

Walden University

COLLEGE OF MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

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Walden University
2010

ABSTRACT

Developing Results-Based Leadership Attributes and Team Cohesiveness Through
Action Learning

by

David Troupe

M.S., Western Washington University, 1996

B.S., University of Washington, 1974

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Applied Management and Decision Sciences

Walden University
August 2010

ABSTRACT

Those who develop leaders in manufacturing settings have little data that describe the usefulness of action learning as a method of developing leaders' abilities to improve results-based leadership attributes or perceptions about their team's cohesiveness. The two purposes of this study were to evaluate an action learning program with regards to its (a) usefulness in promoting results-based leadership attributes and (b) modification of team cohesiveness perceptions. The conceptual framework is founded upon a nexus of action learning, results-based leadership attributes, and team cohesiveness in the context of leadership development with the entire population of a 12-member team. Action learning utilizes adult learning concepts and combines contingency and transformational leadership theories. The research questions inquire how such a program improves the demonstration of the attributes and modifies personal psychological constructs of team cohesiveness. Archival records, interviews, journals, and repertory grids were used to collect qualitative data for analysis. Analyses were carried out through thematic coding of categorical aggregation and identification of patterns. Findings indicated that leadership team members thought small groups and vicarious learning experiences, developed through open sharing, were found to be useful, but cohesiveness of the group did not improve. The results of this research may provide positive social impact through influencing leaders who affect the lives of employees. Since many organizations use team structures, it is important that the teams be as effective as they can be. If leaders can help teams function more effectively, they will be more productive for the organization and society as a whole.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Currently, the general subject of leadership continues to exact a substantial amount of attention, as demonstrated by online resources such as Amazon.com. When queried for books on the subject using the single term *leadership*, Amazon.com returned 61,509 entries. This signifies a popularity similar to that of the term *diet*, which yielded a result of 54,933 entries.

The fascination with leadership might be related to its ambiguous and ethereal nature (Ulrich, Zenger, & Smallwood, 1999). While the leadership construct may be clear to some, the field of leadership does not contain theories and models that are necessarily homogeneous. According to Hodgkinson and Hay ((2006), the body of leadership literature is not cohesive and often contradictory.

Organizations today have a need to understand, develop, and exhibit sound leadership behaviors. In the global economy, where competition is fierce, effective leadership is often seen as a competitive advantage (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2007). There are examples of organizational transformation through employee engagement and involvement (Belgard & Rayner, 2004) and it appears that managers are increasingly expected to be the architects of a workplace climate that involves and engages employees. Abundant literature describes desired leadership values, behaviors, skills, and roles (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005; Gilley, 2005; Quinn, 2004; Schwarz, Davidson, Carlson, & McKinney, 2005). Yet a single description of the leadership construct appears to evade scholarly agreement. What makes a good leader has been

debated for decades, if not centuries (Conger, 1992; Fairholm, 1998; Northouse, 2001). Despite this academic controversy some companies have chosen to embrace a certain leadership model. The company referenced in this study, for example, adopts specific set of results-based leadership attributes as its model for desired leadership behavior. However, the question of how best to develop those attributes is continually under scrutiny.

It is reasonable to suggest that a primary purpose of effective leadership is that of enhancing an organization's ability to create a product, service, or output centered on quality production and achieving customer satisfaction. As an example of the leadership connection to product quality, Hall (2006) offered an approach that describes many of the principles espoused by Dr. W. Edwards Deming and Dr. Walter Shewhart, and which underpins Toyota's system of leadership. In his account, Hall indicated that leaders must demonstrate mastery in inquiry learning. Inquiry learning should be applied to the organization's technical structure, management philosophy, organizational design, team structure, and instructional strategies. According to Hall inquiry learning helps form a sustainable quality systems design.

Another approach requires a leader's knowledge and implementation of a quality enhancement system known as six sigma. Six sigma is a project management methodology that focuses on customer delight, work process improvements, collaboration, and decisions based on facts and data. According to Krause (2009), in this model, it is the team's or organization's customer who provides the impetus for balancing time, scope, and budget.

Still another approach for enhancing production quality is capability maturity model integrated (CMMI). In CMMI, leaders implement practices that help the organization “have visible ongoing processes, which have very well defined steps” (Ramanujan & Someswar, 2004, p. 271). Ramanujan and Someswar (2004) indicated that the phased implementation of CMMI has reported benefits that include the closer relationship between engineering and management and the ability to see if organizational projects are meeting customer expectations.

This case study focuses upon attributes associated with the results-based leadership model, an approach promulgated by Ulrich, Zenger, and Smallwood (1999). Results-based leadership describes leadership effectiveness as “*attributes × results*” (Ulrich et al., 1999, p. 3). The model, as the name suggests, emphasizes improved business performance in the eyes of internal and external stakeholders. The model differs from another model, positive leadership, which seems to exclusively promote intangibles in the form of “outcomes such as thriving at work, interpersonal flourishing, virtuous behaviors, positive emotions, and energizing networks” (Cameron, 2008, p. 4). The results-based model promotes a blend of tangibles and intangibles.

The need for the development of leadership competency is apparent. Contemporary leaders face substantially different challenges than those of a few years ago (Boyatzis & McKee, 2006). Environmental uncertainty (Scott, 2010) and multicultural follower expectations of leaders (Matviuk, 2010) are two such emergent issues. Meeting these and other challenges through the intentional development of leaders in organizations can be argued to be paramount and strategic to organizational success.

Gaining a competitive edge in business and the customer's confidence in service organizations can also be arguably linked to successful leadership.

While there does not appear to be a universally accepted methodology for leadership development, a body of literature exists that points to the benefits of experiential learning in the development of leaders (McCauley, Brutus, & Center for Creative Leadership, 1998). Action learning is one such experiential learning model. Action learning is described by Marquardt (1999) as

both a process and a powerful program that involves a small group of people solving real problems while at the same time focusing on what they are learning and how their learning can benefit each group member and the organization as a whole. (p. 4)

In this case study, action learning is the primary leadership development method.

Problem Statement

The problem is that those who develop leaders in a manufacturing setting have no data that describe the usefulness of action learning as a method of developing leaders' abilities to improve results-based leadership attributes. Nor does there exist evaluative data for determining if action learning is useful as a means to enhance manufacturing leaders' perceptions about their team's cohesiveness. Action learning as a problem-solving technique has been well documented (Beer, 1999; Holmes, 2004; Marquardt, 1999). Action learning as a methodology for developing leadership has also been studied and found to be useful (Choi, 2005; Lee, 2005). However, while accounts exist that demonstrate the usefulness of action learning with leaders with respect to addressing real-world issues (Marquardt, Leonard, Freedman, & Hill, 2009), no research literature exists that evaluates whether or not action learning is useful in developing leaders' abilities to

demonstrate results-based leadership attributes or to strengthen leadership team cohesiveness. As such, organizational leaders who are tasked with ensuring that their results-based leadership attributes development dollars are best spent have little evidence with which to evaluate action learning as a methodology. Similarly, leaders who desire to strengthen cohesiveness among members of their leadership teams have little data to evaluate the usefulness of action learning.

The importance of leaders demonstrating positive attributes and the cohesiveness of the leadership team are significant. Numerous studies have been conducted recently about leadership and its significance in organizational health (Klinsontorn, 2007; Washington, 2007; Wright, 2007). Demonstrating positive qualities, characteristics, and attributes consistently from a group of leaders tends to increase organizational health and well-being (Cameron, 2008). Additionally, the relationship quality between leadership team members, as in any team, is an important element that may affect the performance of the team and, ultimately, the larger organization. If certain aspects of healthy relationships (e.g., open communication) are absent, the team might function in a diminished fashion (Parker, 2006). Therefore, the concern about choosing the right development method for leaders is warranted.

Background of the Problem

This is a study of leaders in an organization within a global manufacturing company where expectations for leadership are changing. In 2006, the company produced a list of expectations in the form of leadership attributes. Beginning mid-2007, through a

performance management system, all managers are assessed annually as to how well they demonstrate these attributes.

While many of the company's organizations have developed workshops and discussion sessions to familiarize managers with these attributes, there has been little activity in creating a mechanism to purposefully assist leaders in operationalizing the attributes. Currently, although the expectation exists for managers to exhibit the leadership attributes, managers have few avenues for meaningful learning coupled with application. Furthermore, because there is little evidence to support the usefulness of action learning as a development methodology, it has not been among the options.

In another sense, the company invests remarkably in its managers. All managers attend leadership learning experiences at a leadership center, where each manager is expected to fulfill a particular regimen. Unfortunately, in most cases, there is not adequate follow-up or reinforcement to ensure that skills and concepts are being embedded into daily leadership activities. Further, in many cases, there is little in terms of expectations from senior leaders that the newly acquired knowledge and behavior be exercised back in the workplace. Corroborating this, a senior executive, responsible for the company's largest site, once remarked that he believed most managers send people to training with the hope that they won't come back and try to implement what they learned.

Another element of the issue stems from the composite of leadership team members. Although a relatively small group, it is not considered to be as cohesive as the senior manager would like. The reasons for the lack of cohesion are unknown, yet certain factors may play a part. For one, many of the leadership members have spent the majority

of their careers in the organization. Many began as technicians on the shop floor. Other more recent additions to the leadership structure have come from outside the organization and may not share the same values, history, or culture. As such, approaches and traditions may clash.

At the time of this study, two other factors were present. Recently, a large unionized segment of the company's workforce conducted a labor strike, resulting in huge losses in revenue and a significant weakening of the company's financial performance. In addition, the global economy has caused tremendous difficulties. As a result, there is substantial concern that the company's customers will not be able to successfully finance the purchase of products. What this means to the study organization is that there is significant pressure to reduce costs.

Even when business is good, there is often a reluctance to consider leadership development a high priority. The demands of getting things done in accordance to a schedule overshadow the need for development (Ruvolo, 2004). When business pressures mount, it is reasonable to suggest that short-term concerns may compete even more successfully for the leaders' time.

It is also possible that, when organizations are faced with substantial pressures and uncertainties, leaders may become united in solidarity and adopt a deep sense of connectivity (Greenberg & Baron, 2008). It may be that leaders will embrace the Cummings and Worley (2001) admonition that "organizations are in the midst of unprecedented uncertainty and chaos, and nothing short of a management revolution will save them" (p. 4). Even so, although leaders may have the determination and desire to

change, modifying behaviors to produce positive relationships with positive communication is a new and unfamiliar focus (Cameron, 2008). As with leadership attributes, possibly due to little evidence, action learning has not been implemented as a strategy to enhance team cohesiveness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was twofold: (a) to evaluate the elements of an action learning program in developing the ability to operationalize and demonstrate results-based leadership attributes, and (b) to evaluate the participant perceived effect of the action learning program on the perceptions of team cohesiveness for members of an intact leadership team.

This research may be helpful in understanding more about action learning in terms of developing leaders toward specific characteristics, behaviors and attributes, and of improving perceptions of team cohesiveness. Although a single case study is not often known for being generalizable (Yin, 2003), it may be that this research will be generalized enough to inform manufacturing leadership teams about how action learning may or may not produce specific improvements. It may also be that the results from this study can be generalized sufficiently to inform the business and social science communities about the usefulness of action learning in developing results-based leadership attributes and increasing perceptions of team cohesiveness.

Theoretical Support for the Study

Three overarching theoretical frames are considered in this study. First, conceptual approaches and models for leadership development are explored. Second,

leadership notions that underpin results-based leadership (Ulrich et al., 1999) are examined. Third, a brief treatise on the conceptual structures found in effective teams and their functions is presented.

Leadership Development

It is difficult to discuss leadership development without including adult learning theory. Although adult learning is too expansive to be fully explored here, it is worth mentioning four theoretical approaches: behaviorist, cognitivist, humanist, and social learning (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). According to Merriam and Cafferella (1991), the purpose of education within the behaviorist model is to create a desired behavioral change, while the cognitivist model's purpose is to "develop capacity and skills to learn better" (p. 138). The humanist orientation promotes self-actualization, and the social learning approach produces the modeling of new roles and behavior.

It might seem apparent that each of these theories has value. When it comes to the demands of modern leadership one might wonder how each might be employed in a development process. A development methodology called action learning blends these theories in its approach.

Action learning uses real-world problems or issues along with small-group collaboration, a facilitator or learning coach, and a focus on learning about oneself and the organization (Marquardt, 1999). Using action learning in leadership development naturally calls upon a behaviorist bent because certain skills, behaviors, and competencies are targeted. In addition, because learning about one's learning is a hallmark of action learning (Marquardt, 1999), a cognitivist element resides. Because

action learning focuses on learning about and solving issues identified by the participants, the learning becomes self-directed. Self-directed learning is an aspect of the humanist orientation. Finally, action learning, by its use of small learning teams and facilitators, contains a social learning element. Mentoring and examination of locus of control for leaders is another central point found within social learning and these are specially relevant for leaders in this study who are learning to be empowering leaders of teams.

Leadership Models

Leadership models are helpful in operationalizing theory. Acting as guides or templates, leaders can pattern their behaviors in alignment with such things. Contingency, transactional, exchange, and transformational leadership models are some fairly well-known theoretical frames.

In contingency theory, researchers like Fiedler (1989) and Hersey and Blanchard (1993) advocated that the leader's style must be aligned with the leadership need. Restated, the leader's style must match the situational context. At the heart of transactional and exchange theory is the social psychology assertion that people will most likely want to continue social interactions that are seen as beneficial to them. If the activities are more rewarding than costly, people will be more apt to persist in those activities (Chemers, 1997). Transformational leadership theory differs in that its effectiveness relies almost exclusively on the leader's ability to be charismatic, inspirational, provide intellectual stimulation, and give individualized consideration (Bass, 1990). According to Seltzer and Bass (1990), transformational leaders "move their

followers to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group” (p. 694), which promotes a focus on the well-being of the collective.

A lesser known approach for leadership is seen in the work of Ulrich et al. (1999). Contained therein is the concept of results-based leadership, which expands the leadership abstraction to combine both a leader’s attributes and organizational results in its formula for leadership effectiveness. Although Ulrich et al. (1999) provided referential linkage to transformational leadership and contingency theory approaches, their treatise capitalized on blending a number of thoughts from authors such as Stephen Covey, Kenneth Blanchard, James Kouzes, Barry Posner, and Warren Bennis. In their depiction of useful attributes, Ulrich et al. listed several overarching elements that relate to “who leaders ARE (values, motives, personal traits, character); what leaders KNOW (skills, abilities, traits); and what leaders DO (behaviors, habits, styles, competencies)” (p. 4). These elements are setting direction, demonstrating personal character, mobilizing individual commitment, and engendering organizational capability.

