Applying Evidence Based Practice Approaches to Leadership Development

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Project Background

The Annie E. Casey Foundation hired the Leadership Learning Community to explore the viability of bringing an Evidence Based Practice to the field of leadership development. The foundation in interested in how this approach could scale its leadership work and improve the lives of kids and families. Leadership is recognized as a critical success factor in this process. Currently not much is known about evidence-based practice in leadership work. This eight week investigation and analysis has been divided into two phases.   The first phase of research summarized in this papers, studies the development of Evidence-Based Research as a methodology with its origins in the field of medicine.

What is Evidence-Based Practice

Evidence-based practice (EBP), first appeared in the medical field where accurately predicting the effects of drugs or surgical procedures with evidence was of paramount concern. The medical field defines evidence-based practice as "the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patient/clients" (Sackett et al., 1996). The Institute of Medicine (2001) defines evidence-based medicine as the "integration of best researched evidence and clinical expertise with patient values." The evidence-based process moves from research to implementation, and concludes with providing information for making treatment decisions. The medical field has organized and disseminated evidence-based practice through The Cochrane Collaboration (Cochrane Collaboration), a website that houses the reviews of interventions in the field of health care. No such website exists for the field of leadership development.

We found evidence-based practice in education, social policy, child welfare, social work, criminal justice, and early childhood. In the early childhood field evidence based practice includes "a decision-making process that integrates the best available research evidence with family and professional wisdom and values." The emphasis on families, wisdom and values suggests another component of EBP. A key aspect of this definition (and what represents the most dramatic shift from thinking in medicine) is the notion that EBP is a process or a way of empowering professionals and families to integrate various sources of knowledge to make informed decisions that directly benefit children and families. Understanding how to use EBP increases the value of evidence to improve practice.

Academic research produces theoretical knowledge; professional communities produce practice knowledge. Learning from experience, from being in different situations, produces evidence that can be used to improve practice and the results that occur. Furthermore, by engaging families and communities in the process of learning, more relevant results are likely to be produced by the field. It's interesting to note that more leadership practitioners are becoming involved in making meaning of their experiences, and developing theories of practice based on those experiences just as we see happening in other fields.

Key Steps of an Evidence Based Practice Process

An EBP creates an important action learning loop. Although different language is used, most EBP practitioners describe five key steps which include the formulation of a question or testable hypothesis about the work (in our case we might say a question related to how to cultivate leadership that can achieve specific results). The next step involves research to identify relevant evidence to inform decisions about how to best cultivate leadership needed for a specific purpose. Then it's important to assess the validity of the evidence you have collected and its relevance to your context and goals, e.g. if this leadership strategy was successful in an urban center is it likely to produce the same results in a rural environment? The next step involves the application of evidence to your decision making process about how to best achieve your desired results. In the field of clinical care, the patient ideally is part of this process, and a possible application to the field of leadership development would be to involve the participants of a leadership strategy in partnering in the assessment of evidence and the co-creation and design of the leadership program or approach. The final step is to learn from the application and revise the approach based on findings.

In the leadership field, many programs engage in formative evaluations that are designed to strengthen and improve program performance based on logic models or theories of change. An EBP approach would strengthen this learning loop by articulating a clear hypothesis for the approach that is directly linked to the specific design. How this might differ from a program logic model will be discussed in future sections of this paper. In short, the five steps have been articulated by the Council for Training in Evidence-Based Behavioral Practices. (EBBP Council Members, July 2008)

1. Ask: Develop relevant and answerable questions about the changes that you are supporting in individuals, communities or populations?
2. Acquire: Identify articles and other evidence-based research for answering the question.
3. Appraise: Evaluate the applicability and validity of the evidence to the specific problem or desired change.
4. Apply: Use the evidence in a collaborative process with those engaged in the change to make decisions and implement strategies that integrate context, values, and the participants themselves.
5. Analyze and adjust: Evaluate the results of the strategy/practice and make adjustments based on the results.

Challenges and Controversies

Evidence-based practice was initially established as a research and implementation strategy in the medical sciences using controlled blind studies and random clinical trials (RCTs) to develop evidence about effective treatments. These research strategies have proven less applicable in other fields. In fields, like leadership development, where results are influenced by multiple factors that are intertwined, controlling for every variable using RCTs is not an appropriate research strategy.

While evidence-based practice is gaining popularity as a methodology for establishng what works and to ensure predictable results in fields other than medicine and clinical care, its application and use are not without controversies. First, fields concerned with evidence-based practice tend to privilege practices that have been researched using RCTs or other quasi-experimental designs over practices that have been researched using qualitative or interpretive approaches. In practice, that means that certain kinds of treatments will be available and paid for, while others will not. Second, evidence-based practice is always developed within a particular context and its applicability in other contexts is an open question that requires a different kind of evidence-gathering, and therefore a different kind of methodology for determining what counts as evidence. Michael Quinn Patton, a leading process use and developmental evaluator, comments:

> *RCTs are not always best for determining causality and can be misleading. RCTs examine a limited number of isolating factors that are neither limited nor isolated in natural settings. The complex nature of causality and the multitude of actual influences on outcomes render RCTs less capable of discovering causality than designs sensitive to local culture and conditions and open to unanticipated causal factors (Patton, 2005).*

RCTs work in environments that are highly organized, planned, and controlled, they are less useful for developing evidence in environments of uncertainty or low agreement about values and direction.

