & Goldsmith, 2003).

It can also be concluded that fundraising is becoming a task of the department head. Hellowell and Hancock (2001) found that academic middle managers feel there is an increased expectation to be “at least as much resource managers and fund-raising entrepreneurs as they are academic leaders” (p. 191). The use of storytelling can be beneficial in fundraising, but department heads need to be taught how to develop, then convey the story of the department as well as be versed in fundraising methods (Tierney, 1999).

Facilitating Faculty Success.

It can be concluded that faculty play an important role in the leadership of departments for this sample. Faculty success was spontaneously given as an important leadership task for eight of the ten interviewed department heads. A department head with over twenty years of experience operationalized his position on faculty success by stating that a department head needs to create a collaborative climate and then, “the best thing you can do is get the hell out of their way, literally. Just get out of their way and let them do their job.”

This finding is consistent with the findings of Gmelch and Miskin (1993). Through a quantitative survey, they found that faculty development is perceived by department heads to be “their most important responsibility” (p. 5). Recruiting, selecting, and evaluating faculty as well as mentoring them and creating high morale and professional development opportunities for the faculty were high priorities for the department heads surveyed. The implication for this finding is the need for department heads to be well versed in the “soft skill” of human development as well as be a leader in the discipline. Those who select department heads should look for this skill in the people they interview.

Leadership Style

A department head with less than a year of experience stated that “there are different leadership styles and there are different times that are appropriate for different leadership styles. That is what makes this leadership thing so complicated.” Because understanding leadership styles is complicated, the broader theme of leadership style was sub-categorized into several inductive categories. These included identified styles, walk

the walk, and pick the collective brains of faculty. Comprehending how leaders conceptualize their leadership style allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of how the department head conceptualized the phenomenon of leadership. An identified leadership style is the framework for how the department head leads. This information could also be beneficial to those training faculty to be academic leaders. If there are certain leadership styles that are not identified as being important, it would not be beneficial to teach those approaches to leadership. This information is also imperative to know for those who select department heads. Asking one to identify her leadership style tells not only what she believes, but also may allude to how much leadership training, education, and development that person has experienced.

Identified styles.

For this sample, it can be concluded that there is no one predominate self reported leadership style. While some department heads were specific and used theoretical leadership style terms in describing their leadership style, others offered generalized and popularized terms. Using a theoretical but also popularized typology of leadership style, three of the ten department heads described themselves as a servant leader. One of the department heads stated that he believes “you’re here on this earth to help people and that’s been the driving force and why I chose to become a department head.” Using Greenleaf’s (1977) definition of servant leadership, the choice of being a servant is what brings one to aspire to lead in an organization, all three department heads could be defined as a servant leader. It was the desire to serve the department, because of the benefits they had received from the department, which led them to lead. One department head said that he decided to become department head because he “just kind of felt like

[he] owed something back.” It is also interesting to note that the three department heads who classified themselves as servant leaders were all bench scientists and had over five years of departmental leadership experience.

It can be concluded that, for this sample, the situation plays a role in the leader’s chosen leadership style. This is in alignment with contingency theory (Daft, 2002). “It is called contingency because it suggests that a leader’s effectiveness depends on how well the leader’s style fits the context...effective leadership is contingent on matching a leader’s style to the right theory” (Northouse, 2004, p. 75). Thirty percent of the department heads described their leadership style using other leadership theory terms. A department head with 1-2 years of experience was categorized by the researcher as a contingent leader. He relayed that “[faculty] can’t figure out my style totally because I come from different points at different times.” This situation as well as the follower dictated how this leader chose to lead. This is congruent with the definition of a leader who utilizes different types of contingency theory (Daft, 2002). Situational leaders diagnose the follower’s level of commitment and competency and then decide the best leadership behaviors to correspond to the follower (Northouse, 2004).

Another theoretical style was identified by a department head in this sample. A department head with 1-2 years of experience laughed as he said that he would “really like to be transformational” in his leadership, “it’s what I’m trying really, really hard to do.” However, he goes on to say that he also sees himself as a team leader, one that makes sure he is inclusive in decision making and makes time for the personal and professional development of his faculty. This description best matches the “team leader”

behavioral style as described by Blake and Mouton (Northouse, 2004). A team leader is conscious of both the task and relationship aspects of his followers.

Another theoretical type of leadership style was identified by a department head with 5-6 years of experience. He describes himself as a charismatic and facilitative type of leader. Charismatic leaders are defined by House and Baetz (1979) as those leaders who “by the force of their personal abilities are capable of having profound and extraordinary effects on followers” (p. 399). The charismatic and the transformational leader lead social science departments.

The other four department heads did not name a specific style of leadership but explained how they see themselves leading an academic department. A department head with less than a year of experience described his leadership style as inclusive, honest, as open as possible, and willing to make a decision and move forward. A former department head with 5-7 years of experience said that he found that leading by example was, in his mind, the best way to lead a department. A department head with 3-4 of years experience stated he was a “fairly casual leader” who does not “micromanage” but likes to “synthesize” the situation before he acts.