Teamwork

The concept of team effectiveness is not clearly understood or agreed upon. One reason is that there are several components involved which are, themselves, confusing and unclear. A second, according to Salas, Burke and Cannon-Bowers (2000), is that there are many types of teams and each team requires a different process for effectiveness.

While there are many definitions for the term *team*, Salas et al. (2000) offered one that is succinct and useful for this discussion:

a set of two or more individuals interacting adaptively, interdependently and dynamically towards a common and valued goal. . . . In addition, team members are each assigned specific roles/functions to perform, and a team has a limited life span. (p. 341)

Salas et al. (2000) also proffered several principles for teamwork. Among them is that “teamwork requires that members monitor each others’ behaviors and action and feel free to provide and accept feedback based on monitoring behavior” (p. 443). Salas et al. (2000) argued that interaction of this type creates a climate where free exchange of information exists. When the climate is free from fear of retribution open, honest feedback can be given and will result in better team performance.

Others have taken on the challenge of attempting to provide better a definition of teamwork quality and to measure its distinctive elements. Hoegl and Gemuenden (2001) identified six characteristics of the teamwork quality (TWQ) construct: communication, coordination, balance of member contribution, mutual support, effort, and cohesion. The elements of this construct, though linked to team achievement, are not measures of team activities, but rather, are measures of the quality of interactions between individuals. This is an important distinction, for it has much to do with relational aspects and the sense of cohesion between team members. In Hoegl and Gemuenden’s (2001) view, the “quality of collaboration in a team determines the contentment of team members with their work situation to a large degree” (p. 445). They hypothesized that TWQ has a positive association with personal success and that personal success consisted of both work satisfaction and collaboration with others to gain learning.

It appears evident that collaboration, by its very definition, is an act of inclusion. Therefore, when a group of people are collaborating there is a stronger bond between

them. Naturally, this would tend to minimize alienation and increase cohesiveness and unity. As the quality of collaboration increases, one would also expect the level of inclusion, or de-alienation, to increase.

Assumptions

I have worked for almost 2 years as an internal consultant with the management team under study. Personal relationships have been established with most of the members. Such relationships might be seen as hindering the research effort. Conversely, they could be seen as enabling trust and confidence in me. One assumption associated with this study was the expectation that the participants would be candid, frank, and self-disclosing in their assessments of themselves and others.

Another assumption was that participation in the study was voluntary, although participating in the action learning program was not. The senior manager expected all members of the leadership team to participate in the learning sessions as a means of developing the staff, but made no statements regarding supporting me or the study. I made it clear to each manager that participation is strictly voluntary, drawing the difference between participating in the learning activities and participating in the study.

Still another assumption is that participants would have a natural motivation for learning how to operationalize the results-based leadership attributes. The company has been clear with expectations for leadership behaviors. This is evident by the fact that the performance management exercise includes attribute measures. In the organization studied herein, 60% of managers' yearly assessments are based on how well they demonstrate the results-based leadership attributes.

Finally, an additional assumption was that team cohesiveness would be improved by spending time together in learning sets. The weekly process of action learning was expected to break down barriers. It was also expected, through the inherent acts of collaboration, to strengthen the bonds between team members.

Scope and Delimitations

This study included 12 participants who were members of a manufacturing organization's management team. All members were male and were formal managers; that is, they each had others who reported to them. The composite consisted of 1 third-level manager, 2 second-level managers, and 9 first-level managers. Of the first-level managers, one had salaried direct reports, while the others primarily had hourly, unionized direct reports. In addition to the managers, there were about 150 employees in the organization, who were not part of the study.

The organization under study was part of a larger organization, which included two other business units. One of them conducted work similar to the studied organization, while the other housed core functions, such as engineering. These two other organizations and their managers were not part of the study.

The management team under study was chosen partly because of its proximity and accessibility and partly because of its receptivity to conducting a leadership development action learning program and being studied. In addition, the number of managers on the team is a manageable study group. Because qualitative data was to be captured through interviews and subsequently transcribed and coded, a 12-member group represents an appropriate study population size and statement of work. The 12 members

represented the entire, intact leadership team. The managers in the study learned and collaborated together in three action learning sets with four members in each set. The learning was applied in the context of addressing the organizational challenges before them, with a focus on demonstrating the results-based leadership attributes as they addressed those challenges. Although none of the managers had any experience with action learning prior to the study they had several conversations about the results-based leadership attributes.

Finally, in this study I was focused, in part, on the cohesiveness found within a leadership team. Although concepts dealing with that cohesion are explored, the central inquiry is limited to the perceptions of the team members. Additionally, constructs like team effectiveness, performance, and productivity—though they may be related—were not included as central items for this research.

Limitations

One of the phenomena that was thought to potentially affect the study outcome is participant absence. My experience with the study group indicated that unplanned organizational events can often preempt team members' availability. When people cannot attend or arrive late for learning sessions, for example, connections among the team members may be diminished and the action learning set process is hampered. Since action learning takes place in small groups, absence or tardiness of members might reduce the learning experience for others and themselves.

As indicated earlier, the relationship between me and the study participants was deemed as possibly limiting findings. It was postulated that due to the many months of

association and the goodwill formed, participants might have been reluctant to share opinions they believed would somehow show up poorly for me. For example, the participants may genuinely believe that my ability to facilitate the action learning sessions, or the study in general, was somehow ineffective. Yet, because they think such comments would be damaging to the study results or me personally, something more positive might be reported. Behavior such as this is hazardous to the study and could potentially contaminate research findings. I believed that this contamination could be mitigated successfully through effective leadership, clear expectations, and emphatic admonishment. Clear communication was delivered about the need for complete candor, given prior to any conversation or interview with any of the participants, with the belief that it resulted in honest feedback and opinions. It was also believed that if the participants understood that their unbridled honesty would help make both the research and me successful, their submissions would reflect authenticity and sincerity.

Another limitation was also associated with the relationship between me and the participants. I am very familiar with most of the participants and that familiarity may bias my perceptions of comments and behaviors. That bias, if not controlled, could flavor the interactions during the action learning sessions, interviews, or coaching sessions. These comments in mind, Creswell (1998) advised against doing a study in one's own backyard and stated:

Studying such people or sites establishes expectations for data collection that may severely compromise the value of the data; individuals might withhold information, slant information toward what they want the researcher to hear, or provide "dangerous knowledge" that is political and risky for an "inside" investigator. (p. 114)

It was extremely important to mitigate inauthentic input and researcher bias. I believed that if the participants understood how crucial it was for them to be open and honest with their views, they will heed my admonishment in that regard and yield their truths. As a practiced coach, I was also aware that when engaged in guided conversations appropriate self-management must come to bear. Here it seemed relevant to recount admonitions offered by seasoned coaches (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 2007) on the subject. The first step is to be aware, to notice one's thinking in the moment. Second, it is important to refrain from offering opinions and advice. The study was not focused on me or my views. It was helpful to remember that the focus was on the participants' experiences. Curiosity and asking insightful questions to uncover participant thinking did much to mitigate researcher bias (Whitworth et al., 2007).

Still another limitation could potentially be found in the instruments to collect data. To illustrate, a performance management exercise was used to gauge leadership attributes. It may use terms that are unclear or ambiguous, but since it is a standard company tool, it cannot be modified. As a result, there is the potential for some participants not to understand the items fully, yet be reluctant to admit it.

It was mentioned that all managers are scored yearly in the performance management process. That score is the result of how the senior manager interprets the achievements of the subordinate. The combination of business goal completion and leadership attribute demonstration, the score affects annual salary adjustments. Since the leadership team under study was composed of superiors and subordinates, some action learning participants may have been less open and forthright in describing their

nonsuccesses. There was a concern that they may have been hesitant to share their challenges when their boss was present.

Finally, it was thought that generalizability would be limited due to the fact that the study population was a relatively homogeneous group of White men in an American manufacturing organization. All the participants have been with the company for many years. The biggest differentiator between participants is the amount of formal education, length of time in the study organization, and length of time as a manager.

Research Design

The research design is an evaluative case study using qualitative data from an assessment instrument, interviews, observation notes, and organizational documents. Two units of analysis are used to explicate the results of the action learning program (Yin, 2003). The first unit of analysis is the action learning program and its elements in relation to the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes, as identified by the participants and others. The second unit of analysis is the perception about cohesiveness, and the changes thereof, with respect to each member of the team. Repertory grid technique, a method of inquiry based on personal construct theory (Fransella & Bannister, 1977), was used in data collection. This will be explained in chapter 3.

Data collection through an assessment instrument and interviews, in support of an evaluative case study, was appropriate for this research. Perceptions of participants, and those of others connected to participants, created the contextual data that corresponded to the research questions. The assessment process, attached to the yearly performance management exercise, was expected to show potential changes of perceptions from a

single source regarding the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes. Semistructured interviews with participants were expected to yield qualitative data regarding action learning experiences and relationships. Interviews conducted, using a repertory grid interview technique, were designed to uncover shifts in personal constructs and offer opportunities for further inquiry. Observation notes and organizational documentation augmented as additional data.

Definitions of Terms

Action learning: “a process and tool that enable individuals and groups to learn while solving problems and implementing actions” (Marquardt & Banks, 2010, p. 160).

Attributes: the combination of competencies and inner character of leaders (Ulrich et al., 1999, p. xiii).

Cohesiveness: “the resultant of all the forces acting on the members to remain in the group. These forces may depend on the attractiveness or the unattractiveness of either the prestige of the group, members in the group, or the activities in which the group engages” (Festinger, 1950, p. 274).

Results-based leadership attributes: a combination of leadership attributes found in the frameworks of setting direction, demonstrating personal character, mobilizing individual commitment, and engendering organizational capability.

Team: “a set of two or more individuals interacting adaptively, interdependently and dynamically towards a common and valued goal. . . . In addition, team members are each assigned specific roles/functions to perform, and a team has a limited life span” (Salas et al., 2000, p. 341).

Research Questions

The following central question is addressed: How is an action learning program perceived as useful in learning to demonstrate results-based leadership attributes and enhancing the perceptions of team cohesiveness? Stemming from this central question, five research questions make up the intent of this evaluative case study. They deal with both the experience of the participants in the action learning program and the effect that the program had in the form of perceived changes in the participants. The research questions are:

1. How useful is an action learning program in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes?
2. What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as especially positive or useful?
3. What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as not positive or useful?
4. What team cohesiveness constructs do team members (participants) ascribe to other team members?
5. How does the action learning program modify the team cohesiveness constructs?

Significance of the Study

It has been suggested that the quality of leadership can affect the quality of the organization in a number of ways. As examples, knowledge management (Lakshman, 2007) and follower satisfaction (Bartram & Casimir, 2007) are two disparate topics that

are potentially impacted by leadership quality. Moreover, Joseph and Winston (2005) asserted that certain leadership behaviors can have an impact on other intangible assets such as the level of trust, while Lencioni (2002) emphasized that trust, openness, and cohesiveness are the most important elements to successful teams.

Because leadership quality is important, it is easy to deduce that the development of leaders and a desired suite of competencies are equally significant. However, not every company or organization has constructed a formal leadership development program or process that includes an explicit leadership model (Bennis, 2000), despite the fact that it is doubtful that desired development can be obtained implicitly (St. John & Shanks, 1997). The role of consciousness in the learning process is still under study. There are some studies to suggest that learning can take place without awareness (St. John & Shanks, 1997), yet most formal learning programs rely on some intentional structuring of what is to be learned and an appeal to the conscious minds of participants (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Applied to leadership development, many successful programs include a leadership competency model, management support, and systematic training. Among these programs action learning is touted as extremely effective since it engages people in finding “real solutions to real problems” and provides “the fastest and most lasting learning” (Bennis, 2000, p. xvi).

Although action learning has been shown to be useful in improving leadership behaviors and characteristics (Giber, Carter, & Goldsmith, 2000; Leonard & Lang, 2010) there is no research literature to show how an action learning program relates to both the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes and the enhancement of leadership

team cohesiveness. Although much research has been conducted about team cohesiveness, relatively little is available regarding intact work teams (Michalisin, Karau, & Tangpong, 2004).

This study stands to make a contribution that is both useful and perhaps generalizable to a larger frame of organizations and team development efforts. Many organizational leaders might be interested in learning the results from this case study. Manufacturing and nonmanufacturing organizations alike might benefit from the knowledge derived.

From a larger social relevance frame this study may well inform leaders of organizations in such a way as to promote additional positive leader development mechanisms. Since many people spend much of their lives at work it seems reasonable to expect that improving work-life may have implications for their overall well-being. As groups of people learn how to interact more positively, life may become more satisfying.

Summary and Overview

In chapter 1, I have described the need for effective leadership development processes. It has been pointed out that the action learning methodology has been shown to be useful, but it has not been used specifically to enhance the results-based leadership attributes associated with the company mentioned herein. Moreover, it has not been shown that an action learning program focused on results-based leadership attributes can deliver improvements in team cohesiveness. In this study, I have investigated how an action learning program strengthens the demonstration of results-based leadership

attributes, if at all, and if that program can positively affect the perceptions of cohesiveness among the participants of the action learning group.

In chapter 2, I present a review of relevant literature that creates the fabric into which this study was woven. The foundational tapestry will give the reader an understanding about the breadth and depth of results-based leadership. It also provides a review of action learning, team cohesiveness, and the study methods in relation to the above research questions.

In chapter 3, the methodology used in the study is described. Information regarding the research design is offered, as well as a portrait of the target population. Instrumentation and data collection and analysis processes are also explained.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review is intended to expound upon the depth and breadth of research related to the research questions. It provides a landscape that portrays areas of academic robustness as well as those with few trusses. The purpose of the review is also to provide understanding about the significant concepts found in the present study.

The review begins with a discussion of results-based leadership, the model on which the leadership attributes associated with this study are founded. It continues with an explication of action learning and its place in adult learning, along with research regarding its use in leadership development. In the discussion of team cohesiveness, I present a theoretical background as well as research on the topic related to experiential learning. Finally, the review includes an understanding of case study methodology and the qualitative data collection processes as well as the repertory grid technique.

The strategy for completing the review included database searches of recent journal and publication articles using the following keywords: action learning, leadership development, team development, leadership team, team cohesiveness, team cohesion, results-based leadership, leadership attributes, experiential learning, repertory grid, personal psychological constructs, and personal construct psychology. The Emerald and EBSCO databases, such as Academic Search Premier and Business Source Premier, were accessed. Searches for dissertations were accomplished using the Walden University access to Walden dissertations and the ProQuest database. Searches for books were done in a similar fashion, primarily using the University of Washington library system.