Research Methodologies and Evaluation Approaches

A variety of methodologies are being used to research and evaluate leadership and leadership development to produce evidence that informs better practice. In this section, we explore some research and evaluation approaches that are being used to establish linkages between actions and results, learn from practice, and produce evidence of impact. While RCTs are rarely used to develop evidence-based practice in leadership, other methodologies such as assessments, evaluations, and action research are producing valuable and credible evidence about practice. Ultimately, more rigor and clarity in the development and application of these methods will be needed, however, important progress is being made.

Assessments

The use of assessments in leadership development has expanded rapidly over the past twenty years. Assessments are widely used in the business sector where competency-based leadership development is linked to performance. In a performance driven system, assessments send a message to employees about what is valued in the system, what the expectations are, and what will be rewarded (London et al., 2007). Assessments are also used in the social sector. Tools like the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), Myers-Briggs, and 360 degree feedback are part of the curriculum of some leadership development programs. These assessments enable leaders to learn about their strengths and weaknesses, and get feedback from others. This evidence is useful for motivating change. The best assessments develop benchmarks for changes in

behavior and performance over time, which can be used to track progress and ultimately set practice standards for a field.

There is a good deal of debate about the cultural biases built into many assessment tools, and whether assessment tools developed in one context are applicable and relevant in another. For instance, leadership assumptions that may be valid in one cultural context, may not be relevant in another. Since many assessments are linked to reward structures, their inappropriate use may actually cause people harm.

In addition, discussion has focused on whether assessment, performance, and outcomes overlook and ignore leadership as a process that happens through relationships and work in a particular context. This bias creates systems that reward and encourage individual performance rather than team, organization, or community performance. This bias reflects the dominance of individual, leader/follower leadership theory and reinforces traditional practices of leadership. Many leadership theories point to the need for more collective leadership to support innovation and population level results. This will require assessment tools that measure collaborative behavior and reward systems linked to collaboration.

The National Center for Healthcare Leadership is using EBP to develop health leadership. They use a portfolio of diagnostic assessments and learning interventions to improve individual and team leadership performance and "align governance and strategic human resource systems support." The assessment tools produce benchmarks for leadership competencies, team effectiveness, organizational climate, strategic human resource systems, governance alignment, cultural diversity practices and organizational performance. These scores are then compared against industry standards. The purpose of the Leadership Development System (LDS) is to better align multiple parts of the health system and improve overall performance. Increasing system performance is often supported through coaching. There is now an Evidence-Based Coaching Handbook(2006), a credentialing program in evidence-based coaching at Harvard University, and an International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring.

Theory of change

Theory of change evaluations gained widespread acceptance during the 1990's through the research conducted with comprehensive community initiatives. A theory of change makes explicit how and why a program works. It was developed as an approach to systematically learn from complex environments. Evaluators work with stakeholders to identify their assumptions. The evaluators then construct methods for data collection to learn which assumptions hold true and which do not. Typically applied in leadership development evaluation, theory of change evaluations focus more on program improvement than they do on disproving program assumptions. This may need to be rebalanced for this approach to inform evidence-based practice that is generalizable beyond a particular program.

For the past ten years, theories of change have been used by leadership development programs to determine what outcomes to assess, and what evidence to collect. Usually, a theory of change is developed for a single program, and the focus is on program improvement. One

example of a cross-program theory of change evaluation is one funded by the Packard and Gates Foundations to evaluate six programs that each developed reproductive health and family planning leaders using a different strategy. Each leadership program worked with a consultant to develop its own theory of change and articulate how their programs' activities connect to outcomes at the short-term, intermediate, and long-term levels for program participants, other individuals, organizations and the broader system. The programs were then brought together, as a group, to identify commonalities across their models and choose outcomes to guide the evaluation that met their needs and the needs of the foundations. This approach produces greater generalization by enabling the testing of the theory across multiple programs. Finding common outcomes across programs is hard work and requires grantees to work together; however, in the end, the results are worth the extra effort. This project produced a A Guide to Evaluating Leadership Development Programs (2003) that introduced and provided leadership programs with a step-by-step process to develop their own theories of change.

While theories of change are more commonly used in leadership development evaluation, they have been much more successful at establishing causal linkages between program activities and short-term outcomes than with intermediate and long-term outcomes. In fact, "attempts to evaluate links between program actions and organizational or system-level results are doomed to prove less than satisfactory to those seeking strong and irrefutable evidence of a contributory or causal relationship" (Grove et al., 2007). The reason is that program participants, their organizations and their communities are influenced by a multitude of nonprogram stimuli that will influence any change that occurs.

EvaluLEAD

EvaluLEAD was developed to address the limitations of a linear theory of change approach. Since leadership development is a complex, open system in which program participants make choices and take actions based on many different influences, the evaluation design needs to reflect this reality. EvaluLEAD was piloted with over 20 leadership programs that helped inform the model. The results mapping process starts with mapping the full range of possible results along many different dimensions, and then prioritizing where the evaluation will focus. Some results are closely linked to the program, and some results are more vague, uncertain, and distant. EvaluLEAD provides a framework for collecting data about many different types of results, even those that cannot be causally linked to the program. By focusing on episodic, developmental, and transformative results, the program may uncover findings that are "pivotal to changing the program for the better but which would not have been included within a tightly designed, causal model for that program." EvaluLEAD is designed to provide stakeholders with evaluation feedback that makes them better informed and "more intuitively sensitive to the productivity and potentials of the program, and what is needed to produce more dramatic results." Programs, like LeaderSpring, GoJoven, and Public Allies have successfully used EvaluLEAD to guide their program evaluation. EvaluLEAD was successfully used to guide the development of a results-based framework for boundary-crossing leadership development. Eight leadership programs participated in a learning community supported by The California

Endowment to sharpen their understanding of boundary-crossing leadership results, and guide them collectively to improve their practice and learn from each others experiences.