It can be concluded that there is not one uniform leadership style that works best for all department heads. Those who develop and evaluate academic leaders should keep this in mind. The one-size-fits-all theory of leadership does not and cannot apply to academic department heads (Lucas, 1994). It can also be concluded that half of the department heads in this sample have received enough leadership education to be able to identify their leadership style using theoretical terms. The implication is that the other half of the sample have not received enough leadership education to be able to use

theoretical terms to identify their leadership style. This, again, is another concept that could be taught to department heads.

Model the way.

It can be concluded that congruence in words and actions as well as authenticity in your leadership style is important to the department heads in this sample. Eight of the ten department heads in the sample gave examples of how they would not ask their faculty or staff to do anything that they themselves were not willing to do. One department head noted that “there’s a great deal in academic leadership where you have to lead by example.” This leadership style is defined by Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) as congruence. George (2007) notes that congruence can also be categorized as consistency. Consistency is being aware of one’s actions and intentions and matching actions with espoused values. Kouzes and Posner (2002 & 2003) describe walking the walk as *modeling the way*. “Exemplary leaders know that if they want to gain commitment and achieve the highest standards, they must be models of the behavior they expect of others” (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 73). It can be concluded that congruence in words and actions is an important leadership style for a department head.

Pick the collective brains of faculty.

All ten of the interviewed department heads spoke specifically about their approach to decision making. It can be concluded that the department heads in this sample want some level of faculty input in important departmental decisions. One department head said that for big decisions, “I rely on input from faculty. I try to engage faculty in discussion well in advance when I know there are some issues coming around.” Gaining faculty input into the decisions is a leadership decision. It is gaining that faculty

buy-in that impacts the effectiveness of the decision (Austin, 1999). This can be related back to the importance of building a shared and collaborative vision and goals for the department. It can be concluded that the department heads in this sample are inclusive with their decision making. This has a direct impact on the department because a leader's "decisions regarding various aspects of the organization shape the course of their organization" (Nahavandi, 2006, p. 276).

Leadership vs. Management

In an academic department, "you have to be able to manage and lead. You can't just do one or the other" stated a department head with 5-6 years of experience. Kekale (1999) concurs with this finding. He stated that not only are department heads called to be a leader and a manager, but they are called to do so at the same time. It can be concluded that it is the marriage of leadership and management that makes the job difficult for the department heads in this study. Eight of the ten sampled department heads spoke of the "dailyness" of the job, meaning managing, getting in the way of being able to lead. This is consistent with the findings of Gmelch and Miskin (1993) who found that department heads become very involved with the day to day operations of the department, and therefore lose site of the leadership tasks which must be accomplished to move the department forward toward the vision. Lucas (1994) separates the key functions of department heads into two categories; leadership or administration. He also stresses that in order to be effective as a leader, a department head must complete tasks that fall into both categories.

Being both a manager and a leader at the same time is a different perspective than one might believe after reading the works of Bennis. He repeatedly states that there is a

clear-cut difference between leaders and managers. He states that having both is imperative, but the organization should not rely on a single person to inhabit both qualities (Bennis, 1989). Although theoretically, a separation of leader and manager is better for an organization, the department heads in this sample see their role as a leader and a manager. One department head concluded that if you couple management and leadership correctly, “it is very complementary.”

It can be concluded that department heads in this sample consider themselves to be academic middle managers. A department head with 3-4 years of experience explains that he feels like a middle manager or a department head sandwich when he “catches it from the faculty when they don’t like what’s going on and catches it from the dean’s office when they don’t like what’s going on.” A department head sandwich is a colloquial phrase for the job type that Mintzberg (1989) defines as a middle manager. A middle manager is one who is in “a hierarchy of authority between the operating core and the administrative apex” (Mintzerg, 1989, p. 98). It can be concluded that it is being at the level of middle manager that this sample of department heads finds frustrating about their jobs. Along with keeping the department functioning, department heads are a “transmitter of core strategic values through the enactment of the role as mentor, coach, and guide” (Clegg & McAuley, 2005, p. 22).

Managing Human Capital

It can be concluded that managing human capital is an important leadership task for the department heads in this sample. All ten department heads stressed the importance of and sometimes frustration that stems from faculty and staff relations. One department head noted that leading is “about the people. Human capital is your greatest resource and

if you can really understand that, then everything else sort of relates to it.” Hiring, mentoring, and supporting faculty were mentioned repeatedly as essential leadership functions. The research of Wolverton et. al (1999) supports this finding. They found that managing human capital combines the department head tasks of resource management, leadership, and faculty development.