Results-Based Leadership

The results-based leadership model (Ulrich et al., 1999) is very clear in its focus and intention. Although leadership theories and approaches such as contingency theory, transactional, and transformational theories have their strengths, they are not fully comprehensive. However, the results-based approach is more so because it interweaves several leadership theories. Advancing the argument that leadership must go beyond “being capable and possessing the attributes of leadership” (p. 3), Ulrich et al. (1999) provided a simple formula: “*Effective leadership = attributes × results*” (p. 3).

Built upon four conceptual blocks, the results-based model (Ulrich et al., 1999) enmeshes leaders’ personal character, knowledge, and their behaviors. These blocks are described as: (a) sets direction, (b) mobilize individual commitment, (c) engender organizational capability, and (d) demonstrate personal character. In order to fully demonstrate the tenets of results-based leadership, leaders must operationalize a combination of the leadership theories and models discussed previously.

Sets Direction

According to Ulrich et al. (1999), leaders must be able to create value for all stakeholders in and around the organization. They must be able to “understand external events, focus on the future, and turn vision into action” (Ulrich et al., 1999, p. 8). Generic actions for the leader to undertake include: developing networks, focusing on the customer, communicating a tangible vision, thinking strategically, and inspiring a shared purpose and vision within a climate of success. This is in alignment with Bennis and Nanus’s (1985) articulation that success in dealing with the complexity of organizational

demands, getting people excited about organizational goals and visions, and enlisting others in attaining a specific future state calls for the transformative leader.

Mobilize Individual Commitment

Leaders operationalize their visions by engaging the people in their organizations (Ulrich et al., 1999). This is done by investing energy into creating collaborative relationships. The leader helps individuals understand how their commitment supports organizational goals and requires a personal investment of heart, mind, and soul. Believing in people, empowering them, and sharing power and information, leaders instill a spirit of collaboration and trust. This powerful aspect of results-based leadership might require a blend of transformational inspiration and credibility (Bennis & Nanus, 1985), particular qualities or attributes (Jago, 1982), relationship-oriented style (Northouse, 2001), and Chemers's (1997) description of transactions and exchanges between leaders and followers.

Engender Organizational Capability

It is not enough to simply stay busy. The actions taken by leaders must add value and increase organizational capability (Ulrich et al., 1999). Developing organizational infrastructure and diverse human resource systems along with the deployment of teams are tactics leaders can use. Leaders exemplifying this attribute also model themselves as change agents bringing about cultural change and demonstrating active experimentation and risk-taking.

Demonstrate Personal Character

Leaders who walk the talk, inspire those around them, and demonstrate a blend of personal charm and intelligence display a charismatic demeanor with a substantial degree of credibility (Ulrich et al., 1999). According to Ulrich et al., this credibility is the transformational leadership described by Kouzes and Posner (2002) and embodies perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and dynamism. This character demonstration aligns well with the requirement to lead by example, model a dedication to personal growth and learning, and demonstrate a humble self-confidence.

While the four attribute groups create a foundation, Ulrich et al. (1999) reiterated frequently that the bottom line must be the impact to the bottom line; that is, leaders need to produce results. These results must be meaningful and add value to the organization, employees, customers, and investors. It seems apparent that a variety of leadership theories and approaches are called upon in order to be successful.

Action Learning

Ulrich et al. (1999) advocated a system of development where leaders develop leaders. “Workshops, courses, and structured activities have their place in the process of building leaders, but most would-be leaders who become leaders in fact, capable of achieving long-term success, often gain most of their skills through experience” (p. 205). Among those experiential developmental processes that Ulrich et al. promoted was action learning.

As mentioned, action learning has been shown to be a useful system in many organizations. Marquardt (1999) offered that “action learning is a powerful problem-

solving process as well as a program that has amazing capacity to simultaneously effect powerful individual and organization-wide changes” (p. 1) and Raudenbush and Marquardt (2008) reported that action learning promoted leadership growth in the areas of communication, team building, and conflict management. The action learning process uses a methodology that combines small groups of people working on relevant issues, using experiential learning and reflection. Cusins (1996) depicted this process as a wave, with an event or activity taking place, followed by reflective observation, followed by making sense out of the information gathered, followed by application of learning, followed by the next event. According to Marquardt (1999), this cyclic process consists of six elements which work together: (a) a problem, challenge, or issue of high importance, (b) a small group of learners, also called a learning set, (c) questioning and reflection processes, (d) resolution to take action, (e) a commitment to learning, and (f) a facilitator.

A Problem, Challenge, or Issue

A significant problem or issue is a critical element. According to Yeo and Nation (2010) “an urgent and complex problem provides the stimulus for individuals and groups to increase their readiness for the problem-solving process” (p. 185). Marquardt (1999) explained that the selection of the problem or issue is paramount and should meet a number of parameters. It should be real in that the solution should be meaningful to the organization. It should be feasible in that it should be within the group’s capacity to understand the problem or issue and to derive possible solutions. It should not have an

existing solution and many solutions might be applicable. Finally, it should provide opportunities for learning that can be applied elsewhere in the organization.

Marquardt (1999) indicated that action learning is useful in developing a number of desirable leadership roles. Systems thinker, change agent, innovator and risk taker, servant and steward, polychronic coordinator, instructor, coach, and mentor, and visionary and vision builder were included in the list. These roles are useful in fulfilling the requirements of results-based leadership.

A Small Group of Learners

The small group of learners, or set, is essential as a support mechanism for individuals in the group. Meeting regularly, members of the learning group challenge each other, share information, and testing each other's view of reality (Cusins, 1996). Marquardt (1999) advanced the notion that learning groups, recommended to be sized at four to eight members, establish ground rules or norms to govern behaviors. These may include communication expectations, being prepared for each meeting, and staying on task. According to Marquardt (1999), a small group supports a needed balance between inquiry and advocacy, along with a blend of dialogue and discussion.

Questioning and Reflection Processes

Central to the action learning process are questioning and reflection. Marquardt (1999) stated that action learning is sometimes depicted by "the formula $L = P + Q + R$, where L = learning, P = programmed knowledge, Q = questioning, and R = reflection". Programmed knowledge is information that gives learners a background or baseline from which to work. For example, both effective questioning and encouraging reflection are

skills inherent to coaching (Hargrove, 1995; Peterson & Hicks, 1996; Whitworth et al., 2007). It seems reasonable to expect that for learning groups to be successful, some of the programmed knowledge delivery of action learning would be tailored to teaching coaching skills. Asking questions not only expedites solutions, it also encourages exploration of possibilities. Effective questioning can explore and develop mental models and create new connections. Sofo, Yeo, and Villafane (2010) suggested that powerful questions can generate reflection during activity and that this reflective practice embraces both motivation and emotion. Marquardt (1999) posited that reflection is at the heart of action learning. It is associated with the time taken to step back, unfreeze thinking, and adopt different perspectives. Reflecting on experiences is a natural opening to double-loop and triple-loop learning where personal transformation takes place (Hargrove, 1995).

Resolution to Take Action

Marquardt (1999) indicated that learning group members must put their learning into action. This means that they must be empowered to act or be assured that their recommendations will be embraced. In the area of leadership development, it might seem apparent that members are empowered and expected to take action on their learning, to demonstrate actions associated with leadership attributes.

A Commitment to Learning

Marquardt (1999) acknowledged that there are additional targets in the action learning process besides solving problems. If learners have an appreciation for the

purpose of action learning, they can see the strategic nature, that it is transformative. It involves both a social and intellectual element for the organization, group, and individual.

In a larger sense, the transformative nature of the process must extend beyond the task at hand. If learners are learning to demonstrate actions and skills associated with leadership attributes, the real value has to do with how it enhances themselves, their relationships, and their entire system. Dirkx, in referring to that which is being learned, stated:

How do the words of the text, of what we read, hear, see or experience become part of who we are, lend meaning to our lives, illuminate those aspects of our lives shrouded in darkness or mystery? Clearly, it is more than memory, more than remembering what we read, see, hear, or experience. The process of learning represents the process of the word becoming an integral part of our being. And when this happens, it has the potential to transform our sense of self and our being in the world. (Dirkx & Mezirow, 2006, p. 130)

Transformative learning applies to more than single individuals. Entire organizations can be transformed through learning when its members change their underlying beliefs and assumptions. “Organizational learning occurs through the shared insights, knowledge, and mental models of members of the organization” (Sofa et al., 2010, p. 215). Allee (1997) identified organizations that are transformed in such a manner are most successful in the global marketplace.

A Facilitator

Marquardt (1999) cited the facilitator of an action learning process as important and who incorporates the roles of coordinator, catalyst, observer, climate setter, communications enabler, and learning coach. As the name implies, the facilitator facilitates learning by creating the environment that is free of judgment and criticism. The

facilitator intervenes wisely and only to enhance learning. In this way, the facilitator is a model for learners to emulate.

Action Learning Benefits and Concerns

O'Neil and Marsick (2007) suggested that action learning offers a number of benefits to individuals and organizations. First, it represents a powerful tool for innovation. Its structure and methodology appears to break down traditional forms of thinking, teaching the skill of asking the right questions. Second, action learning is results-driven. Real solutions can be generated that have a true and positive business impact. Third, the need for resilient leaders is growing and resiliency can be attained through continuous learning. Action learning offers that in its iterative pattern of working on a problem and learning about learning in a networked, social fashion. Finally, in action learning, the transfer of learning to the workplace takes place. This operationalizing of concepts learned is more apt to impact behaviors and transform the organization.

Investigations have been conducted into what participants view as beneficial elements or aspects in action learning programs. In Lee's (2005) study activities surrounding "the questioning and reflection component in particular seem to have made the greatest contribution to changes in leadership among the six [action learning elements]" (p. 200). However, in Van Schuyver's (2004) study of 22 graduate-level students who had recently completed action learning programs, it was suggested that learning takes place throughout the entire action learning process. It is pervasive and no

one particular aspect or phase of the process was considered by participants to be the most learning-causative.

The emphasis on learning in action learning is warranted, for without it, the action learning set becomes little more than a project team focused on getting tasks accomplished (Mumford, 1996; Weinstein, 1997). Mumford (1996) suggested a distinction between accomplishing tasks and attention to what is being learned by proposing two cyclic models. In the task cycle, the following steps are found: taking action, seeing results, thinking about the results, and planning the next action. In the learning cycle, the steps are: having an experience, reviewing, concluding, and planning. This is akin to Kolb's learning cycle which contains the steps of: experience, reflection, generalization, and testing (McGill & Beaty, 2001). A predominate element found in most of the postulates for the effectiveness of learning in action learning is that of reflection (McGill & Beaty, 2001; O'Neil & Marsick, 2007; Sofo et al., 2010).

Action learning is not necessarily embraced by some management development traditionalists. The beliefs that managers should learn management theories based on research, and that only practices based on that research should be taught, may still exist. Management development might often be thought to be best provided by experts, not the managers themselves. Management development specialists understand the theoretical framework and may be regarded as the best ones to transmit what is needed. Learning in this mental model, according to McLaughlin and Thorpe (1993), may be regarded as an individualist exercise, rather than social.

Overall, it appears evident that action learning has value, both for the individual and for the organization. For the individual, personal development and self-improvement occur (Jianhua, 1991). For the organization, significant problems or issues are resolved (Schlesinger, 1991; Yeo & Nation, 2010) and a spirit of collaborative leadership can be encouraged (Raelin, 2006). According to Rayner, Chisholm, and Appleby (2002) leadership capability, which might be argued as benefiting both individuals and organization, was edified through action learning. In their experience, leaders learned questioning techniques, gained “new enthusiasm for effecting change in practice” (p. 39), and increased personal confidence.

Action Learning and Leadership Development

As noted, no studies that deal specifically with action learning and results-based leadership attributes appear to be evident. Studies do exist, however, showing the usefulness in developing managerial and leadership skills (Choi, 2005; Lee, 2005). In Lee’s (2005) study, it was shown that action learning was effective in positively modifying both transactional and transformational leadership behaviors. In that research, all of the ten elements of visionary leadership theory were found to be improved for each of 16 middle management participants using self-reported data.

In Choi’s (2005) work, action learning was used as a means of developing coaching skills in managers. Participants reported that skill improvement occurred for all eight coaching skills involved. Lee (2005) and Choi (2005) conducted their studies in South Korea and, while they both reported action learning as effective, each relied strictly on participants to self-assess their skill or attribute advancement.

In another recent study, especially relevant to the present study, Ward (2008) conducted a case study using 13 managerial participants and an action learning approach. Ward's (2008) design was developed to understand the extent to which learning was transferred to the workplace and whether or not the perceived learning resulted in performance improvement. Included in his study were multi-rater feedback instruments, action learning sessions, semistructured interviews, and personal learning goals (PLGs). The goals were linked to specific competencies as defined by the multi-rater feedback instrument. Examples include: drive for results, display organizational savvy, lead courageously, manage disagreements, and foster open communication.

Ward (2008) demonstrated that a substantial amount of learning was transferred to the workplace. According to Ward (2008), the action learning design allowed for the opportunity to try out new learning in the workplace. While questioning insight, reflection/critical reflection, and PLGs were the three areas of concern, PLGs were found to transfer the most, with reflection/critical reflection being the next-most.

Team Cohesiveness

Teams are becoming more critical as elements of successful organizations (Marquardt, Seng, & Goodson, 2010). Katzenbach (1997) defined a real team as “a small *number* of people with *complementary skills* who are committed to a *common purpose*, *performance goals*, and an *approach* for which they hold themselves *mutually accountable*” (p. 84). Katzenbach (1997) opined that very few top management teams are real teams. Generalizing this a bit further it is possible that many leadership groups are not real teams, and perhaps for the same reasons as Katzenbach cited. Many leadership

groups do not have a clear purpose for their existence, unlike a shop floor team which might be responsible for a particular assembly of a particular component. Many do not have shared performance goals. Each member might have goals for their function or operation, but they may not necessarily be coresponsible or interdependent. In a leadership group, there may not be the right skill mix, or perhaps, little thought given toward a skill mix that meets a holistic aim. Many leadership groups do not embrace mutual accountability. Rather, they are often held accountable as individuals. Real teams require a substantial amount of time to work on team chemistry, including shared understanding about roles, skills, and goals. Many leadership groups are flying fast and furious and have little patience for working through team development activities. If much of this is true about many leadership teams, it is little wonder that they are not as cohesive as they could be.

It should be easy to see why team cohesion is an important construct and one that needs to be understood. There are many factors that lead to an increased sense of cohesiveness. The rigor of initiation into the team or group is one of these. When members of a group overcome the difficulties of joining the group, as in the process to join a prestigious club or top-ranked sports team, there tends to be a sense of unity and esprit de corps. Greenberg and Baron (2008) cited other factors that positively affect cohesiveness that included the amount of time team members spend with each other, especially in small groups, and having a history of success.