Action learning and action research

Action learning is commonly used in leadership programs to support individuals and teams to learn by doing. Typically, for instance, a team will choose a project or a result that has strategic importance to the collective, conduct research, and develop and implement a solution. Many leadership development programs, such as the National Public Health Leadership Institute, programs offered by the Center for Creative Leadership, and the Leadership in Action are examples of programs that use action learning as a core leadership development strategy.

Reason and Bradbury (2006) in their <u>Handbook of Action Research</u> define action research as a "participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes...it seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people*."*

The Ford Foundation invested in action research as a component of its Leadership for a Changing World program. The Research Center for Leadership in Action (RCLA) designed a participatory research process that had three parallel streams of inquiry -- ethnographic inquiry, cooperative inquiry, and narrative inquiry. The goal was to generate "practice-grounded products that would help program participants learn something about their own practice, and would help to answer the guiding research question of the initiative: In what ways do communities that are trying to make social change engage in the work of leadership?"

While RCLA is not formulating and testing hypotheses to produce evidence, they are actively engaged in the debates about what constitutes quality evidence in the field of narrative inquiry and other interpretive approaches to collecting and making sense of data. In these approaches validity is replaced with credibility as a test of the plausibility of the argument or explanation. Credibility is established through strong evidence of familiarity with a site, event, or process; taking care to distinguish data from analysis; and to separate the informant's voice from the researchers. Triangulation also enhances credibility (Dodge et. al, 2005). Other standards of interpretation include the rigor of interpretation and the practical fit with the situation.

Interpretive rigor goes beyond the sound application of method to focus on moral and aesthetic dimensions of scholarly quality. It pushes researchers to engage strategies that directly contribute to worthwhile human purposes, not only from their own perspective, but from the perspectives of other social actors involved in the research. Applying this notion of rigor requires adopting criteria of quality that more explicitly address relevance (Dodge et al., 2005)

The RCLA research project was a success because the research agenda was co-created and co-produced with the community. Participants thought the research process was useful and took the time to collectively reflect on their work, and to produce products for documenting an sharing it that valuable for the participants and the leadership field.

Case studies

Case studies have multiple functions in the research and evaluation of leadership and leadership development. Case studies are used by researchers to develop and test their theories and models. David Chrislip and Carl Larson used case studies to identify key components of a collaborative leadership theory, and to formulate a hypothesis they could test with a broader set of stakeholders. In other cases, researchers develop a model of leadership and then use case studies to demonstrate the applicability of their model. Case studies are used frequently as a methodology for evaluating community or organization level outcomes. The complexity of factors that interweave to contribute to collective outcomes are illuminated with case studies. Case studies triangulate data from multiple sources in order to ensure a comprehensive and multi-faceted picture of results. One of the limitations of the way that evaluations have used case studies is the lack of meta-analysis of the themes that cut across cases or a theory that is used to interpret the cases. Too often cases stand alone as qualitative illustrations of program impact without drawing generalizations that are applicable across contexts.

Meta-analyses

Researchers conduct meta-analyses when they want to analyze available evidence from studies that have already been completed. Often the studies have different designs and and are asking different questions so the task is to develop a lens to look at the data that enables new researchers to mine the evidence from these studies around the questions they are asking. An example of a meta-analysis of leadership is a study that was done by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to look at the link between school leadership and student outcomes to identify what works and why. The research analyzed 134 studies from which they identified eight leadership dimensions of effective leadership and a set of leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are associated with effective leadership. The researchers caution that a meta-analysis is not "a guidebook about how to run a school," but it does provide a solid research foundation for developing and testing further hypotheses about what works.

Discussion of Leadership Evaluations as a source of Evidence for an EBP Approach:

There are many approaches to developing and establishing evidence about leadership results. We believe the methodologies we have discussed could contribute to an EBP and offered suggestions about how they might be strengthened. Selecting the right method is important. Each method creates different learning opportunities. Assessments are a good choice when the desired result is well-established, and the pathway to the result is clear. Assessments can benchmark progress towards a desired result, such as changes in behavior, changes in effectiveness, and changes in performance.

Some changes are more complex, and the precise results and pathways to those results are not known. Developing a theory of change is one way to make explicit assumptions about the direction of change and the change process so that stakeholders can test their assumptions. If systemic changes and cultural shifts are desired results, a open-systems framework like EvaluLEAD may better support a practice group to capture the full scope of results, especially

those that may only be beginning to emerge. Case studies, leadership stories, and other forms of narrative are good choices when you want to illuminate the journey or an emergent process that may be unfolding.

Action learning and action research engage teams in framing and exploring their own questions, and learning from their experiences. This approach is particularly useful when diverse groups with different perspectives, different positions of power, and different cultural experiences are engaged in a change process together. Meaning is not given, it has to be discovered through dialogue, reflection and inquiry.

Some of these approaches are being used to develop and/or test relational leadership theories that will be discussed in the next section. These theories have the potential to generate evidence confirming or disconfirming hypotheses about how to support effective leadership processes and action.

What Is The Role Of Theory?