It can also be concluded that frustrations with people management is an important aspect of leading an academic department for this sample. The department head with over twenty years of experience avowed “what runs most department heads off is personnel management.” The research of Bowman (2002) supports this conclusion. Bowman (2002) states that because most academic leaders are not trained in personnel management, they quickly become disenchanted with dealing with conflict and human issues that arise.

Hiring and mentoring faculty.

Eight of the ten department heads interviewed specifically mentioned the importance of hiring faculty as one of the leadership tasks of a department head. It can be concluded that, for this sample, deciding which faculty to hire is an important aspect of leading an academic department. Department heads must focus on more than just recruiting and hiring faculty; they must help guide them once they become part of the department. A department head with 5-6 years of experience said that it is more than just recruiting and hiring; you must “help them because they’re going to achieve more than anybody can.”

The research of Gmelch and Miskin (1993) supports both conclusions. They found that recruiting, selecting, and evaluating faculty as well as mentoring them and creating high morale and developmental opportunities are all high priorities for

department heads. The implications for these findings suggest that those who train academic leaders must focus on hiring practices but also the theory of mentoring. Those who are hiring department heads should inquire about the hiring and mentoring philosophy of the candidate during the interview.

Sometimes they act worse than my kids.

As stated above, it can be concluded that dealing with human capital is an important aspect of leading a department for this sample. One department head noted that “as a department head, more than fifty percent of what you do is dealing with people.” Seven other department heads from this sample agreed or echoed that idea. The research of Moore and Rudd (2004) and Jones (2006) conclude that human skills as well as emotional intelligence are important skills for an academic leader in colleges of agriculture to possess.

It can also be concluded that human issues are sometimes problematic for the department heads in this study. A department head with 3-4 years of experience said that “sometimes, I think [faculty and staff] act worse than my kids.” Dealing with the autonomous and sometimes high-strung faculty is difficult. A department head with over twenty years of experience lamented that “as an administrator that cares about every one of these individuals, how do you get them untangled?” It is that statement that captures the significance of this theme. When those chosen to lead are usually chosen on research ability, how can they learn to “untangle” the human emotions of their followers? Jones (2006) found that human skills are the most important of the leadership skills needed in the job of academic leader. Leadership development can help department heads develop and have the human relation skills needed in order to be successful leaders.

It's not Like a Business

For this sample, leadership at the academic department head level is different than leading a business. One department head stated that “we’re an academic unit, an academic institution. We’re not a business.” Forty percent of the department heads interviewed spoke specifically about the difference between academia and the business world. This inductive theme is significant because the majority of leadership development programs geared toward academic leaders still focus on business model paradigms when creating and implementing their curriculum. The business model of leadership also takes into account that the leader has many power-bases at his disposal. They have the power to hire and fire those (reward and coercive power base) at will (Raven & French, 1958). Academic leaders often do not have these two power bases. “You set policies but in terms of a reward system; most academic institutions are like ours. With budget cuts and low pay increases, there isn’t a lot to be able to reward faculty with” stated a department head with 1-2 years of experience.

It can also be concluded that department heads in this sample often found it difficult to connect to leadership theories and practices of which they were informed, via books or formalized courses. For this sample it is because they see a disconnect from the business-based leadership theories and the actuality of their leadership functions in higher education. One department head stated that “one of the books from leadership training was from a business model and I found it absolutely useless.” The research of Bush (2003) supports this finding and conclusion. Bush states that there are several distinctions between leading in academia and leading in a for-profit paradigm. Power bases are one of the differences, but goal setting, money allocation, and knowledge of a product are also

described by Bush (2003) as differences. There is some transferability from one paradigm to the other, but the fundamental purposes of the two worlds are too different for a complete convergence of thought.

Herding Academic Cats

All ten department heads lamented about the difficulties of leading faculty, and some commented on their perceived lonesomeness as leaders. It can be concluded that, for this sample, leading faculty is a daunting and isolating task. A former department head noted that he felt that he “didn’t have any friends as a department head.” He relied on his spouse as a sounding board and confidant.

As some described academic leadership as herding cats, there was more to this theme than a simple colloquial statement. Fifty percent of the participants in the study used the term “herding cats.” One department head described herding academic cats by explaining, “you’re dealing with a group of independent faculty who are getting their own grant money, who are organizing their own program and you’re encouraging them to be creative and innovative. They have a great deal of academic freedom in terms of what they want to pursue” but you still have to keep everyone on the same page and marching forward.

It can be concluded, for this sample, the influencing factor of faculty autonomy coupled with the lack of a coercive or reward power base afforded to the department head, a different strategy must be utilized to lead (herd) faculty and move the department forward toward the shared vision and goals. Gaining faculty trust by being a credible, consistent, and congruent leader, obtaining faculty buy-in by co-creating a vision, and gaining faculty buy-in when making decisions are all ways that can be utilized by the

department head to lead faculty. As one department head stated, “if you don’t get faculty buy-in, it’s not going to work.”