The need for team cohesion in leadership teams was articulated by Michalisin, Karau, and Tangpong (2004). The authors recognized that a company's competitiveness

is found within its intangible resources. Resources that are generally intangible and are “simultaneously valuable, rare, difficult or costly to imitate, and are nonsubstitutable” (p. 126) are called strategic assets. Arguably, team cohesiveness is an exceptional strategic asset. Reinforcing this notion, the work of Michalisin et al. (2004) suggested that team cohesion in top management teams adds organizational value. More specifically, they suggested

the possibility that factors that can increase [top management team cohesion]—such as liking and attraction to other [top management team] members, commitment to the team, and desire to remain in it, and pursuit of shared goals—may well produce sustainable competitive advantage for the firm. (p. 137)

Arguing for additional care Michalisin et al. (2004) advocated special attention in the areas of team development, creating shared goals, and the selection of team members regarding compatibility.

In describing team effectiveness, Thompson (2003) cited four performance criteria used to evaluate success or failure of team effort: productivity, cohesion, learning, and integration. In the discussion of team cohesion, Thompson posed a defining question: “Did the team work together well and are its members better able to work together in the future as a result of this experience?” (p. 37). Seen as an elemental aspect of cohesion Thompson indicated that healthy relationships within a team help ensure that members can work productively together in the future.

Action Learning and Team Cohesiveness

It appears that few, if any, studies exist that focus on developing team cohesiveness in intact leadership teams through action learning. One report implied that action learning strengthened team cohesiveness for a group in the Singapore Prisons

Service, but fell short in describing the enhancement of the cohesiveness construct (Marquardt et al., 2010). However, it may be possible to glean some understanding about team enhancements through certain studies and apply this information in a generalized fashion to team cohesiveness. As an example, Rogers (2002) conducted research with 15 participants in two teams. One of Rogers' (2002) research questions was: "What is the effect of action learning on the team's learning as a group?" (p. 14). Of a team which had more experience with action learning, Rogers (2002) reported:

They were better listeners and rarely interrupted each other, thus giving people a chance to finish expressing a thought and showing respect for each other. They learned the value of paying attention to the process, not just the content, of their interactions and the value of differences in personality style. They learned how to facilitate themselves in a discussion and how to run more effective meetings. (p. 312)

Even though some team interactions were improved, it may be that team cohesiveness was not edified. According to Rogers (2002), "both teams experienced both personal and professional conflicts" (p. 318). These conflicts dealt with both task and relationship issues and did not appear to be substantively resolved through the action learning process.

Action learning is a form of experiential learning (McGill & Beaty, 2001; O'Neil & Marsick, 2007). Advancing the notion that team building develops cohesion among team members, Miller (1998) conducted an experiment to show how experiential learning, in the form of a low ropes course, can lead to team development. In a low ropes course, participants are challenged with physical problems which they, as a team, must solve and surmount.

Miller (1998) used two assessments for both the experimental and control groups, a total of 242 participants: Horizontal Team Member Exchange II and Team Development Inventory. The former was designed to test for “performance, liking (affection), trust, and a global feeling of overall relationship quality” (p. 75), while the latter was designed to test for task and relationship outcomes associated with “awareness, conflict, cooperation, productivity, and separation” (p. 75). Miller’s (1998) results indicated that a low ropes course was useful in enhancing the quality of interactions among team members and strengthening beneficial team characteristics.

Yet another study conducted with a university women’s soccer team was centered specifically on team cohesion (Allain, 1996). The qualitative, exploratory research, relying on interview and journal entry data, used adventure-based experiential training as its centerpiece. The training was comprised of four experiential activities designed to foster certain team outcomes. As a result of the activities, Allain reported that the training activities

resulted in expected outcomes including a) an increase in the team’s communication level, b) problem solving, c) role acceptance, d) role shift, e) member contribution, f) trust, and g) focusing skills. Apart from the cohesion, the outcomes additionally impacted the players confidence level. Therefore an increase in cohesion and an increase in the players’ confidence level both impacted the team’s ability to perform on the field. (p. 113)

It appears that experiential learning exercises have a positive effect on team cohesiveness. However, sparse literature on the subject yields uncertainty that an action learning program can enhance cohesiveness. Information found in the next section and chapter 3 explains the research design and methodology that will hopefully assist in filling a void in the body of research.

Case Study Methodology

The present study is centered in single-case design. Yin (2003) argued that there are at least five rationales for single-case design. One is when the case might be used to contribute to testing or substantiating a theory. A second rationale is when the case is extreme or unique. A third is when the case represents a typical or common situation. A fourth, known as the revelatory case, is “when an investigator has an opportunity to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation” (p. 42). A fifth is the longitudinal case, where a particular case is studied at more than one point in time.

Action research was embedded within this case study methodology. Action learning contains the elements of action research. The design of the action learning process includes participants collecting information about themselves and their team, reporting this information back to the team itself, and developing action plans to improve performance (Brown & Harvey, 2006).

Also referred to as field research (Singleton & Straits, 2005), case studies can be useful in addressing questions about who, what, why, how, and where. They are especially helpful in the discovery of why and how when a “question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control” (Yin, 2003, p. 9). Information used in this discovery can come in many forms. Among these are “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts” (Creswell, 1998, p. 63). All these are useful in answering the questions posed in case studies.

Case studies have been traditionally used in social science research, as well as in business and community planning, to explore, describe, or explain certain situations or phenomena (Yin, 2003). Regardless of which approach social science researchers choose, they must be diligent in understanding human behavior from the subject's frame of reference (Singleton & Straits, 2005). According to Singleton and Straits (2005), field research, to which case studies belong, is best suited for "investigating dynamic situations, settings in which it is important to preserve the natural order of things, and settings in which the researcher's minimal understanding makes it crucial to understand the subjects' interpretation of reality" (p. 310). Yin (2003) suggested that exploratory, explanatory, or descriptive case studies are highly appropriate forms of research for these situations.

Other factors involved with case study research are worth identifying. Sampling, for example, is usually purposive and nonrandom (Singleton & Straits, 2005). Often, case studies emphasize internal validity by focusing on understanding natural settings that are not contrived or controlled. This creates challenges for researchers, especially around the balance between participant and observer. Singleton and Straits (2005) indicated that it is possible for researchers who are participant observers to lose sight of their purpose as they become more familiar with the setting and desire to fit in.

Consideration of Other Methodologies

The case study methodology was not the only approach under consideration. I considered two other methods: experimental design and survey research. Rationale for

why these methods were ultimately rejected in favor of case study is explained in the following discussion.

Experimental Design

A field experiment was seriously considered for this study. Situated in a natural setting, a field experiment includes all aspects of experimental design. Random assignment of participants, independent variable manipulation, measurement of the dependent variable, two groups, and the constancy of conditions across both groups are all essential elements. Although most conditions could be met, a typical weakness of a field experiment, the potential inability to control the independent variable, created the determination to discount experimental design (Singleton & Straits, 2005). Because all the subjects belong to the same organization and are all members of the same leadership team, it was deemed too difficult to try to contain the experience of action learning to an experimental group. This is especially true since some of the randomly chosen subjects could well be the senior leaders, who would potentially want to share some of the action learning methodology as part of their leadership conduct.

Survey Research

Survey research was also carefully weighed as an option. Under consideration was the creation of a structured interview process to be done with a sample of the non-management population and customers of the leadership team members. Besides exceeding this researcher's ability in a time-resource frame, a strict implementation of survey design was not embraced for one primary reason. Within the company, a prohibition has been placed on conducting surveys other than those conducted by the

company itself, unless approved. For this study, it would have been necessary to get the design and implementation plan approved by senior executives and union officials of two unions. Further, the results would have to be shared with those entities and approved for use in the study. The additional risk and effort would have been beyond personal capacity.

Methodologies for Data Collection

Besides field and observation notes, the present study utilizes three distinct methodologies for data collection. Qualitative data was collected from semistructured interviews and journals. This data was obtained during and after the action learning program. Quantitative data was obtained using single-source assessments from senior managers as well as repertory grid technique data. The quantitative data was collected before and after the action learning program.

Semistructured Interviews

The purpose of the semistructured interviews is to create a conversation centered around open-ended questions that specifically explore and address the research questions (Singleton & Straits, 2005). The following statements and questions form the outline for the conversations in the exploration of the first three research questions about the action learning program and the results-based leadership attributes: Please tell me about your experience in the action learning program regarding its usefulness to you in improving your ability to demonstrate the leadership attributes. What about the program especially helped or enabled you in improving the leadership attributes? What about the program did you find to be not helpful or useful in helping you to improve the leadership

attributes? Please comment on the following elements of the action learning program: small groups, facilitator, questioning and coaching from others, journaling, action plans, reflection and sharing your experiences, and your commitment to the learning process.

The fourth and fifth research questions, dealing with team cohesiveness constructs and the action learning process, were explored using questions that come from the repertory grid technique. Grids from each participant were completed before and after the action learning program. The questions emerged as I inquired about the changes that occurred in perception, if any, from before and after the action learning program.

Single-Source Feedback Process

Inherent in the job characteristics model is the notion of job feedback. This refers to a process of giving direct and clear feedback regarding work performance (Brown & Harvey, 2006). A job feedback mechanism, specifically targeting results-based leadership attributes, is used in data gathering in this study. Managers in the study organization rate their subordinate managers three times a year through the performance management process on the results-based leadership attributes shown in Appendix A. Participants in the study group were rated approximately 3 or 4 months prior to beginning of the action learning program. They were also rated within 1 to 2 months after the program.

Repertory Grid Technique

Repertory grid technique is an interview methodology that uses personal construct psychology (PCP) in its approach. Sometimes referred to as personal construct theory or personal construct system, PCP was promulgated by George Kelly in the mid-1950s (Fransella & Bannister, 1977). The essence of Kelly's approach is found in the belief that

all people create, modify, and experiment with personal perceptions about reality. Since we cannot discover reality directly, we experience it through our perceptions. This system of construing reality is composed of many constructions interwoven to form the foundation for how each of us anticipates events (Adams-Webber, 1979).

Kelly's PCP does not stand alone in the field of constructivism. Adams-Webber (1979) pointed out that Jean Piaget's work supported many of his assumptions. As an example, regarding Kelly's fragmentation corollary, which essentially states that "an individual's successive constructions are not necessarily derivable from one another" (p. 10), is Piaget's assumption of logical relationships between subsystem constructs and the total construct structure. Another example is found in the assertion that there is an evolution of the construction system into an ever more organized and integrated one. Adams-Webber (1979) also indicated that Piaget's work was in alignment with this hypothesis in his argument that, as human beings age, psychological processes evolve into more organized schemata and with increased capability for abstraction.

People will form new constructs when events occur that create ambiguity in the current system. When these events unfold they create new constructs or new relationships between constructs. Reframed as Kelly's experience corollary, as a schematic organization becomes unstable due to the introduction of something novel, a "need-to-function" arises from the temporary instability" (Adams-Webber, 1979, p. 14). The central issue is that the more differentiated the system of independently organized subsystems, the easier it is for a person to fit the new element into the network of constructs.

As a means of assessing the structural properties of a person's constructs, Kelly also created a matrix called a repertory grid as a way of graphically representing their construct systems (Stewart & Stewart, 1981) and to demonstrate the relations between constructs (Adams-Webber, 1979). While it is beyond the scope of this section, how the grid is used in the present study is fully disclosed in chapter 3. The following paragraphs describe the fundamentals of conducting an interview using repertory grid technique.

At the core of the process is the elicitation of bipolar constructs from an interviewee regarding certain elements. Often, if studying human relationships, elements may be people with whom the interviewee is familiar. The process of eliciting constructs is accomplished by establishing triads of elements (e.g., coworkers). The interviewer asks the interviewee to state, for each triad, ways that two of the people are the same, but different from the third. Answers to these questions create constructs with contrasting poles, such as happy—sad, kind—mean, or industrious—lazy.

The resulting bipolar constructs are listed with each pole on opposite sides of a two-dimensional matrix. Assuming that several elements are identified and several combinations of triads are formed, the matrix can be populated with many different constructs. The interviewer asks the interviewee to rate each element listed at the top with a score from 1 to 5. A 1 indicates that the person strongly exemplifies the characteristic or quality shown on the left side of the matrix, while a 5 indicates strong adherence to the characteristics on the right side. A 3 would indicate that the interviewee regards that person to be in the middle of the bipolar construct.

To illustrate how this works, suppose a researcher wants to learn how someone in an office viewed others in the workplace. The researcher might put forth a series of names of coworkers in triads and ask: As you consider these people in terms of their qualities as employees, please tell me how two of them are alike and the third is different. From this question the interviewee might populate a grid with constructs such as happy—depressed, hard-working—lazy, and so on. Next, the researcher will ask the interviewee to score every person in regards to how they regard each person. Figure 1 exemplifies how such a matrix might appear. Based on this exercise, the researcher may then ask additional questions that probe for the rationale behind why they gave the scores they did. This develops the richness of the data and can be illuminating for both the researcher and the interviewee.

Construct Pole 1	Element 1	Element 2	Element 3	Element 4	Element 5	Construct Pole 5
Happy						Depressed
Hard-working						Lazy
Optimistic						Pessimistic

Figure 1. Example of a repertory grid matrix.

There are at least two significant strengths associated with repertory grid technique. First, the grid gives the ability to ascribe quantitative values to each of the element-construct associations in a comparative fashion. In effect, this “allows the interviewer to get a mental map of how the interviewee views the world, and to write this map with the minimum of observer bias” (Stewart & Stewart, 1981, p. 5). Second, the

constructs people use to describe elements are self-generated. This means that they own them. Repertory grid technique is a means of holding up a mirror for people so they can take responsibility for who and how they are and for their own development (Stewart & Stewart, 1981). In the current study, repertory grid technique was used to generate cognitive maps, while the action learning program gave participants the opportunity for development.

In a demonstration of the usefulness of cognitive mapping, a researcher presented two case studies of university graduates as they entered their first jobs (Fournier, 1996). Fournier (1996) sought to show the utility of the map in identifying change in a person's construction system. In these studies, graduates were asked at three intervals to consider elements (people who played a significant role in their lives, to include the manager at work, a colleague, and themselves). Interviews were conducted at two to three weeks after being hired, six months later, and nine months after being hired.

Highlights from the studies include the fact that the exercise for one of the participants clearly depicted that the work world did not contain many of the important things he valued and, in fact, the concept of work life was threatening to him. He feared that if he stayed in that environment, he would become someone he would not like. In the other study, the participant became aware of his ability to be a type of chameleon. Fournier (1996) reported that the participant "put on a face fitting his perception of his work environment" (p. 101) because he felt that he could not be himself at work and be successful.

The contrast between these cases demonstrates how constructs can be different from person to person. While each participant had much in common, their patterns of change were quite dissimilar. In addition, the two cases demonstrate how people reconstruct their systems when faced with invalidation, or experiences differing from their expectations. Both of Fournier's (1996) participants experienced invalidation.