The potential application of EBP to the field of leadership development would require a new level of rigor in developing a theoretical basis for leadership strategies that could be tested, refined and potentially affirmed (if not confirmed) by empirical research and data gained from practical experience to collect evidence that could better inform decisions about leadership development work. There are several sources of theory for supporting leadership development practices that are focused on how multiple social actors are connecting in processes that can achieve large scale results. Some of the practitioners have begun to construct theories about how to support leadership to achieve specific outcomes by studying their experiences to formulate and test hypotheses about leadership work. Jolie Pillsbury has formulated a Theory of Aligned Contributions from her leadership development experience. Some practitioners, like the Center for Creative Leadership, are integrating the work of scholars and researchers; and in this case, drawing on Drath's Collective Leadership Theory to produce a hypothesis they have referred to as DAC. These examples which we will review in greater detail in the next section point to an opportunity to strengthen the connection between leadership theory and leadership development practice. An Evidence-Based Practice approach calls for a more careful consideration of the potential contribution of current scholarship and theory development.

The work of Annie E. Casey focuses strongly on achieving population results. As the field of leadership development moves from a focus on individual change and improved organizational performance to community, systems and population level changes, there is increased recognition that "a new consciousness and a new collective leadership capacity is needed to meet challenges in a more conscious, intentional and strategic way" (Otto Scharmer). A new body of theoretical work has emerged in the past 10 years that better reflects the reality of how individuals are coming together to tackle large scale problems. We have chosen to focus on theoretical conributions with an empirical research component because this work is better positioned to produce evidence that will be useful to leadership development practitioners.

Theory of Aligned Contributions

<u>What is the Theory of Aligned Contributions</u>? We begin with the Theory of Aligned Contributions because this theory is already grounded in the basic elements of an Evidence-Based Practice. The Theory of Aligned Contributions is an emergent, action-oriented, results-based framework that proposes, through implementation, the achievement of meaningful benefit to community well-being on a significant scale. They hypothesize that: *Population level changes are most likely to occur if a core group of multi-sector, cross agency leaders not only respond to a call to action, but also take aligned actions at scope and scale towards a result.*

The theory develops from a set of assumptions about improving community well-being: a) achieving changes at the level of populations cannot be addressed by any single organization/agency and need to be multi-sectoral (both private and public sectors); b) achievement of "outcomes" have proven disappointing because of a lack of alignment on results (i.e. attempting multiple or unidentified specific result); and c) breaking through can appear "impossible" (systemic challenges); d) public accountability can increase the sense of urgency and provide motivation to take action/make aligned contribution; e) 'tipping' the scale is possible with a small group who share a common sense of purpose, and have connected with one another and have a shared appreciation for the urgency of the issue being addressed; f) action learning with a sense of urgency as one element for forward movement toward change sought; g) given the skills and tools, leaders can do the adaptive work required to achieve the results they seek.

The Theory of Aligned Contributions is both a descriptive and predictive theory moving from talk to action.

It predicts the acceleration of population results when leaders from multiple sectors equipped with specific skills and a sense of heightened urgency:

- *Make an unequivocal commitment to be publicly accountable for a result for a specific population: and,*
- *Work together to take aligned actions to contribute at a scope and scale sufficient to make measurable progress and towards the result.* (Pillsbury 2009)

<u>Theory Elements</u> - There are several key elements to the successful implementation of this theory:

- A focus on a single, measurable population result: This result needs to be clearly stated, measurable and the starting point for the groups work.
- Urgency and public accountability: The condition has to be made visible to create a sense of urgency and those involved need to make a public commitment to getting fast results (in a single measurement period).
- Leaders with a collaborative skills set: Leaders need to develop or possess the leadership competencies described below.

How was the theory developed? This theory was developed in response to an observation by its authors that the work of leaders often remains siloed despite efforts to build multi-stakeholder collaboration. In their paper, Cross-Sector Performance Accountability: Making Aligned Contributions to Improve Community Well-Being (Pillsbury, Goddard-Truitt, Littlefield, 2009), the authors acknowledge the disappointing results realized through cross-sector initiatives that have looked at improving community performance. They cite the work of Bryson, Crosby and Stone, who in a 2006 review of the literature on cross-sector collaboration, came to the conclusion that achieving success from those collaborations has proven largely disappointing. Hypothesizing that where the existing conditions in a cross-sector collaboration fail to demonstrate stakeholder alignment and attempts are being made at changing either multiple results, or lacking in a specific desired result(s), unproductive and disappoint outcome(s) are invariably inevitable. The theory rests firmly on the degree of "alignment" around addressing a specific, measurable, "urgent" issue that engages key stakeholders and where leaders hold themselves publicly accountable for ". . . accelerating progress in a single measurement period."(Pillsbury 2009)

What is the implication of this theory for leadership development? The Theory of Aligned Contributions shifts the focus from the individual leader to a more wholistic and systemic approach to increasing community level well-being on a significant scale, such as increasing the number of children prepared to learn when entering school (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007). It provides a cross-sector collaboration of key stakeholders with a framework and complementary tools and skills to effect measurable change - a change for which they are held publicly accountable. This theory has identified four leadership competencies that are key to producing aligned contribution: : a) Results Based Accountability; b) Race, Class Culture Dialogue; c) Collaborative Action; d) Leading from the Middle (King, Pillsbury, Gross, 2009)

Participants are trained in the use of Mark Friedman's results-based accountability framework as a tool for forward movement, by: 1) Identification of the result/outcome being sought stated in clear and direct language; 2) Identify an indicator that is the measurement being sought; 3) Develop a strategy that will achieve the result sought. (Annie E. Casey Foundation's Children and Family Fellowship Program, November 2007)

Developing these competencies requires a neutral and supportive environment where leaders can experiment, practice new behaviors and skills, form authentic relationships, have real conversations and solve conflict in order to support the collaborative work of making aligned contributions.