Conclusions and Discussions for Research Question Two

For this research question, four categorical themes were found. The first theme was inductive. The experiences with prior leadership development theme emerged from the data analysis and coding. The department heads were candid in their past leadership development, which gave the researcher a more developed picture of their lived experiences with leadership development. The other three themes of *leadership training, education, and development* were captured via a deductive lens on the emergent codes. Utilizing Brungardt’s (1996) definition of these concepts, codes were deductively analyzed into the three themes. Sub-themes indicated the complexity of the themes and offer a more focused view of the department heads.

Experiences with Prior Leadership Development

It can be concluded that department heads in this sample expressed a need for continued development at the department head administrative level. During the conversations, all department heads interviewed expressed, at one time or another, a frustration and uncertainty with and in their job. Several cited the lack of leadership preparation as an influencing factor in this frustration and uncertainty. All ten of the department heads expressed the need for leadership development for department heads: formal and/or informal.

School of hard knocks.

It can be concluded that for half of the sample, they had limited formalized leadership development. Five of the ten department heads surveyed stated that they had

no leadership training or development before they became department head. A department head with less than a year of experience laughed when he stated that he “did not go to department head school.” It can be concluded that learning as you go is how many department heads receive leadership training. This conclusion is supported by Kuhl (2006) who found that “less than twenty-five percent of department chairs received professional development in connection with their chair duties” (p. 6). However, this sample has received more training than department heads surveyed from 1990-2000. Gmelch (2000) found that only three percent of over two thousand academic leaders had experienced any type of leadership preparation. The difference between that population and this population is the active step that the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges has taken in developing leadership programming.

It's your entrance exam.

It can also be concluded that, for this sample, serving as a faculty member was a way of learning about the leadership responsibilities of a department head. Seven of the ten department heads interviewed conveyed that they believed that being a faculty member was their leadership preparation before becoming department head. One department head stated that “you need to understand the various steps in the academic life” before you can become a department head. It can be concluded that the majority of the department heads in this sample see completing tenure as a faculty member as training for an academic leadership position.

It is also important to note that it is the department heads with less than five years of experience who avow that this preparation is adequate preparation for becoming an academic leader. One department head stated that he “had that preparation experiencing

all the trials and tribulations and challenges that faculty members have.” Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt (2005) came to a similar conclusion when they studied academic leadership at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. They found that academic leaders new to their position believed that “if you are good at being a faculty member, then you are bound to be good at being a department chair” (Wolverton et al, 2005, p. 229).

Department heads who have been leading for at least five years have a different perspective on the role that being a faculty member plays in developing as a leader. A department head with over five years of experience conveyed that he believed that being a faculty member was an important part of preparation for the position of department head, but that being a faculty member was not enough to make you a successful department head. Being a faculty member is “kind of like your entrance exam. It doesn’t mean you’ll be good at [being a department head]. It doesn’t mean that you’ll get the job. It does mean that they’ll now look at you.” This finding resonates with the finding by Kuhl (2006) regarding the disconnect between how academic leaders are chosen and their actual leadership preparation and how this is an issue in higher education. Wolverton et al also found that more experienced department chairs believed that true leadership development was needed in order to become a more effective academic leader. This conclusion implies the need for leadership development before and during the tenure of a department head.

Leadership Training

Brungardt (1996) defines leadership training as the “learning activities for a specific leadership role or job” (p. 83). The department heads in this study were asked to discuss any formalized leadership development in which they had taken part. From this

question, two sub-categories emerged: national leadership programs and on-campus training opportunities. Both types of leadership “development” programs were described by the participants but because of content, like specified tasks addressed, and the information participants got out of the program, fit most appropriately in the leadership training section, not leadership development.

National programs.

It can be concluded that the two programs identified by the participants played a role in the leadership training of the department heads. Two different formalized leadership programs were mentioned by the participants of the study. Four of the ten participants were fellows in the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) sponsored Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy (ESGOP)/ Academic Programs Committee on Organization and Policy (ACOP) leadership development program (now named LEAD 21). The other national leadership development program mentioned by a participant of this study was the Harvard Academic Managers Development Program. The department head with over twenty years of experience was chosen to attend this program after he had been a department head for over twelve years.

Although fifty percent of the department heads in this survey attended leadership preparation programs, it is concluded that it is the perception of the sample that the programs were not development as much as majority leadership training with a little education. These two programs do not include all of the components required for academic leadership development, as defined by McDaniel (2002). McDaniel (2002) states that a quality academic leadership development program which will develop

academics into better leaders must “blend job experience, educational initiatives, guided practical experience, and targeted performance feedback into a systemic process for ongoing leadership development” (p. 81). These two programs show elements of McDaniel’s paradigm, but according to responses fall short in ongoing leadership development experiences. Once the program is over, the aided monitoring of the leader’s development ends. ACOP/ESCOP did not follow-up with the participants to evaluate the program or evaluate the participants’ leadership development. Brungardt (1996), McDaniel (2002, and Day (2001) all ascertain that leadership development is an ongoing process.