Comparing the two cases, Fournier (1996) found the themes of threat, tightness, and fragmentation to be of interest. In the one case, the graduate was threatened by work while the other, through a looser construction, was able to see himself in a dualistic fashion. And in this case fragmentation meant that the "change took the form of the development of incompatible subsystems of constructions for different contexts of application" (Fournier, 1996, p. 103). The importance of cognitive mapping can not be overlooked in Fournier's (1996) work. By representing the elements and constructs graphically and over a period of time, analysis reveals shifts in correlations, relationships, and their associative strengths. Maps such as these tell a story.

Summary

The literature review provides evidence which suggests that action learning can be useful in leadership development. It indicates that some authorities prefer it as a methodology, including Ulrich et al. (1999), who advocated the results-based leadership model. Action learning contains certain elements which might promote the ability to operationalize the results-based leadership attributes.

The literature review also offers an understanding into the relevance of team cohesiveness in a leadership team context. Further, it portrayed an implication that action

learning, as a form of experiential learning, might show promise for enhancing team cohesiveness. However, there are indications that cohesiveness within leadership groups might be elusive, due to the lack of teaming characteristics.

Finally, the literature review establishes argumentative foundations for the appropriateness of the study methodology and data collection approach. Case study methodology is described and compared to other methodologies. Qualitative data collection methods are discussed and shown to be appropriate in addressing the research questions.

In the next chapter, details about the methodology are revealed. The role of researcher is clearly defined, along with the processes of the action learning program and data collection. Tools and instrumentation are also covered thoroughly.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

There is very little research literature, if any, that explains how action learning is useful in developing leaders' abilities to demonstrate results-based leadership attributes. There is also little or no study literature that explicates how an action learning program might influence team members' perceptions about their team's cohesiveness. In order to help fill the gap, a research methodology needs to be designed that is robust and formulated well enough to furnish the right data. A single-case, evaluative case study methodology can provide the relevant data and illumination.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to the details of the study approach, which was conducted under the Walden University IRB approval number 10-19-09-0183405. Permission to conduct the research was granted and access to the study group was authorized by the study organization's senior-most manager. A facsimile of the permission letter is found in Appendix B.

Included in this chapter is the description of the research design and why it was chosen. The target population and the circumstances surrounding it are described and information about the study sample and how it came to be chosen is also provided. A detailed description of the action learning program is furnished as well. Finally, a description of the data collection tools, along with methods used, and how the data was analyzed is presented.

Description of the Research Design

Several study designs were initially considered. Since the activity of an action learning program was a primary focus, an experimental design was not appropriate.

Although it might answer questions of how and why, there would be no control of behavioral events. In this case, control and experimental groups did not exist. Yin's (2003) work indicated that an historical research design would not suffice because the activity under investigation was current, not in the past.

In this study, the two units of analysis are the action learning program for results-based leadership attributes and the personal constructs regarding the leadership team's cohesiveness. These were assessed using single-source assessments and interviews. The research questions for this study are addressed through qualitative investigation. The five questions are as follows: How is an action learning program useful in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes? What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as especially positive or useful? What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as not positive or useful? What team cohesiveness constructs do team members (participants) ascribe to other team members? How does the action learning program modify the team cohesiveness constructs?

The qualitative nature of the case study offers significant strengths. Data captured as field and observational notes as well as informal and semistructured interviews provide a depth of understanding from which to posit much regarding the research questions. According to Creswell (1998), "through this data collection, a detailed description of the case emerges, as do an analysis of themes or issues and an interpretation or assertions about the case by the researcher" (p. 63). The result can yield a particular richness.

Target Population and Sample

In order to evaluate how an intact leadership team might fare using an action learning development process, a team was required that was both willing and accessible.

The participants in the study make up the population of a single leadership team that is responsible for managing manufacturing operations. The nonprobability sample used is 12 individuals, is the entire population, and can be classified as purposive (Singleton & Straits, 2005). According to Creswell (1998), a study group of this size is appropriate for the study method since it provides ample opportunity for continuous observation, triangulation, and rich description.

The team comprises 9 first-level managers, 2 second-level managers, and a third-level manager. The managers are White men and each has many years with the company. The number of years as a manager and the number of years with the organization under study varies. Table 1 delineates the differences between leaders in years at the company, years in the organization, and years as a manager. As noted previously, vigilance was applied in the relationship between me and the participants to mitigate bias and contamination. Mitigation of bias was achieved by using only data obtained through the means previously described. Any former knowledge, anecdotal or experiential, was not used. In addition, I consciously and deliberately adopted the demeanor of researcher, rather than colleague, and repeatedly emphasized the need for participants to share their truths. This reduced the chance of data contamination and the data produced shows it to be an effective tactic.

Table 1
Number of Years in the Organization and as a Manager by Leader

Leader	Years in org.	Years as a manager
L1	24	20
L2	22	<5
L3	<5	8
L4	26	20
L5	26	15
L6	17	8
L7	<5	13
L8	<5	17
L9	6	Unknown
L10	33	<5
L11	24	<5
L12	<5	13

The organization to which these individuals belong is in business to provide high-tech aviation assemblies to commercial aircraft assembly plants. People on the team represent various functions—manufacturing, quality assurance, tooling, parts procurement and delivery, and industrial and manufacturing engineering. Because the organization is a manufacturing operation, five of the first-level leaders are commonly known as manufacturing or shop managers. The other four are often referred to as

support managers, in that they manage functions which support the manufacturing operations.

The leadership team was chosen primarily for two reasons: accessibility and receptivity. The organization is geographically near to me and the leadership team members have had a professional relationship with me. This simplified the processes of permission, authorization, and commitment from each participant regarding inclusion in the study. Each of the 12 participants completed a consent form which outlines relevant study information (see Appendix C).

The Action Learning Program

I negotiated the format and structure of the action learning program with the senior leaders of the study organization. From this negotiation a regular day and time for action learning sets to meet each week were identified, along with the weekly routine. Based on earlier conversations with the leaders, following is the anticipated program structure.

The 12 participants first met as one group in an orientation to receive explanation of the action learning process. During this time the agreement constructed between me and the senior managers was communicated. In this orientation, expectations, purpose, and process were also communicated. Explanations of participants' roles as learners and coaches were delivered. This included encouragement for the participants to share openly about their leadership attributes action plans as well as to practice coaching behaviors such as asking insightful, open-ended questions, in support of each other's learning. Appendix D lists examples of useful coaching questions that were offered to participants. In addition, the importance of reflection and recording thoughts in the journals was

emphasized. Examples of journal entries were put forth along with templates and examples of action plans. The session included instruction that gave a detailed description of the weekly practice, as explained below. The orientation was a time for all participants to ask questions and gain additional clarity about the program. It was also a time for participants to choose which leadership attribute(s) they intended to strengthen and create an associated plan of action.

The action learning program spanned 16 weeks. The 12 leadership team members met in three learning sets each week for 1 hour. Four members were randomly assigned to each set. Over the course of the 16 weeks members moved from one learning set to another in order to experience the diversity of the larger group. This movement or rotation took place 4 weeks into the program. In the fifth week, an assessment session was held with all 12 participants to get feedback about the program. Members voiced that rotation at 4-week intervals disrupted the continuity of the experience. It was jointly determined that no more movement would take place.

One facilitator was assigned to each group. The role of the facilitator was to keep time, assist members in learning from each other, facilitate the conversations, and keep them in dialogue centered on their action plans and experiences of demonstrating the results-based leadership attributes. Facilitators were asked to capture observations and record them in a theme book journal as research data.

In the 60-minute weekly sessions, each learning set member had 15 minutes to describe the action plan they had created. The action plan could be a simple statement of intention for that week regarding the deliberate practice of a results-based leadership attribute. During this time they also shared their experiences, both successes and

nonsuccesses, regarding the practice of the results-based leadership attributes chosen. Participants were asked to give and solicit input and feedback from the other set members. Members were encouraged to ask open-ended questions to spur additional reflection for the sharer and to inform future action plans. The sharer was encouraged to also ask for suggestions and solutions.

Participants were given a theme book journal and were encouraged to record learning, ideas, thoughts, and weekly action plans. These data were collected as research data. In the orientation session, I informed participants that these recordings would be requested at the end of the study period.

Instrumentation

Instruments used in obtaining qualitative and quantitative data for analysis are explained in this section. Some of the qualitative data was intended to be obtained in the form of observational and reflection notes found in journals from participants, facilitators, and the author. Quantitative data was obtained from reports generated by the company's single-source performance management process and from a repertory grid technique, aided by software to produce a matrix or grid. The numerical data was used only as points of inquiry for the purpose of conversational interviews. The following gives additional details on how these instruments were used.

Qualitative Instrumentation

Each participant, facilitator, and the author was given a theme book in which to record thoughts and ideas. Participants were given examples to demonstrate the type of data that might be recorded (see Appendix E). Action plans, information to share in weekly sessions, and ideas are all appropriate types of information. Participants

understood that recording such information about the action learning sessions and their experiences in attempting to demonstrate results-based leadership attributes is a type of reflection and a key aspect of action learning. At the end of the study period I intended to review, evaluate, and analyze the writings found in these books. Additional information concerning qualitative data collection is described in the next section.

Quantitative Instrumentation

Quantitative instrumentation was used appropriately to provide data for interview conversations. A feedback mechanism was used to augment leadership attribute performance data, while a scoring matrix provided data regarding team cohesiveness. Each of these is explained briefly in the following sections.

Single-source feedback report. Three times each year managers in the company rate their subordinate managers in a performance management exercise. As part of this exercise the results-based attributes are gauged and scored. See Appendix A for the items on the performance management document.

Repertory grid technique. A software program, Enquire Within II, was used to standardize the process of understanding, recording, and creating a matrix of team cohesiveness constructs as they are expressed by each participant. The two matrices, produced at the beginning and end of the study and exemplified in Figure 1, are the primary tools used to gauge any change in the participants' views of cohesiveness in relationship to their teammates. A list of the teammates and others who fit in the category, past or present, are known as elements. This list is generated by asking a series of questions, which are identified in Appendix F.

Data Collection

Qualitative data found in the form of journal entries from me, the facilitators, and the participants represent one type of data and method of data collection. Data from instruments were used to inform interviews: single-source feedback and personal constructs associated with cognitive mapping. These data were collected using the company's performance management process and a repertory grid technique, respectively. It was also expected that additional qualitative data would emerge from the repertory grid technique process as well as from various other opportunities for unstructured interviews. Yin (2003) referred to this as "guided conversations rather than structured queries" (p. 89). Table 2 portrays the timing of data collection.

Table 2
Study Milestones and Data Collection Points

Three to 4 months before the action learning program	First performance management exercise completed
Week 1	Orientation for participants
Week 2	Action learning program begins
Week 2 to 3	First repertory grid interviews
Week 2 to 18	Semi- and unstructured interviews and conversations held
Week 18	Action learning program ends
Week 18 to 19	Second repertory grid interviews
Week 19	Participant learning journals collected
Week 19	Facilitators' field books collected
Within 4 months after action learning program	Second performance management exercise conducted and results from both exercises collected

Following is an explanation of each data collection methodology.

Collecting Qualitative Data

As stated, qualitative data were obtained through several means. Each action learning participant was given a learning journal for recording ideas, thoughts, plans, and other items relevant to the process. The learning set facilitators were asked to record

observations from the weekly learning set activities. I also made observations about the action learning process and relevant occurrences in the organization during the study period. In addition, I engaged in guided conversations with participants throughout the study period, which were recorded as written field notes or as voice recordings.

Participant notes and observations. Learning journals were distributed at the beginning of the study. Participants were informed that this is a tool to record their personal learning throughout the process. Ideas, thoughts, and action plans for demonstrating results-based leadership attributes are items which can be written there. Participants were told that, on a volunteer basis and at the end of the study, I would collect them, review them, and return them. Due to the very sparse amount of useful data contained in the books that were collected, none of this data was used in the findings.

Observations by and interviews with learning set facilitators. The facilitators were given a field book in which to record observations and notes about the learning set activities. Facilitators were cautioned to make most of their notes after each session and that, if notes must be made during the sessions, it should be done discreetly so as not to cause a distraction to the learners. Participants were informed that facilitators would be engaged in this activity. These notes were collected at the end of the study and analyzed. I also engaged the facilitators in conversational interviews concerning their observations.

Field notes taken by the researcher. I made observations and took notes throughout the study period. These were recorded in a field book and analyzed at the end of the study. Notes were intended to include observations made during learning set sessions and elsewhere. It was believed that impromptu conversations might yield relevant data which would be recorded in this manner.

Semistructured and informal interviews. Through the study period, there were opportunities to conduct semistructured and unstructured interviews with participants. With their consent and foreknowledge, I recorded these using an Olympus 4100PC voice recorder. Recordings were transferred to a computer and kept secure using password logons for later transcription and coding.

In order to mitigate possible bias stemming from the relationship history between researcher and participants, I explained carefully to each participant the importance of truthful and heartfelt reporting. I emphasized that nongenuine responses to questions would tend to generate less meaningful results. As mentioned earlier, the need for sincerity was emphasized as a preface to each inquiry.

Repertory Grid Technique

In order to help identify shifts in team cohesiveness, as marked by perceptions about other members of the team, I chose to use the repertory grid technique in identifying perceptions in the form of personal constructs. The process includes an unbiased method of eliciting the constructs by asking participants to state how individuals in a triad are similar and different. Once the bipolar constructs were identified, participants were asked to rate each of the other 11 team members from 1 to 5, in a matrix, with respect to how close they represent one of the two poles (refer to Figure 1). Although the process can be done without a computer, using note cards or such media, I selected a computer program called Enquire Within II. This program allows the generation of constructs, matrix and ratings, and additional analyses, if desired. For the purpose of this study, the program was used primarily as a practical way to elicit constructs, rate team members, and create electronic records for each participant.

Following is the process used in eliciting constructs about team cohesiveness from study participants and completing the rating matrix.

Step 1: Identifying elements. I asked the participants to identify a series of elements (names of individuals). According to Fransella and Bannister (1977), elements must fit certain criteria. The elements must fit into the category being examined; that is, they must be concrete examples found in the domain being explored. In this case, they are all the members of the leadership team and people with which the participant has worked.

Step 2: Construct elicitation. Once the elements were identified, they were loaded into the Enquire Within II program. The software randomly created a triad of elements on the screen and asked the participants to consider how two of the individuals in the triad are alike and different from the third, using a question created by me. It is important to qualify the question in the context of area of concern. In this case, the following prompt was given: Considering these three individuals, think of something that two of them have in common that makes them different from the third—in terms of ways they enhance or reduce team cohesiveness. The participants then yield an answer which becomes the bipolar dimensions of a construct. As the triads are presented, the various answers are entered into the computer and show up as lists of polar dimensions on the two sides of a matrix or grid. The number of constructs varied from participant to participant. The diversity of the elements is intended to assist in exploring the full range of constructs regarding team cohesiveness.