Application and testing of Theory: The Theory of Aligned Contributions has been implemented in the Smoking Cessation Leadership Center at UCSF, San Francisco's Local Performance Partnership Summits and the Leadership in Action Program (LAP). The LAP was launched in 2001 by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and has been implemented at 13 sites in 4 states. It has resulted in demonstrable success in achieving the (measurable) goals sought after by leaders who have implemented the process. "Overall, LAP leaders have provided evidence that learning and using the aligned contributions framework has empowered them to make a

difference both collectively and within their organizations (The Impact of Leadership Development on Early Childhood Education, 2007)." (Pillsbury, Goddard-Truitt, Littlefield, 2009)

Methods for Generating Evidence About the Theory: Across these examples, the Theory of Aligned Contributions is being tested with tools that measure the level of alignment and action. In fact, the learning and data collection are embedded within the actual design of the program with a very strong action learning orientation. The use of a results framework that is cultivated as a capacity of the participants creates a strong measure (the specific population result) for understanding the impact of different degrees of alignment or action on the result to confirm or disconfirm the Theory of Aligned Contributions. The breadth of implementation and the clear link to specific results creates the basis for gathering a strong body of evidence from these programs about how and when to implement this theory.

Collaborative Leadership Theory

<u>What is the leadership theory</u>: A Collaborative Leadership Theory was developed by David Chrislip and Carl Larson through their research on civic leadership and collaboration in the 1980s and early 90s. In their book, *Collaborative Leadership* (1994) they define collaboration as: *A mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority and accountability for achieving results.*

Collaboration is seen as more than sharing knowledge and information. The Collaborative Leadership Theory assumes that by cooperating and coordinating their efforts, groups of people collaborate when they transcend personal interests to pursue common goals. In a leadership context, the purpose of collaboration is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address public concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party.

<u>What is the implication of this theory for leadership development</u>? In *Collaborative Leadership*, Chrislip and Larson test the following hypothesis:

If you bring the appropriate people together in constructive ways with good information, they will create authentic visions and strategies for addressing the shared concerns of the organization or community.

This hypothesis shifts attention away from a vision of leadership as "heroes who tell us what to do" to a vision of leadership as "servants who help us do the work ourselves." Implicit in this hypothesis is a belief that diverse people can solve their most pressing problems and address their needs if they have the information they need and are brought together in constructive ways. Leadership development becomes the means by which people are brought together with constructive processes, and the information that will enable them to do the collective visioning and planning to act on their shared concern.

How was the theory developed and tested? With the support of the National Civic League, Chrislip and Larson designed a research project to test their hypothesis. They studied six successful collaborations in order to refine their hypotheses. They then assessed 46 collaborations using a tool they developed, *Working Together: A Profile of Collaboration.* This enabled them to identify factors that, depending upon their presence and absence, determine whether collaborations succeed or fail.

Successful collaborations meet four conditions.

- They are broadly inclusive of all stakeholders (including those who may be "troublesome").
- They provide a credible and open collaborative process that gives participants the confidence that their views will be heard and considered without predetermined outcomes.
- They have visible support from high-level, well-known and trustworthy leaders in the community to provide the credibility necessary to assure participants that their efforts may lead to tangible results.
- They gain the support or acquiescence of "established authorities" or institutions either at the beginning or as a result of the collaborations success.

In short, successful collaboration efforts are able to:

- Produce tangible results,
- Empower participants,
- Lead to revolutionary changes in civic culture, and
- Create a renewed sense of community.

The focus on results is critical. Chrislip and Larson acknowledge that "getting results" is too often where collaborative efforts fail, and that there needs to be a shift from a focus on planning to a focus on getting results. Action plans are a tool that help leaders turn collaborative agreements into action. Within a successful collaboration a "steering" group is responsible for moving strategy to action.

Collaborative initiatives get results because participants take deliberate actions to achieve them. Specific actions that produce results in groups include:

- Consciously shifting focus from planning to results
- Establishing a management structure and review process to oversee implementation
- Establish detailed action plans for each implementation initiative that include clear time lines and assignments of roles and responsibilities
- Finding champions and creating implementation teams with the capacity and commitment to initiate and sustain action

- Spinning off implementation tasks to existing organizations (or creating new ones, if necessary)
- Securing agreement of implementing organizations to goals, strategies and implementation tasks

Replication/Application of the Collaborative Leadership Theory: The Kansas Leadership Center is testing a Theory of Civic Leadership in partnership with David Chrislip. They have designed a set of programs across the state that are designed to lead to demonstrable progress on civic challenges such as health, education, economic development, environment and governance; grow the amount of bridging social capital (e.g., the capacity of people to work together across boundaries) and transform the civic culture of Kansas towns, cities and regions (e.g., the ability to support adaptive work through collaborative civic engagement).