On-campus training.

It can be concluded that waiting to train department heads specifically for their department head responsibilities until after they have accepted their academic leadership occurred in this sample. One department head stated that “the way you got most of that [training] was on the job with an occasional seminar.” While waiting until a leader has been given the opportunity to lead is not an ideal form of leadership development (Brungardt, 1996), this does show that there is some progress in the understanding by colleges and universities that there needs to be some form of leadership training provided to academic leaders.

It can also be concluded that the five land-grant institutions from which the sample derives are taking steps to train their department heads. One department head stated that at his university, “they’re trying to meet with the department heads and run them through the ropes.” All ten department heads in this study mentioned activities at their home institution that were geared towards the training of department heads. One

department head mentioned the “executive briefings that [the dean] is pretty insistent on us going to.”

It can also be concluded that training for department heads at these selected institutions tends to be task specific. Seminar titles include managing stress, overseeing legal issues, and managing the tenure and promotion process. While these trainings may be helping to build some specific leadership skills needed by department heads, they are not developing the leader in a holistic manner (Conger, 1992). These programs do take into account the position of Day (2000). He emphasizes the need for leadership training to include the organizational environment (academic department) in the enhancing of the leader. All leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities should be rooted in the organizational and community environment. By using real examples from department heads, leadership training programs can integrate content with application.

Leadership Education

Although the leadership education for the department heads in this sample did not come from a formalized leadership theory course, it can be concluded that they all have learned leadership from different areas in their professional career. Brungardt (1996) defines leadership education to include “those learning activities and educational environments that are intended to enhance and foster leadership abilities” (p. 83). As the department heads told of their experiences with leadership development, deductive coding was used for the theme of leadership education and inductive coding split the leadership education theme into three sub-categories: observing and osmosis, leaders are readers, and learn by doing.

Observing and osmosis.

It can be concluded that learning by watching other department heads is a mechanism of leadership education for department heads in this study. One department head stated that “we all pick things up by observing and osmosis when we’re in the academic setting. I’ve had several department heads and I’ve watched others.” According to Brungardt (1996), observing good leadership practices and bad leadership practices is not enough to be classified as leadership education. It can be concluded that simple observations of leaders is not enough to add to the leadership education of the department head. Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) concur with this conclusion. They state that a leader can learn some from looking at other leaders, but it is the internalization and application of that information that turns the exercise into leadership education. One department head stated he “learned from the reflection of good examples and bad examples of leaders.” Reflection must occur in order for a department head to understand and appreciate a good leader from the bad leader. It is the reflection and application of the observation and osmosis that makes this activity leadership education. The implications for developers of leadership programs for this finding would be to include observation and osmosis coupled with reflection about other leaders in the leadership program.

Leaders are readers.

It can be concluded that books play a role in the leadership education of the department heads in this sample. Thirty percent of the department heads interviewed mentioned books as an important source of information while they were department heads. A department head with 1-2 years of experience stated that he has “got a bunch of books by my bed that [he] periodically leafs through.” Some books were given to the

department heads by deans or provosts as part of a leadership education program, but other department heads sought books written by department heads in their own disciplines. One department head specifically mentions the writings of John Maxwell. The department head stated that he could “follow Maxwell’s principles and use them to develop into a leader.” Reading, reflecting, and then applying the leadership concepts that were gained from reading the leadership books are ways of developing as a leader (Conger, 1992). It can be concluded that reading is a way for department heads to gain leadership education. The implications of this finding are for those who provide department heads with the reading material to themselves analyze the theoretical leadership backing of the book.

Learn by Doing.

It can be concluded that learning by doing was thought of as the best way to educate oneself as a department head. All ten of the participants in this study said they felt like they learned how to be a good academic leader by doing the job. A department head with 3-4 years of experience stated that he “learned [academic] leadership by doing it for twenty years as associate head.” This is consistent with the findings of McDaniel (2002), who states that the application of leadership education in the context of one’s surroundings is imperative for leadership growth. According to Bass (1990), it is the blending of job experience with leadership education that yields the most successful leaders. It can be concluded that learning by doing was a mechanism for this sample to learn leadership, but according to leadership development theorists, it is not the best way to develop a holistic and effective leader. Leadership development should begin before the person takes the leadership position (Brungardt, 1996).