Step 3: Rating the elements. I asked the participants to rate each individual (element), including themselves, on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being most like the

dimension on the left and 5 being most like the one on the right. The computer result is a matrix of bipolar dimensions of constructs for each element. See Table 3 for a generic example.

Table 3
Generic Example of a Construct Matrix for an Element.

	Rating					
	1	2	3	4	5	
Construct Pole #1A		X				Construct Pole #1B
Construct Pole #2A		X				Construct Pole #2B
Construct Pole #3A			X			Construct Pole #3B
Construct Pole #4A					X	Construct Pole #4B
Construct Pole #5A				X		Construct Pole #5B
Construct Pole #6A	X					Construct Pole #6B

Construct elicitation and rating of elements was done at the beginning of the action learning program. At the end of the program, participants once again rated each element. Differences were noted and analyzed both qualitatively, through informal, unstructured interviews, and numerically, as described in the next section.

Linkage to Research Questions

It seems logical to suggest that using qualitative data can render a rich evaluation of the action learning experience and its perceived role in developing both results-based leadership attributes and leadership team cohesiveness. It is expected that qualitative data obtained from those directly participating in the action learning process provides deep insight as to the method and outcomes. It is intended to inform, and give meaningful responses to, the research questions. It is expected that how action learning is useful and

what aspects of it are particularly useful or not can be addressed qualitatively. Likewise, what team cohesiveness constructs are in play and how the action learning program may well modify those personally attributed constructs can also be attended to qualitatively.

In essence, qualitative inquiry was chosen with four of Creswell's (1998) compelling reasons in mind. First, the research questions ask what or how, rather than why. Second, the topic of using action learning with an intact leadership team needed to be explored and evaluated. Third, a detailed understanding of the experience is required. Fourth, and finally, a natural setting in the environment of the workplace, rather than a laboratory setting, is needed to get an accurate appraisal.

Data Analysis

In general, the portrayal of data as a sense-making scheme that Yin (2003) referred to as an "analytic manipulation" (p. 110) was constructed in a chronological order. This was appropriate since the purpose of the case study is to show changes, if any, over time through an action learning program. In this study, I am concerned with changes associated with improved demonstrations of results-based leadership attributes and perceptions of team cohesiveness.

In addition, the data were analyzed with two strategies in mind. First, the analysis focused on the propositions underpinning the study design: how and what aspects of an action learning program might improve the demonstrations of results-based leadership attributes along with enhancing the perceptions of team cohesiveness. Second, data were analyzed with the possibility that factors external to the action learning program may be present and be influential. Chief among these, as mentioned previously, is the possibility

of history or maturation. Yin (2003) promoted the robust strategy of combining analysis with propositions and rival explanations.

Both qualitative and numerical data were used. But only qualitative data, in the form of learning journal entries, observation notes, and informal, unstructured and semistructured interviews were analyzed as described in the following section.

Quantitative data, found in the company's single-source feedback exercises and the repertory grid technique results, were used as data for use in interviews.

Qualitative Interview Data

Electronic interview data was transcribed, then coded using Atlas.ti, a software program. Atlas.ti was chosen because it is an easy-to-use, full-featured software program which is designed for qualitative research. Interview data was intended to be used in triangulation with journal and field book data from participants as well as facilitators. Triangulation to any significant extent was not possible, since data in journals and field books was sparse. Triangulation and data saturation did occur with data submitted through semistructured interviews.

Data analysis was conducted on all interview data in relation to the research questions in order to uncover themes, patterns, or biases. Coding categories were formed, which grouped together similar recording units in the form of responses that inform the research questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Singleton & Straits, 2005; Trochim, 2001). For example, the analysis regarding Research Question 1, concerning how an action learning program is useful, identified recording units in the form of comments and opinions about the usefulness of the program. To guide the selection of categories, I asked: What outcomes, effects, or impact did the participants perceive to result from

program? What benefits were perceived? How did the participants perceive the program to be helpful or to assist them? Once code categories were established, recording units were identified and assigned to the categories.

Qualitative Data from Journals and Observation Notes

In similar fashion, recording units found in participants' learning journals were reviewed with the intention of notating them thematically and categorizing them. Similarly, data from facilitators' field books were also thematically organized. These data were to be used in triangulation with qualitative interview data. As mentioned, the small amount of meaningful data made this not worthwhile. In order to produce a high-quality data analysis, I attempted to address the evidence produced and demonstrate that all relevant evidence was included in the analysis. In addition, I was sensitive to include data that creates rival interpretations for study outcomes.

Ethical Considerations

To help ensure full and voluntary cooperation from participants the purpose of the study was shared with participants in a one-on-one fashion. Each participant was given a copy of the consent form, shown in Appendix C, and any and all questions would be answered. Participants understood that guided conversations held between me and them would be kept confidential and that all data recorded would be kept secure.

Protection of Data

Electronic data, in the form of Enquire Within II output, recordings and transcripts of interviews, and multisource feedback reports were housed in a laptop computer. The computer is either in a locked office or in my personal possession. The computer requires a user ID and password, which is known only to me.

Data in the form of paper copies and other printed media was kept in a locked cabinet in a lockable office. At times the data was moved, at which time it was in a briefcase under my direct control. Under no circumstances was the data, electronic or other media, made available to anyone other than my dissertation chair and committee members.

I have completed a multihour course offered through the National Institute of Health regarding ethical research (see Appendix G). Several issues were emphasized and I ensured full compliance. For instance, at no time were participants coerced. All activities, including attendance in weekly action learning sessions, were strictly voluntary. No judgmental or depreciating language was used with participants.

Summary

Chapter 3 contained details about the research method being used. It also presented the data collection and data analysis processes. In chapter 4, the results of the data collection are revealed, while in chapter 5 recommendations and concluding remarks are offered.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The systematic processes for generating, gathering, and recording and keeping track of data, were devised with the research questions in mind. A pragmatic approach was used in ascertaining insight as to the usefulness of an action learning program. A similar method was used in obtaining data to determine the identification of which aspects of action learning were especially helpful or not helpful. Regarding team cohesiveness constructs, it was necessary to discover how team members viewed one another and how action learning had an impact in the modification of those views.

In this chapter, the five research questions are addressed in the following sections. Information is presented by addressing each research question. Following each question is a description of how data were generated. Analyzed data are then exhibited which informs that question. A summary is also offered at the end of each discussion. It is hoped that these findings may help address the problem statement of the study—namely, that leaders have little evidence to evaluate action learning as a methodology for leadership attributes development and strengthening team cohesiveness.

Data Presentation

In this section, data will be presented, addressing each research question (RQ). A brief summary is also included for each RQ.

Research Question 1

How useful is an action learning program in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes? Data were generated through observations and subsequent field notes, participant learning journals, and semistructured interviews.

Personal observations were conducted throughout the 16-week action learning program as a facilitator of one of the three 4-member learning sets. In addition, two other learning set (small group) facilitators generated data through observations and recorded them as field notes. Semistructured interviews were also conducted with the facilitators at the end of the action learning program. I recorded and transcribed conversations to ensure quality and accuracy.

Study participants were encouraged to write notes, learnings, ideas, action plans, and reflections in a supplied composition book. Semistructured interviews were conducted to inquire specifically about participant experience with the action learning program. These data were triangulated among participants, facilitators and data from performance management exercises. The conversations were recorded electronically and transcribed to ensure quality and accuracy. Some of the data obtained from these conversations were used to respond to RQ 1.

Three times a year participants are assessed regarding their competency in the results-based leadership attributes. Managerial assessments were conducted prior to the action learning program and about 2 months after the program. These ratings were obtained from most study participants to also potentially inform RQ 1.

Study participants were asked to describe their experiences with the action learning program. Each of the 12 participants described benefits of the program. Following are some of the comments. Participant L2 described how observational learning was beneficial:

It helped me to see somebody else's personal side so they're giving up their personal issues and learning that some of their issues that they're having are the same as mine and how they're dealing with it. It likely helped me decide how to

go through some of those same issues with my team or my group. Just hearing other people's experiences is helpful to balance out my own things I need to follow up on or could follow up on.

L1 emphasized the enhancement of relationships and the learning sets as a means of communicating:

It's kind of developing trust, was the way I saw it. Learning to trust one another. By using the meeting and the attributes was a tool to communicate with so we're focusing on the things we should be—improving the business environment. I thought it was going pretty good.

L5 indicated that the formal weekly action learning session was beneficial by saying:

We don't have another forum where we talk about them where we consciously talk about the leadership attributes. In our organization, it's a significant part of our performance in our compensation and we don't spend a lot of time talking about it. So, I think that was helpful just dedicating some time to talk about it.

When queried about what changes he saw in himself during the study period, L3 issued this statement:

Awareness. So I think that by having that time to look back and see those things that you don't normally see, or having the seeds planted that you don't normally have, to focus on the attributes. You make them more of a part of your everyday regime. . . . You kinda have it in front of you where you see opportunities to inspire others and you kinda have it up front as you head into a situation of knowing that through what I am about to do I can figure out a way to determine the course so everybody can kinda understand where we're heading. So it kept everything up front rather than as an afterthought.

Describing a real-life example, L6 offered this account of increased competency in one of the leadership attributes:

I understand people better now, the manager staff. "Determines the course"—every leader has to know where they're going and how to set higher expectations I'm setting higher expectations now than just setting expectations. I'm not willing to let go of something that we have agreed to. . . . You're supposed to create higher expectations and make them prove to you that it's not okay. Make them prove that, you know, and encourage them, you know, get them on the same page as you and let them know that we can still—let's do that. That was a good

example of something that I've learned in the last 16 weeks. You know, it's creating higher expectations.

L4 indicated that he learned from others in the program. Using different language than the official company results-based leadership attributes verbiage, he also related an outcome about improving his behavior with his factory team:

So now I'm a lot better with coming forward with my expectations. "This is what we need to do", or, "You know, we got to get this done", or, "I expect it". Setting the goals, steering the ship—telling them where to go. That's pretty much what I got out of that. I needed some of that. And hearing what some other people were doing in the mornings or throughout the day, trying to mimic that.

At least one other participant claimed that the action learning exercise resulted in better performance. L12 stated:

It helped me to be a better manager. Makes you think about once you exercise that part of your brain about that certain thing. When you think about anything more than just seeing it on the wall, you're gonna get better at understanding each detail. I don't claim to be an expert but just that little bit of time that we had when we played with the leadership attributes I feel like I was getting smarter about it all the time.

Not all participants indicated a direct improvement in demonstrating results-based leadership attributes, but most alluded to creating a positive environment in which to have conversations about the topic. Referring to the routine of meeting once a week throughout the study period, L7 acknowledged that the program allowed him to be more mindful of his actions, but did not indicate that the *creating high expectations* attribute was enhanced:

In my case it worked real well with my boss because we happened to be in the same [learning set] but it's also your peers and interacting with your peers and how they perceive you. There was some pretty honest discussion. A lot of times we don't have the chance to think about things a whole lot and that would give us an hour to—or a few minutes before we had to talk—to actually reflect on what it was that we had committed to the week before and talk about what we were gonna do and stuff. I don't think I got a whole long ways on my piece of it as far

as creating high expectations other than a realization that it's something that I still need to work on.

In similar fashion, other participants indicated appreciation for the program without any specific reference to improving their ability to demonstrate the leadership attributes. One such comment is noted in the following:

So first, what works particularly well is just dedicating some time to sit together as leaders and not firefight. To talk about our own development. To focus more on the process than a specific assignment, action, deliverable. We don't do that. And reflect. So, dedicated time to just discussing strategies and our leadership attributes that accomplish those. That's probably it—dedicating that time because we don't take the time unless we're assigning actions or getting reports.

Comparative performance management data—prestudy and poststudy. Each year managers in the study organization are required to complete three performance management exercises with their manager that include ratings for the results-based leadership attributes. I obtained results from those exercises that took place before and after the study period. Those data submitted are depicted in a matrix shown in Appendix H.

In an interview about the data found in the matrix, a senior manager engaged in the following exchange:

[Interviewer]: What is it that you notice in general?

I have a hard time recognizing the trend. Because some scores improved, some didn't improve, and some there were no change. So there is no real, distinct trend that I can see right now. And then I would also say that the change in individuals and even as a group is very minimal. So it tells me that probably change in culture and attributes—leadership attributes—take a long time. They don't happen overnight. Then I have another thought about all the data—as we went through this process—before, we didn't probably really know each other and understand how we, with intent, use the leadership attributes—and as we started to focus on that our direct opinion of how some of these individuals use those changed. . . . So as we learn more about individuals, we really began to understand their strengths and weaknesses—and part of that is sharing our own. And this is probably the

first time as a team that we have had a dialogue about how we do things, not just what we're doing.

[Interviewer]: Did you expect to see a bigger, positive change?

I was hoping for a bigger positive change, yes. But we haven't focused in this area before, so I guess I didn't have anything to base that expectation on, other than I was hoping that as we learned about how we do things that we'd embrace some things quicker. But I'd say that one of the first tendencies is to get a little defensive about how we do things. So you have to get over the denial before you can improve. So maybe we're at the building-confidence-and-trust and some of us are at the denial phase or don't have that total open, honest, trusting relationship yet. I guess the two highest scores that came in—and which I could have probably predicted for a manufacturing group—is [creates a way] and [achieves results] because we are used to executing the plan and not worrying too much about how we went about the plan.

RQ 1 analysis. The data supports the notion that most participants found the action learning program to be positive in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes. Scores provided by senior managers on the performance management assessments do not necessarily validate this. Responding to inquiries about RQ 1, some participants reported a direct improvement in their ability to demonstrate an attribute, while others cited the program as a positive vehicle for observational learning and sharing about the topic. Most participants reported some aspects of the program as useful.

Summary for RQ 1. The above data suggest that most participants found the action learning program to be useful in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes, although data from performance management assessments do not necessarily support this. Some participants found a direct improvement in their ability to demonstrate an attribute, while others cited the program as a positive vehicle for vicarious learning and sharing about the topic. In general, most participants reported that the program was

useful. The following section, which addresses RQ 2, depicts what specific elements or aspects of the action learning program study participants found helpful.

Research Question 2

What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as especially positive or useful? Data were generated through observations and subsequent field notes, participant learning journals, and semistructured interviews. Personal observations were conducted throughout the 16-week action learning program as a facilitator of one of the three 4-member learning sets. In addition, two other learning set (small group) facilitators generated data through observations and recorded them as field notes. Semistructured interviews were also conducted with the facilitators at the end of the action learning program.