KLC supports the development of four competencies of civic leadership across its programs:

- Diagnose the situation,
- Manage self
- Facilitate intervention
- Energize others

Methods for Generating Evidence About the Theory: David Chrislip and the KLC developed a Community Leadership Program Benchmark Assessment that they have used with the KLC Advisory Group composed of leadership programs from around the state. The group used the tool to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their programs which helped them collectively recognize that many of their programs, ". . . while uplifting for participants, did not adequately develop leadership competencies to cope with the true complexity of the challenges people and communities face." The Advisory Group challenged themselves and their programs to "raise the bar" by aspiring to transform the civic culture of their communities (Chrislip, 2009).

They have strengthened their hypothesis that if communities move from an exclusive, often divisive and ineffective civic culture to a more inclusive and collaborative civic culture, they will be more capable of doing adaptive work and ensuring accountability that will help their communities make progress on critical issues. KLC will be an interesting case study to watch since they are investing significant resources in leadership development statewide, and intentionally testing their theory of civic leadership development. They are currently in the process of designing and evaluation strategy for assessing their comprehensive set of leadership interventions. An EBP could help them to select methodologies that will produce solid evidence that could be used by the field.

DAC Integrative Leadership Theory

The Center for Creative Leadership developed the DAC (Direction, Alignment and Commitment) Integrative Leadership Theory.

What is the DAC Integrative Theory?

Leadership is about producing agreement on direction, a framework for alignment, and a sense of commitment to the collective work. One of the characteristics of DAC is its focus on outcomes. "The outcomes of direction, alignment, and commitment are by nature social, systemic, and organizational. If direction is to be shared, everyone must understand and accept it; if alignment is to produce coordination and collaboration, everyone must be prepared to interact collaboratively with others; if there is to be commitment, everyone must put the good of the shared work about individual good" (Eckert and Drath, 2009) .

In the DAC model, leadership is not tied to any particular process. Whatever process or processes a group, team, organization or community uses that produces DAC is a leadership process. Leaders and followers may be involved or they may not be.

What are the implications for Leadership development? These examples made it clear that producing DAC requires more than a competency-based approach to developing leaders. No matter how competent an individual leader is they cannot produce DAC alone. This has led CCL to do extensive research on how *leadership culture* (McCauley et al., 2008) develops and evolves.

How was the theory developed and tested?   CCL saw a need to move beyond an understanding of leadership as fundamentally about leaders and followers in an asymmetrical influence relationship with each other. They increasingly observed that people work together without being in a hierarchical relationships, such as a task force in which several people share leadership, or a community coalition of peer organizations. In these situations there was no clear leader and no clear followers, but there is still leadership.

Methods for Generating Evidence About the Theory: CCL has also done case study research on the DAC model to look at successful leadership in two turnaround schools that were led by principals who participated in the School Leadership Executive Institute (SLEI). SLEI is a rigorous two-year experience for principals to develop and improve leaders' skills in three areas: leadership, management and educational best practices. Principals learned how to use the DAC model to build a culture of high performance. The case studies examined the turnaround process in each school, and then looked at outcomes in several areas: discipline in the schools, academic achievement, and teacher satisfaction. They showed a positive correlation between the turnaround and the improved outcomes.

While the DAC theory has some evidence of success in practice, we have not come across any research that formulates and tests hypotheses based on the DAC theory. Rather, DAC is being used as a lens to analyze data from successful cases. The study did not include research on all the schools that participated in the leadership program so there is no way of knowing whether learning how to apply the DAC model consistently produces turnaround schools or not. We would encourage more discussion on this and future case studies about how the model is being adapted based on what was learned from the research.

Theory U

What is the Theory U?   *The basic hypothesis of the Theory U is that in order to creatively solve significant problems we need a new collective leadership with the capacity to observe the present with a new openness, sense the future and actively learn by prototyping solutions*.

What is the implication for Leadership Development? The Theory U or U Process, as it has been referred to, is a process through which a group enters into a collective relationship that supports participants in collectively sensing and producing innovations. Successful participation in this process requires leadership competencies which are cultivated through a number of exercises and activities that include journaling, listening tools, modeling, solo experiences in nature and introduction to creative processes for prototyping.

The Theory U describes a process with 5 Movements

- Co-Initiating: This is the phase of building a common intent and requires deep listening to what others want to do and connecting deeply to ones own source of meaning, motivation and internal knowing. This is the process by which a group coalesces around an area that matters to them where they would like to make a difference.
- Co-sensing: This phase has been described as observe, observe, observe by going to the places with the most potential for learning and listening, with an open mind and heart. In this phase, it is important to have direct contact with the context of a situation. Most of our organizations do not support this type of deep, collective sensing and perception collectively and across boundaries.
- Presencing: Connect to the source of inspiration and common will. Go to the place of silence and allow the inner knowledge to emerge. This process requires letting go of everything that is not essential. At this threshold the new is embraced and transforms the old such that the participants are changed and will never see things in the same way again.
- Co-Creating: Prototyping the new in living examples that explore by doing. Prototyping is not the solution but part of the discovery process in which the future is explored by doing and not thinking and reflecting. Innovation can be stalled by analysis paralysis. Change makers leverage their learning across prototypes.
- Co-Evolving: Embody the new in ecosystems that facilitate seeing and acting from the whole. This step is to learn from what has worked and not worked in the prototyping and decide which prototypes has the greatest impact on the system. The prototyping involves institutions and players who can pilot and take the prototype initiatives to scale.