Leadership Development

It can be concluded that formalized, holistic leadership development has not occurred for a lot of the department heads in this sample. Leadership development is the combination of experience, education, and training in the growth of a leader (Brungardt, 1996). Day (2000) and Conger (1992) add the contextual application to the development. Only twenty percent of the department heads interviewed spoke about experiences that can be categorized as leadership development. One department head spoke of the influence of the FFA organization on his ability to develop into a leader. This program focused on training and education, and the department head was able to grow from these experiences. The other department head who has experienced leadership development cited a professional organization as the catalyst of his leadership development. It is important to note that these two examples came from the former department heads interviewed. It can be concluded that while department heads are beginning to receive more leadership training and education, formalized and guided leadership development for this sample is lacking.

Recommendations for Further Study

The following recommendations were proposed based on the findings of this study.

1. It is recommended that this study be replicated with department heads in other colleges at land-grant institutions to compare findings.
2. It is recommended that this study be replicated with department heads in college of agriculture at other types of institutions to explore the similarities and differences between the types of institutions.

3. It is recommended that the study be replicated with the addition of faculty interviews to compare the espoused leadership style with perceptions of the leadership style by faculty.
4. It is recommended that faculty and the higher administrators (assistant deans, associate deans, and deans) be included in the study to give a more comprehensive picture of leadership at the department head level.
5. It is recommended to include the significant other of the department head when researching holistic leadership concepts of department heads. As a former department head noted during the interview, he believed that because he felt he could not speak with other department heads about his struggles, he often “took the burden home” and spoke to his wife about his leadership conundrums.
6. It is recommended that the influence and leadership style of the dean be utilized in the diagnostic of leadership style by the department head.
7. It is recommended that the findings of this study be translated into a quantitative survey that could be given to all department heads in college of agriculture at land-grant institution in order to take this generative study and make the findings generalizable.

Implications of the Study

Academic departments are the building blocks of higher education’s academic structure (Rosovsky, 1990). Because of this, it is imperative that the leaders of this building block be effective in their leading. In order for academic leaders to be successful, they must understand the complex phenomenon of leadership. As one department head in this study noted, “you don’t take anyone off the street and put them

in here and have them make decisions that effect seventy people's lives." Since a department head is charged with leading and managing faculty, staff, and students, it becomes even more imperative that the department head be aware of and understand the phenomenon of leadership. Many of the frustrations expressed by this sample of department heads stem from the lack of leadership training, education, and development. Another department head noted that it was because of his lack of leadership training, education and development that he "put in eighty-hour weeks for many years and sixty-hour weeks when he wasn't doing eighty-hour weeks." It is this generative study which begins to deepen the understanding of leadership as seen by department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions. From the findings of this study, empirical research can be developed to gain a broader perspective of leadership at the department head level.

For the professorate, scholarship, teaching, and service have been identified as essential functions for success as a faculty member (Boyer, 1990). Because of the information garnered from this generative study, a more in depth look at the phenomenon of leadership at the department head level in colleges of agriculture, faculty who teach leadership in colleges of agriculture can gain a more complete understanding of leadership as an academic middle manager. Service to the college for leadership educators could include leadership training, education, and development for current, incoming, or aspiring department heads. This study gives insight into not only the workings of the phenomenon of leadership in academic departments in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions, but it also gives insight into the training,

education, and development of department heads. Service, for leadership educators, could also include aiding those who provide leadership education for the college.

This study also has implications for administrators in colleges of agriculture. By looking at the findings of this study, deans and associate deans can identify the leadership styles, training, education, and development they want in their department heads. Those who serve on department head search and screening committees can also benefit from this research. Understanding the complexities of leadership as a phenomenon in higher education might add to their selection criterion for department heads. Deans and associate deans can also look at the current development of their department heads and add components of leadership development, education, and training to their current programs.

The findings of this study have a direct implication for those who aspire to become a department head in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions. As several department heads in this study noted, there are not a lot of faculty members who want to “take up the mantel of being a department head.” For those faculty who do aspire to becoming a department head, they can gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of leadership at the middle management level in higher education. Aspiring department heads can also understand the difference between leadership development, education, and training as well as the need for a department head to have all three types of experiences.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is your official title?
2. How long have you been in your current position (or if former department head, how long were you department head)?
3. How would you describe your department?
 - How many faculty members are in the department?
 - How many students do you have?
 - How many staff members work in the department?
4. When people ask you to describe your department, what do you tell them?
5. Tell me a little about your journey to becoming department head.
6. What kind of preparation did you have when you decided to move to administration?
7. What kind of developmental opportunities have been presented to you since you have become department head?
8. Suppose a member of your faculty comes to you and expresses his/her interest in academic leadership. What advice would you give them?
9. What does academic leadership mean to you?
 - Is it important for department heads?
 - When should it begin?
10. In the *Journal of Higher Education*, Knight and Holen were quoted as saying that Department heads account for “as much as eighty percent of all administrative decisions made in colleges and universities...[but] they have seldom been trained as administrators.” What are your thoughts on this statement?
 - How does this relate to your experiences?
11. What leadership development opportunities are available for department heads?
12. In your role as department head, how would you describe yourself as a leader?
 - What tasks do you consider to be leadership?
13. In your role as department head, how would you describe yourself as a manager?
 - What tasks do you consider to be more managerial in content?