Study participants were encouraged to write notes, learnings, ideas, action plans, and reflections in a supplied composition book. Semistructured interviews were conducted to inquire specifically about participant experience with the action learning program. Conversations were recorded electronically and transcribed to ensure quality and accuracy. Some of the data obtained from these conversations were used to respond to RQ 2.

In the data gathering process, participants were asked what in the action learning process was especially positive or useful. In addition, participants were asked to comment on the following action learning elements: small learning groups, action plans, learning journals, questioning and coaching from others, open reflection and sharing with others, the facilitators and facilitation of the learning groups, and the participant's commitment

to adhering to the action learning process. Data from those inquiries is found in the following.

Small learning groups. Nearly all of the participants reported positive experiences with the small learning groups. Among the comments were citations regarding ease of participation, ability to work better within a limited timeframe, promotion of learning, and less threatening. The following data is representative:

[L6:] it allowed each person to be heard and not, you know, when you get into the groups of 10 to 12 you can sit in the meeting or in the exercise and not really say anything. And no one's ever going to notice. But when there's three or four people in the room, when you're not participating in, it's pretty obvious. So I think small groups is really good.

[L4:] Small groups was good. In a larger group, you wouldn't have time to really get your part out. You might do one or two of the people in your timeframe. In a small group everyone could have a say. I like that.

[L12:] I learn better within groups and if I'm on my own I'm not as good at it. Seems like when I'm talking about it, going over it together, and hearing different angles. I really like working in small groups. . . . I think the biggest thing is I learn better in small groups.

[L7:] So the small groups, I like the small groups. Like I said we got a lot more accomplished in the small groups than we did in bigger groups. . . . You were more accountable to each of the people around the table.

[L2:] [The small group] was probably easier than the whole group. Having four or five of us in there rather than 10 or 15 of us. So I guess it made it easier for me. Someone that did not want to open up to 10 or 15 people at once. It would be easier to open up to 3 or 4.

[L1:] Small groups—good. People are intimidated in large groups so with these types of things—in good small groups—are better to learn the lessons on how to become truthful or open, that kind of thing. You're more apt to open up with just a few peers instead of a large team.

[L8:] So small groups, good! Very good! Large groups, not a lot of interaction. In smaller groups, you have to interact.

[L3:] So the small groups—I like the small groups piece. It was nice not having too many people in your group to discuss things

[L11:] I liked that part of it—small groups. It's sometimes too chaotic when you get too many people talking about certain things. You get certain people trying to dominate. Here, everyone got a chance to speak and that's a good thing.

The facilitators, F1 and F2, also presented their views on the small learning sets:

[F1:] The small groups are definitely the right thing to do. [The participants] got more into a comfort zone.

[F2:] So I definitely think the process worked great because we were split up in small groups. I think that gave a very intimate environment whereas I think the big group would have lost the purpose of this process. I think the small group worked a lot better.

The use of learning sets was seen as useful by most participants. Although the reasons issued for finding them helpful may be diverse, the subject of small groups enjoyed almost unanimous acceptance. Other action learning elements were not embraced as positively.

Action plans. When asked to comment on action plans, most found benefit. The data, however, describe the difficulty most participants had and the inattention to their use. A leadership team participant responded with the following:

[L6:] It brought to light that I needed to focus on stuff. How do I truly deliver results and keep the promises I make. The action plan laid out some stuff to do, but there always seemed to be outside influences that got in the way of the bigger ones, the bigger commitments, the bigger promises. . . . So, I think the action plans—they worked

One participant identified the tendency to create an action plan, but not follow it.

[L4:] Action plans? I thought the action plans was good. And I think everybody that I saw in the groups, everybody had an action plan. Almost everybody had done their action plan. I liked the [action planning] model, but I don't think we ever really followed it. . . . You know, sometimes you make a plan. Okay, I got my plan made and now you go do whatever the heck I'm going to go do.

When asked how helpful the action planning was, L12 replied, “Very helpful. When you write it down you're probably more apt to doing it or exceeding it even.” L9 indicated that action planning was useful for him because it raised the issue of relevance and represented a form of accountability:

It makes it more meaningful, more tangible. Another thing an action plan does is bring some accountability on a personal level. Even when no one sees the action plan, when you plan it out, you've made some commitments to yourself. You become accountable to yourself when you do that.

This accountability was echoed by at least one other participant. L10 shared:

Action plans—that part I like because it gave me specifics to do and I'm pretty specific. Tell me what you want me to do and I'll go do it. Write me a list of things you want me to do and I'll go check off that stuff on the list. . . . So lists are good and then action plan is good for me.

Action planning was not easy for some participants. Citing over-analysis in choosing an attribute for which to conduct an action plan, L2 described why it was difficult for him to put an action plan in place:

Probably just me and my ways of—I don't know—analyzing. Trying to figure out which [attribute] I should do. A lot of us talked about or at least I talked about—we don't all just model one attribute, we do a bunch. And I just couldn't pick one, I just couldn't pick one.

For another participant, being intentional with his action plan was challenging. L11 reported it would have been easier work in hindsight, to identify which attributes were demonstrated, instead of deliberately attempting to practice them:

So trying to actually pick one and put it into real life was a little tough, I thought, at some points.

[Interviewer:] Pick an attribute?

Yeah, like *setting high expectations* and trying to use a real example and grab a person and an issue and try to relate that to that was sometimes a little tough. If I just figured out what happened during the day then I could pick one of those...

Trying to pick one and say, “Okay, I’m going to go do that today” was tougher than saying, “Okay, here’s one that just popped up today. This is where it fits in here. And this is what I did to it.” It’s more on the fly, which is more real-life, what’s happening, rather than saying, “This is what I need to go to today.” But the action plan process did work. But it just seemed a little harder sometimes.

The facilitators did not observe the regular use of action plans on a weekly basis. They offered these comments:

[F1:] Action plans—great way to learn. I didn't see 100% of that when the people came into the session. Most of us run around here, very full plates and I didn't see the level of commitment to actually building the plan prior to the session.

[F2:] Action plans. I don't know what I can comment on that because like I said I was really a little bit disappointed that they didn't really commit to the process of having action plans. They never did an action plan.

Some participants reported that action plans were helpful. That is, participants could articulate the need for them. In practicality, however, they were not utilized to a great degree. Because of this nonuse, it seems reasonable to suggest that action plans were not seen as very useful.

Learning journals. Learning journals were not used by participants to any meaningful extent. The participants were asked to turn in their journals at the end of the program. Although some participants could understand the rationale for journaling, almost all participants indicated that they had not used it much. Some reported that journaling was useful, but my observation did not support that. Six journals were submitted and none had more than five pages of writing. Following is substantive data:

[L6:] I didn't seem to journal a lot. I didn't journal a lot. I think that was a direct result of what I talked about earlier. I'm so busy. I don't have the five minutes. And when I do have the five minutes outside of work, I'm taking care of some other things. So the journaling wasn't a big part to me.

[L12:] The journaling part was good because even if you write down a one-liner, every time something happens, and just putting your weekly plan together, that

helped. I've kinda always done that a little bit. Like when it comes to attendance type issues or anything like that I always keep a little journal on the side so it's kinda an easy thing to go do.

[L7:] As far journaling, I'm probably the worst journaler there ever was. The only thing I ever wrote down in there was what you and I talked about that one time and I made sure to write that down. But I was really bad about the reflecting and putting my thoughts down on paper and stuff on it. What did go through the process post meetings I would reflect what we were talking about and stuff but I never got it down on paper.

[L9:] That's probably the weak link in the process for me. I didn't do it nearly enough. I never kept a personal diary. I've never been one to do that much. I did it some.

[L10:] I don't see the benefit of it at this point in my mind because I don't go back and look at it so it's not going to do me any good to write it.

[L1:] So journaling—we were trying to do journaling and trying to write down when we do what—okay doing this, what attributes were we touching on? So we would write them down in the journal so yes I've got some. I have things in my journal, I did use it, I mean write it down and give us references so we can refer back to them. We tried to identify and write down those attributes that we think we found ourselves using or needing help with. So journaling was cool.

[L8:] So, I did some journaling. The journaling wasn't for me to reflect on. I take notes when I need to take notes but I got a pretty good memory. . . . I saw very little journaling.

[L3:] Journaling. I struggle with journaling.

[L11:] I liked [the journaling]. Like I say, things are going to be popping up all week and you aren't going to remember it all. It made me write down the things related to the attributes that were popping up during the week.

In response to inquiry about the use of journals with personal and habitual reflection, a participant made this observation:

[L5:] It is not a habit yet. And what that does is it drives reflection, right? So they have a little reflection before they come into the meeting cold. . . . So how do we get better? We reflect on history and make change. So again, the question is, if you don't do it in this journal, where do you do it? Where do you dedicate time to look at what you've done and change if you didn't get the desired result?

The facilitators offered statements about journaling. Both agreed that participants saw little value in it:

[F1:] Journaling—I don't know. . . . I don't really think that the people saw a lot of value in that.

[F2:] Well, I mean I think if they had followed the process like we originally planned out like if they were sitting down, having time to journal their thoughts, really focus on the different leadership attributes for the week, what did they do, what didn't they do, I think they would maybe get something, I mean they probably would have gotten something out of that whole process but I just don't get the feeling they did.

Similar to action plans, journaling about ideas and thoughts was not a popular exercise. It was not viewed as a practice important enough for which to dedicate time. As a result, it was not done to any extent and was therefore not deemed as useful by most participants.

Questioning and coaching from others. Most of the participants had opinions to share regarding the value of questioning and coaching in the action learning process. In at least two cases, the value of questioning and coaching was contingent upon who it was who was conducting it:

[L6:] Questioning and coaching from others. You know, sometimes the questioning, sometimes the coaching, it really depended on the three or four people you are with at the time. Sometimes it went really well. And if I was in the mood to share and tell a story about something that happened that week—you know, it gets back to: do you respect the person on the team? . . . I can't even think of specifics, but sometimes if I didn't respect the person giving me the coaching, it didn't mean a lot. If I respected the person giving me the coaching, if I thought that they were wise in that area, then it came across better.

[L12:] I think some people are just damn good at it like [a certain participant]. That's one of his strengths. He's an analytical type of guy that can dig beyond what I would have thought of. When I was in a group with him, he made me learn a little bit just from his style and just hearing him talk.

Two members identified having their boss in the learning set and how the coaching and questioning was beneficial:

[L7:] And I think that's—to me the biggest takeaway is the coaching from the others. I had the experience of having my boss in there so that I got some real time coaching outside of the PM—you know, performance management type and other feedback that may not be quite so well thought out I guess and constructive as opposed to “you screwed up, don't let it happen again”. It was more constructive type feedback.

[L3:] The questioning and coaching—the ability to ask questions to not only your peers but your upper level managers and get opinions from multiple sources was really good.

L9 shared that coaching was positive: “It was interesting to hear the perceptions that others have. Sometimes I would hear something that I hadn't considered.”

For L2, being asked open-ended questions was a positive experience because it initiated additional thoughts:

Well you know, a lot of the questioning that comes up is how would I—they're open-ended questions—that's what you talked about and it does make you think more about it. It just brought more intrigue into it I guess you might say. And created more thinking, I guess. Not that I had the answers for it but oftentimes someone might ask me an open-ended question. I wouldn't have the answer but it made me think about it.

It was stated that coaching did not come naturally to the participants. In some cases, coaching was replaced by advising and offering solutions:

[L5:] I think we struggled with coaching because we all want to help people. That's our human nature to want to offer suggestions. More like solutions than kinda asking open-ended questions. So, we're not good at that yet. . . . I think we all struggled with the coaching questions because we're used to trying to provide solutions or options and coaching questions—we need a lot more practice on the coaching questions. That would be a focus if I were to possibly do this again is to have a list of coaching questions in front of me every time we have a discussion and we did have copies of them but I don't think we really looked at them and used them as a guide as much as we could have.

L11 believed the coaching and questioning to be the most valuable element of the action learning experience:

That's kind of what I liked the best part of it—the one-on-one coaching between the group. It was great. I really liked that. It was the biggest bang for the buck, I thought. I've only been a manager for a couple years and getting the mentoring, I guess, from the other guys was great.

The facilitators also shared their opinions about the questioning and coaching in their learning groups:

[F1:] It was tough for some, easy for some of the others. We did have a couple of people who I thought were very, very good in the sessions. They helped me with some of the pulsing questions on things to keep the direction of the conversation and to keep it moving down to the lower levels of details. But then again, others were, oh wow, I can't go there.

[F2:] Questioning and coaching—I think that is something very new for these managers as to what coaching is really about—you know asking coaching questions. Open-ended questions. I do remember that seldom happened in the group. I keep reminding them, use your coaching questions. Look at the back of your book, you've got coaching questions there but I remember that very seldom happened. It's a difficult adjustment I think for them to do that.

It appears that coaching and questioning, using open-ended questions, is not a natural skill for these manufacturing managers and might take more practice to generate more comfort. However, despite the challenge, the data indicates that some of the study members tried to implement the practice. The data also confirms that, when the practice was engendered, many participants found it to be useful and helpful.

Open reflection and sharing with others. Participants were asked to comment on the open reflection and sharing with others aspect of the action learning program. L7 offered this positive input: “So that was one of things I liked about it. Our whole team was really pretty good about sharing.”

One participant, in an exchange with me, shared the following about the perceived imbalance during the learning set sessions:

[L4:] Reflection? Sharing your experiences? I think that kind of over-grew the other stuff in the meetings. Sometimes the meetings were just reflection meetings, which is okay but—

[Interviewer:] So the reflection wasn't as helpful?

[L4:] Actually, it was helpful, but I think reflection took over having an action plan.

[Interviewer:] So you weren't reflecting on the stuff that you intended to do, you were just telling stories?

[L4:] Sometimes we got into some good discussions, but yeah, you're exactly right.

Even though hearing from others may be seen as positive, sharing openly in a small group may not be easy for some, as evidenced by conversation with one study member:

[Interviewer:] What about the reflection and sharing with others? We've talked about that quite a bit. You're hesitant, if I understood you correctly, you're hesitant to open yourself up and describe what happened and sort of talk about yourself in that way?

Yes. Whether it's something I think I did well or something I did not so well. I just don't like to talk about myself.

[Interviewer:] Okay so that was not easy for you, that's the bottom line?

Right. . . . [Hearing about others' experiences] was useful. I could apply those approaches with my personal twist to my situations. That's the main take away I'm taking from it right now is that I could listen to other people's issues and it's not so different than my own. Nice to know I'm not the only one, obviously. I know that, but to hear it in a room straight up of people that could share was good.