Leadership competencies - The successful implementation of the Theory U process requires seven leadership competencies to deliver results:

- Holding the Space: Listening to what life calls you to do. The key to holding space is to listen, to yourself and what you are called to do, to others and their calling, and to what is emerging in the collective space.
- Observing: Attend with your mind wide open. Suspend judgments based on your own experience and listen with an open mind.
- Sensing: Connect with your heart. This type of knowledge is developed through interconnected wholes and not isolated, contingent parts. This type of knowing is open, based on an unconditional sense of value rather than conditional usefulness.
- Presencing: Connect to the deepest source of your self and will. This involves a sense of deep connection to the whole and ability to act from the whole instead of from the self. There is an intuitive knowing what to do.
- Crystalizing: Access the Power of Intuition: A committed core group with an intention goes out into the world and creates and energy field that begins to attract people, opportunities and resources to make things happen.
- Prototyping: Integrating heart, head and hand. This integration occurs in the context of practical application. In this process the new usually begins with a feeling that morphs into a new idea or insight, that is applied to the problem or challenge to produce an breakthrough.
- Performing: Playing the macro violin. Moving beyond one's self to act from the whole.

Has the Theory U been Replicated? The Theory U has been applied in six countries, addressing different issues and is being monitored by the Presencing Institute. The Theory U has also been applied to a network of 20 global leadership from business, government, and civic organizations dedicated to finding productive solutions to significant problems. For more information see Theory U: Leadership from the Future as it Emerges (Otto Scharmer, 2007).

How was the Theory U Developed and Tested? The Theory U was based on interviews with 150 thought leaders and practitioners and dozens of workshops across industries, sectors and cultures. The research was based on a basic hypothesis: Leaders will not be able to solve problems without being able to let go of the past and learn from the future instead of relying on the current learning model of learning from past experience. The research set out to understand what it takes to shift the action of a leader and an organization from learning from the past to leading and learning from an emerging future. The Theory U is a theory constructed from this research and as a methodology for guiding learning and innovation. The Theory U has been tested for 10 years in a variety of contexts. Theory U is also referred to as presencing which combines the words "present" and "sensing." Presencing has been used in Brazil in a sustainable food lab through a partnership with the Sustainability Institute; in India to tackle child malnutrition in partnership with the Synergos Institute; in Washington D.C. to engage in new approaches to HIV/AIDS.

How is Evidence Being Generated to Support this Theory? The Theory U has been implemented in many projects. As evidence of the success of the Theory U, these projects are being tracked to see if multi-stakeholder initiatives using the Theory U are responsible for innovations that

acheive some measureable result. The prototyping is an action research methodology that experiments with and discards or revises potential solutions in rapid time. Examples have been documented as a collection of success stories in health care delivery and satisfaction in Germany, solar and wind generated power in the global south, hybrid sources of power for the Chinese auto industry, micro ventures to support women entrepreneurs in the Philippines to name a few.

How Do These Theoretical Contributions Support Leadership To Achieve Large Scale Results?

<u>What is motivating new thinking</u>? The body of leadership theory that has emerged in the past 10 years requires radically different thinking, aptly captured in Mary Ulh-Bein's writings when she quotes Drath, "The very idea of leadership---what it is and how it works and even how people know it when they see it---is in the process of changing....Nothing less than a revolution of the mind is required, a shift in order of thought, a reformation of how leadership is known." (Uhl-Bein, 2006)

Changes in thinking about leadership are being driven, in many cases, by practical experience and an understanding that our models have not equipped us to deal with persistent problems of fragmentation or to move effectively into a future where social technologies have presented new opportunities of scale and new norms for group behaviors and action. Those who have contributed to this work cite a number of reasons for this shift in leadership theory:

* the focus on individual actors does not take into account the role of context and social identity in shaping leadership;
* leadership theory about individuals does not adequately describe observations about how change actually occurs;
* a study of unsuccessful collaborations points to the need to better understand collaborative leadership and how it is supported;
* the complexity of problems we are tackling require a multi-sector systemic approach to leadership;
* leadership needs to be cultivated as an emergent process co-constructed by multiple social actors to innovate in a rapidly changing and complex environment;
* a more collective and collaborative approach to leadership is required to achieve larger scale results in communities, fields and systems.

<u>Are there common themes emerging across these theoretical contributions</u>? There is a convergence among those who believe that theory about individual leadership does not fully understand the process of change and those who believe that our rapidly changing world is calling for a new leadership mindset. There is general agreement from the sources we have drawn on for this report that leadership is a highly relational and emergent process by which individuals and groups act together on behalf a some social good. We believe that it is helpful

to look at specific areas of agreement to help us understand the potential for a more identifying a set of propositions about leadership development that create a stronger link to the practice field. These propositions could be tested in our leadership work to build a body of evidence across leadership development applications that help us to understand what assumptions about supporting leadership to achieve population level results have been born out by experience. Of course EBP is dependent on being able to assess the quality of evidence, so testing these hypotheses will require that we draw on appropriate evaluation and research approaches to ground this evidence in reliable methodologies.

Common themes among relational leadership theories:
These themes are drawn from the work cited above and from the work of Mary Uhl-Bien on Relational Leadership Theory (Uhl-Bien, 2006), and Barbara Crosby and John Bryson's article on Integrative Leadership Theory (Crosby and Bryson, 2010). We did not include their work in the above review because they are still in the process of developing empirical research to support their theories. We still believe that their work affirms the alignment around several basic ideas across this theoretical contributions to the leadership field.