14. For you, what are the most important functions of a department head?
 - What are the most important things you do on a daily basis in your role?
15. Is there any other aspect of leading an academic department that you would like to discuss?

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Tuesday, March 20, 2007
IRB Application No AG076
Proposal Title: Academic Leadership in Higher Education: What Leadership Education and Training to Department Heads in the College of Agriculture Identify as Vital
Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 3/19/2008

Principal Investigator(s)
Jennifer Williams Cindy Blackwell
464 Ag Hall 444 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078 Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT INITIAL CONTACT

RECRUITMENT CALL

Good _____ (morning or afternoon) Dr. _____

My name is Jennifer Williams and I am a PhD student in Agricultural Leadership at Oklahoma State University. For my dissertation, I am studying the conceptualization of leadership and leadership development by department heads and Dr. _____ gave me your name as a potential participant. If you are willing, I would like to interview you to obtain your thoughts on the subject of leadership in your current role as a department head. The interview should only last about one to one and a half hours.

Would you be willing to participate?

(yes)

When is a good time that I can contact you for an interview?

Thank you very much



APPENDIX D

IRB CONSENT FORM



INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Conceptualizations of leadership and leadership development by department heads: A qualitative study

Investigators: Jennifer Williams, B.S., M.S.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of department heads regarding leadership and leadership development for academic leaders. You have been identified as a potential rich source of information on this subject, given your position. This interview seeks to capture your thoughts on leadership and leadership development at the departmental level.

Procedures: The methodology chosen to best capture the depth of your responses is an interview. The interview should only last about one hour. The interview will be taped in order to transcribe your statements verbatim. A transcript will be sent back to you to check. At that point, you will be able to make any corrections, add, change, or strike any of the information given.

Risks of Participation: There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: The benefits of this study are to help higher education understand the thoughts of the department head regarding leadership and leadership development. Your thoughts could help shape future leadership development initiatives.

Confidentiality: The interviews are to be confidential. Each transcript will be stored on a non-networked computer as well as a locked filing cabinet in the office of the PI. All data will be shredded after three years elapses. Codes will be given to each participant and all reporting will utilize the code name. Only the researcher will know the identities and a master list will be destroyed upon completion of the project.

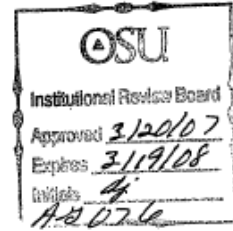
The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for your participation

Contacts: If you have any questions about the research and your rights, you can contact
Jennifer Williams or Cindy Blackwell, PhD
Principal Investigator Dissertation Chair
(405) 744-6942 (405) 744-5133

You may also contact Dr. Sue C. Jacobs, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights: Participation in this study is voluntary. You can discontinue the research activity at any time without reprisal or penalty. You may terminate your participation by telling the researcher that you no longer want to take part in the interview.



Signatures:

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant

Date

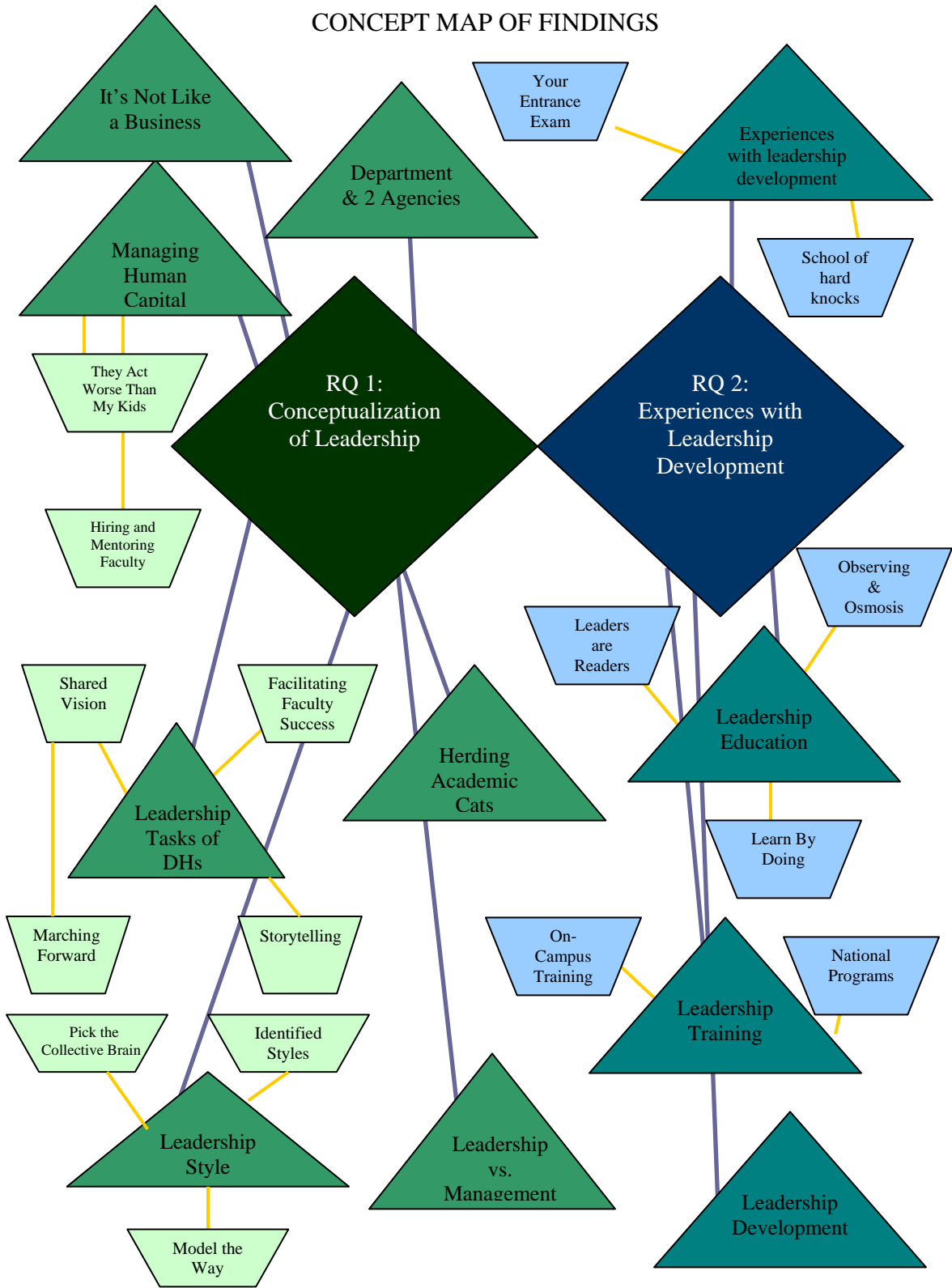
I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX E

CONCEPT MAP OF FINDINGS



VITA

Jennifer Renea Williams

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT HEADS IN COLLEGES OF AGRICULTURE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Major Field: Agricultural Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born March 14, 1980 in Granbury, Texas, daughter of Gary and Kathy Best; Married August 11, 1999, wife of Michael Williams; mother of Brenna Williams.

Education: Graduated from Granbury High School, Granbury, Texas; received Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Leadership and Development at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX in December 2001; Received Master of Science in Agricultural Education at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX in May 2003. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy or Education Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2007.

Experience: Lecturer in Agricultural Leadership and Development at Texas A&M University 2001-2005; Graduate Associate for the Associate Dean of Agriculture's Office 2005-2006; Senior Academic Advisor in University Academic Services at Oklahoma State University 2006; Graduate Associate in Agricultural Education, Communications, and Leadership at Oklahoma State University 2006-2007.

Professional Memberships: Association of Leadership Educators (2002-present); American Association for Agricultural Education (2005-present); North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (2006-present).

Name: Jennifer Renea Williams

Date of Degree: December, 2007

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF LEADERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT HEADS IN COLLEGES OF AGRICULTURE AT LAND GRANT INSTITUTIONS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Pages in Study: 134

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Agricultural Education

Scope and Method of Study: This study sought to qualitatively capture the conceptualization of leadership and leadership development by department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant institutions.

Findings and Conclusions: While there have been many studies on leadership in higher education, few have focused exclusively on the department head, and fewer still have focused on department heads' conceptualizations of leadership and leadership development. This is significant because department head leadership is the building block of university administrative success. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and conceptualization of department heads in colleges of agriculture at land-grant universities, regarding leadership and leadership development. Pfeffer (1977) stated that if a researcher wanted to understand the behavior of leaders, she must "begin by attempting to find out what they are thinking about the situation in which they would be a leader" (p. 106). This study explores just that.

Inductive and deductive analytic procedures led to eight identified themes and nine sub-categories for Research Question One and four themes and seven sub-categories for Research Question Two. The themes for Research Question One emerged inductively from the data. These themes, that looked at the conceptualization of leadership by department heads, include *the role of the tripartite mission, leadership tasks for department heads, identified leadership styles, leadership vs. management, managing human capital, how leadership in higher education is not like a business, and herding academic cats*. The findings for Research Question Two include those themes that emerged both inductively and deductively. The inductive theme of *conceptualization of prior leadership* and the deductive themes of *leadership training, leadership education, and leadership development* were developed by applying the conceptual framework to the data.

This study found that the department heads in this study conceptualize leadership as a complex phenomenon in which they feel they have had little formalized training, education, and development.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Cindy Blackwell