Results Focus: There are a number of ways that these different theories and applications approach results, but almost all of them recognize this as a key component of effective leadership. It is an essential starting point for the Theory of Aligned Contributions. Collaborative Theory is based on the premise of working together on and holding each other accountable to a common goal. Integrated Theory and Theory U are based on an agreement to focus on developing solutions to a specific problem. A shared commitment to a specific result or problem solution provide both critical meaning and context for leadership work. The idea is further developed by Pillsbury and Scharmer who highlight the importance of the feedback loop through data analysis or action learning prototyping to monitor and ensure high impact results.

Problem Analysis: Collaborative Leadership Theory calls for a strong diagnosis of the situation. The Theory of Aligned Contributions underscores the importance of using/collecting data to clearly understand the gap between the current reality and a desired result, what a possible measurable change would look like and how to monitor it. Theory U uses the language observe, observe, observe and has developed a set of tools to help participants engaged in the Theory U leadership process, draw on multiple perspectives to develop a depth of understanding in their analysis of a problem as essential to creative problem solving.

Action: All of these theories have an action bias (and many an action learning bias) whether stated explicitly or not. In fact, many of these theories, The Theory of Aligned Contributions, the Integrative Leadership Theory and Theory U, were developed to improve the effectiveness of action. In these theories, aligned action is supported by clarity of purpose, connection to deeply held passion and caring about issues that matter most, planning, shared (and public) accountability, and creative processes that encourage rapid prototyping.

Relationship: All of the theories referenced recognize leadership as a highly relational process. The Integrative Leadership Theory recognizes relationships of trust as essential to effective cross sectoral collaboration. DAC was developed out of the recognition that no individual leader produces direction, alignment and commitment alone and emphasize the importance of creating a high performing culture. The Theory of Aligned Contribution recognized group alignment around action and results and has developed curriculum to help the group engage in authentic dialogue. The Theory U promotes models of deep listening to what others want to do in order to co create solutions.

Emergence and Collective Identity: Mary Uhl-Bien describes relational leadership as an emergent process through which social actors construct meaning and organize action. Some of the theories describe the experience of group formation that transcends individual identity and agendas. Several of these were developed in response to the failures of multi-stakeholder initiative recognizing that we need a better understanding of how to develop leadership that can make this move from the person or institutional agenda to understand the interdependence of their work. All of these theories recognize the power of what can be accomplished collectively, even by relatively small numbers of highly aligned social actors.

Diversity: Many of these theories are based on a larger systems view of what is required to achieve high level results (systems, fields, population, community). This can only be achieved by mobilizing multiple parts of the system and building leadership across sectors, communities, institutions and the divides of race, class, gender and other isms.   These theories do not believe social change can be achieved by single entities, i.e. individuals or single institutions.

Conclusion

Leadership practitioners use evaluation to seek answers to questions they have about how to do their work better and have a greater impact. Foundations invest in leadership program evaluations to better understand the value of their investment and to determine how the program contributes to achieving significant results. There is little doubt that leadership stakeholders want to learn about leadership and make sound choices about how to do this work. The desire exists but it is sometimes hampered by resources, capacity and a long term view of field building.

Leadership development and evaluation efforts may also be limited by our vision of what results are possible. The Leadership Learning Community has engaged a number of leadership funders in conversations about a leadership development investment framework that identifies 25 potential leadership development investment opportunities. This framework enables stakeholders to identify patterns in their current investment strategies, engage in deeper dialogue about the purposes for investing in leadership, and become more intentional about future investments. Such clarity increases the likelihood of achieving desired results, and

ensuring that all program stakeholders hold similar intentions as they contribute to program design, delivery, and evaluation.

The majority of leadership programs and evaluations in the past 10 years have targeted individual and organizational change. There has been insufficient connection between the growing body of leadership theory recognizing leadership as a collaborative process capable of systems level change and the approach of leadership development programs. There is a critical need and opportunity to build the connection between a growing set of hypotheses about how to achieve system level results and leadership development practice that has the potential to produce important evidence about how to scale our leadership efforts.

The question we are exploring, is whether EBP has the potential to significantly strengthen our learning and ability to make informed decisions about our leadership work that is backed up with evidence. In the course of this research we have come to believe that there is an opportunity for an EBP to support an important paradigm shift with a methodology that articulates and tests leadership theory about systems change to produce a solid research base of evidence. If leadership development program staff, funders, evaluators and researchers believe that EBP provides an opportunity to strengthen our work we might want to consider a community of practice and learning where we could:

- Develop research and evaluation frameworks that guide the collection of different kinds of evidence for different purposes (e.g., the investment framwork)
- Provide training on what data to collect, how to collect it, and how to use it among leadership practitioners
- Create communities of practice to support the use of evidence based practice across the field (potential collaborators have been identified in this report)
- Organize an EBP repository that can disseminate evidence and be easily accessed by practitioners
- Invest more in practice-based research
- Facilitate collaboration between scholars and practitioners to identify and test hypotheses
- Design and promote reward systems that produce accountability for results

We believe the time is ripe for these changes. Developing evidence in real-time is an area of evaluation research that is promising to accelerate rapidly over the next few years. Our technological capacity to learn continuously across networks and communities of practice will make it possible to capture system level and cultural changes like never before. Methodologies, like results-based accountability and emergent learning maps, are transforming the possibilities for holding each other accountable for results and learning what works and does not work across diverse contexts. Theories have been developed that expand the scope of what is possible, our methodologies for learning from practice are growing and an EBP offers the opportunity to align these developments to significantly increase the scale and impact of our leadership work.

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