Some participants offered these positive appraisals:

[L10:] Sitting down and listening to others—that helps because I haven't been a manager as long as some of them here. . . . It was more like stories about how

somebody had this and here's how they resolved it. And so that's good because I haven't lived that yet as a manager.

[L3:] The ability to share experiences and reflect on things that happened the previous week were dynamite. They were very valuable

[L5:] Again, I think the positive part of it is that we did get people to open up a little bit about their things that were less than favorable. You know, their failures or their weaknesses. So I think we're starting to get some open dialogue.

[L11:] [What was especially helpful or useful about the action learning process was] the sharing of the real-life stories that transpired out there.

L1 identified a need that constrained the level of openness within the group and that the action learning program was addressing:

My belief is that you need a lot of opportunity to sit together and to get to know each other well enough to work through—to be honest, to be open and honest because we don't know how to do that. That comes from working closely together and trying to be open and develop the trust. I thought it was a good thing.

The facilitators also supplied observations. F1 offered, “Some of the participants really enjoyed the process. They liked bringing actual real world examples to the table.” F2 observed, “Reflection and sharing with others—so this they did do. They did a lot of that. They reflect on some things and they shared with others.”

It seems reasonable to suggest that the small learning sets afforded a greater sense of safety and ability to share openly. Although the atmosphere might not be regarded as completely safe by some it appears that open reflection and sharing was conducted to a satisfactory level. It also seems reasonable to suggest that the data indicates that most participants found open reflection and sharing to be a useful aspect of action learning.

The facilitator and facilitation. Two overriding themes were extracted from the data regarding the facilitators and their facilitation. First, the selection of facilitators must be given careful attention. Perceived neutrality and competency are two issues to

consider. The second issue is concerned with how well the facilitators are prepared for the action learning assignment. F1's usual workplace role may have created unintentional barriers:

One of the interesting things that I had was being [a non-manager], just a professional in the room with managers, one thing that I think it did is it kinda shined some light on those folks that hey this [facilitator] is kinda a peer of mine and I felt that there was a few people I couldn't communicate very clearly with and they didn't understand my role and even though there were areas where I could probably help them

[Interviewer:] What about the facilitation role?

If I go back and kind of look at the beginning, the origin of the process if you will, I felt just a little bit uncomfortable

[Interviewer:] How prepared did you feel?

Well, somewhat, but again the biggest hurdle there was I knew a lot of our participants really well and I knew it was going to be a tough group.

L6 demonstrated a concern about the facilitators' competency:

I think the facilitation of those small groups in this endeavor was a necessary step. I'm not so sure that that I—you know—I'm not sure that the facilitators were trained or, I didn't respect them enough. You know, so each facilitator was different. When you run across a facilitator you don't respect, you're not going to—you know—it just throws a different dynamic into it.

Others shared concerns as well:

[L12:] I didn't feel like they were as serious as they needed to be. You have to have fun no matter what you are doing but you also have to know when to pull everybody back in.

[L7:] The very first couple of times [the facilitator] was really involved in steering the team, the facilitating in the team and after that, I don't remember there being that much interaction. And maybe that was the way as designed. It just seemed that we could have used some nudges in a certain direction. I'm not sure exactly what that direction was otherwise I think we would have done it ourselves. . . . I would like to see a little more facilitator interaction in our group but it's by design—I don't know what the facilitator's role was supposed to be by design. I think gatekeeper as more part of the role would have been more helpful on that.

[L5:] I think the facilitators could have been more consistent in the application of the tools and the process.

[L1:] I don't know if—the facilitator would tend to want to join as part of the group, become a member of the group versus trying to facilitate, and that could come from maybe some lack of direction of really what their role was. So I found them becoming a member. Not that it was bad. So they became a member more than actually facilitating.

Not all participants were critical of the facilitators or the facilitation. Following are some data showing more positive regard:

[L2:] The facilitator did work good for me with regard to comfortably bring out some questions from me but it made it difficult because there are some difficult questions or requests that I was asked to do or answer. But maybe I need that in a way to get past certain hurdles that I have. So, I think the facilitating was good to push me but I struggle with answering some questions that I don't want to talk about.

[L10:] I think if you don't have a facilitator and you're not quite sure of the process, then you'll never get anywhere with it so somebody needs to help you along so that was good. And some of the probing questions that you wouldn't ask yourself get asked. . . . You don't always think about what somebody else deals with. How they deal with it, what they see, the experiences that they have, and why they see what they see. So the facilitator brought that out a number of times so that was good.

[L5:] I think it was helpful to have facilitators because we did get bogged down at times on issues. . . I think having a facilitator is good.

[L3:] Facilitator definitely was good in the fact that you kinda go off in bunny trails and things like that kind of need to bring you back in.

Most study participants believed that the use of facilitators was important and useful to the process. The specific style and competency of each facilitator seemed to vary. The way the facilitators carried out their roles were factors that seemed to affect the perceived level of usefulness.

Participants' commitment to adhering to the action learning process. As described below, the demonstration of commitment may be revealed in various ways. Attendance is one significant variable. Over the 16-week program, four weekly sessions were canceled at the behest of a senior manager. According to the manager, learning sessions were canceled due to a great number of missing participants or pressing work issues. I recorded in field notes that the session in week 9 was canceled by a senior manager because the senior-most manager was absent and that the session for week 10 was canceled because another activity caused conflict for many of the managers. Additionally, many participants would show up late to the weekly, hour-long learning set sessions. A facilitator indicated in notes that in one session two participants arrived on time, while two others failed to attend. In another instance, the facilitator recorded that participants were almost 20 minutes late. Besides tardiness, individual absences occurred regularly. One of the learning sets had one missing participant for 3 weeks successively. In another set, two members, one member, and two members were absent in the first 3 sessions, respectively.

The participants and facilitators shared their views about the subject of commitment. L6 indicated a difference between his mental and actual levels: “On a scale from 1 to 10 in my mind I was committed—a 10. My actions and follow through to the process was way less”. L7 shared how his commitment was affected by the senior managers and their actions:

It was a high priority for [the top senior manager] to do this. . . . My commitment was there but it wasn't as robust as it could have been. I usually look to my bosses for guidance on what's important that week, what's important to them and like I said without the—I don't want to say daily monitoring of the process, but more of the monitoring of the process doesn't get the emphasis.

Others brought up the very popular topic of the challenge of competing activities and priorities:

[L9:] I thought there was an awful lot of draws on our time and found it difficult at times. So often, we would leave the meeting and we'd have people in crisis waiting to talk to us. I'd like to say that I had 100% commitment, but the truth is it was probably closer to 50% to 60%.

[L11:] I thought [my commitment to adhering to the action learning process] was average to above average. I thought I could have put more into it, but with the daily grind that you've got going on, it's hard to really stay focused on some of these things. Meaning like *creating high expectations*, I get into it for awhile, then it would die down with what is going on for the rest of the week and stuff. And then, I'd have to refocus next week. So it was hard to really stay on it.

In a similar fashion, L10 viewed the program as additional work demanding his time:

“My commitment to the learning process is probably 50-50 because I looked at it as a burden, another thing to do”.

L5 observed that the study participants had varied levels of commitment, referring to it as a disconnect:

So the disconnect to me was obvious in some of the attitudes that some people were committed to getting better at the leadership attributes and some people were there just because someone else told them to be there. So they were just going through the motions where others were trying to commit themselves to getting better and developing trust and becoming better at the leadership attributes.

Although many participants reported themselves to have a relatively high commitment level it is more accurate to say that their intentions may have been high. Evidence such as canceled action learning sessions, inattention to action plans, and failure to utilize learning journals denotes a low level of commitment. Therefore, the degree of commitment to the action learning process can not be regarded as positive.

Additional elements or aspects found to be beneficial. Participants found other aspects of the action learning program to be valuable and worth reporting. The development of relationships through dialogue and learning about each other appeared in the data as positive aspects. Following are examples:

[L1:] I was kinda impressed because I think we were getting comfortable enough to be able to start to be—start on the road to being honest and communicate with each other openly so if you saw what you felt was a shortcoming you could say it without worrying about creating a situation with the person.

[L5:] It helped me be a little bit more open and honest about situations and events that weren't as successful as I would have liked them to have been.

[L6:] I learned a lot about the other individuals on the team. You know, how they tick, what makes them work. How to communicate, you know, more openly and more honestly, feeling safe about it and not, you know, not worrying about, you know, ramifications of telling somebody, “I don't like the way you do that”.

[L10:] You learn more about a person that you didn't maybe have full knowledge of or you didn't know them very well. So, how you saw that person had changed, how you might go, oh I can see how that would make them like that. Knowing them a little bit more or knowing their heart a little bit more changed the way you felt about that person. That was something that came out of this too. I think I changed the way I thought of a couple people differently because of what I learned and what I heard.

[L11:] I just learned a lot. How to talk and work with your peers. Sharing the information you have and the opinions and stuff. I learned a lot from their—how to handle certain situations, what you could do better. That's what I got most out of the whole thing. . . . It was just good that you learn more about the other persons. Some people I kind of look more toward mentor because of the comments and the reactions and the feedback that you get from them. It's like: hey, that guy I could work with.

[L9:] I think perhaps the most powerful element about the process was the accountability you have from others. When you say you are going to do something and you know that they are going ask you if you got it done.

RQ 2 analysis. Most participants identified the learning sets as positive and valuable as well as the interactions through coaching, questioning, sharing, and open

reflection. The individual learning activities such as journaling and action planning were not reported as especially helpful or useful. This in mind, observational learning associated with the learning set interaction may be considered more useful as a mode of learning than the experiential mechanisms of journaling and action planning. In addition, participants felt that facilitation was a necessary and positive aspect, but indicated that competence was required.

Summary for RQ 2. Evidence abounds indicating that the study participants found the social aspects of the action learning program to be useful. Most participants felt that the small groups were positive as well as the interactions through coaching, questioning, sharing, and open reflection. However, the individual learning activities such as journaling and action planning were not seen as especially helpful or useful. It can be reasoned through this that the observational learning associated with the interaction was considered more beneficial as a mode of learning than the experiential mechanisms of journaling and action plans. In addition, participants felt that facilitation was a positive aspect as long as the facilitators were competent and adhered to a helpful role of assistance and guidance.

Research Question 3

What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as not positive or useful? Data responding to this question were generated through observations and subsequent field notes, participant learning journals, and semistructured interviews. Personal observations were conducted throughout the 16-week action learning program as a facilitator of one of the three 4-member learning sets. In addition, two other learning set (small group) facilitators generated data through observations and recorded them as

field notes. Semistructured interviews were also conducted with the facilitators at the end of the action learning program. I recorded and transcribed conversations to ensure quality and accuracy.

Study participants were encouraged to write notes, learnings, ideas, action plans, and reflections in a supplied composition book. Semistructured interviews were conducted to inquire specifically about participant experience with the action learning program. Conversations were recorded electronically and transcribed to ensure quality and accuracy. Some of the data obtained from these conversations were used to respond to RQ 3.

Each facilitator and study participant was asked to identify aspects of the action learning program which were not deemed to be positive or useful.

A participant noted various disruptions:

[L9:] We had a lot of time delays, a lot of schedule interruptions, there were times when we wanted to start and we couldn't get the projector to turn on, that kind of thing. Those are minor things, little inconveniences, but they slowed down the momentum of the group.

Another participant shared his impatience with other learning set members as well as his lack of esteem for weekly meetings:

[L10:] Some of the same stories. I mean, sitting down listening to people, some people get into their stories more than others when they're done talking. Kinda wonder what they were talking about in the first place because they were just rambling. And so that wasn't useful for me. The other thing for me is finding the time to come to the meetings. . . . So I guess having a scheduled meeting is a good thing. But I don't always agree with having a meeting. Even if it's on good stuff. Just another thing to have to go do.

More than one participant commented on the short rotation time between learning groups; that is, the movement of participants from one group to another. Two examples are shown below:

[L1:] The other part that didn't work well was probably four weeks was barely enough time to getting comfortable with your teammates so the rotation time was a little quick. I think we were just starting to get to the point of just opening up a little then it was time to rotate so now you got a new fresh team. So that probably didn't help me much.

[L5:] Possibly the short rotations within the team. It was like 4 weeks and sometimes you would have a team member gone a week or two and so you only had a couple weeks potentially to develop trust and the relationship with someone. So possibly the rotations might be longer. Six or eight weeks or something. Because it's all about developing trust that you can share things with that smaller group of people without being criticized or going on the defensive.

More than one participant stated an opinion about the need for additional structure. Those comments follow:

[L3:] I think it could have been more structured, a little bit more disciplined, and a little bit more focused on specific things. I think it was a bit open-ended and allowed that bunny-trail action to happen, where people shot off in all directions.

[L7:] So it's almost like an organization around needing structure around what we would have done. . . . if we had action plans that were laid out as far as how what exactly we were gonna do, wouldn't have been so much going back and trying to recreate the wheel so to speak. . . . If we would have gone through some worksheets it might have helped us through the process.

[L5:] Just so you know that I think that the form you gave us with kind of a situation and a goal and then some actions was a great simplistic form and I think everybody should have used it. So we should have structured it so we told everyone you need to use it. Because it holds you accountable.

Besides wanting additional structure, some offered their views on the need to improve the facilitation:

[L5:] The other thing that I thought wasn't helpful was we didn't stick to the process like we probably should have with having three different facilitators.

They all had a thought on how strictly we should follow the process and the tools were given and in some cases the three teams followed a different process.

[L4:] Facilitators? Love 'em dearly, but on this type of a thing: I wish we would have just had one: you—you ran each meeting on a different day or something. We all broke into different groups. Your facilitation is different than the other facilitators.

[L8:] I would get some experienced facilitators that are used to drawing things out, getting people going, and try to stay to an agenda.

Some participants indicated that there was not adequate clarification and emphasis about the purpose of the program, that the reason and benefit for meeting weekly could have been better substantiated. One participant commented:

I think if we would have planned it, if I would have done it, and I don't have the right answer for you—I don't know what the chemistry mix would have been. But if we could have, perhaps myself included, made it better for the managers to understand that it was to use real life best practice events and attributes to share and the bottom line was to better them, to make them a better management and a better functioning unit, than it was for Dave. Because I think the perception was that it went well when we were looking at the right things, I don't think they really thought it was for them.

Another viewed the action plans as merely more work:

Like I said, since designing a project and trying to carry it through to me it just seemed like another assignment—so it seemed like extra workload on a person—so that part didn't work for me.

Alluding to a lack of commitment, a facilitator supplied this in an exchange about the question of what about the process did not work well:

I'm not sure if the process that didn't work or you know I can't really put my finger to as to what was wrong but there were a lot of people, first group and second group actually, would come in late or they would not show up or they didn't do the assignments that they were supposed to do. There was a lot of that. I don't get it, even though they were comfortable sharing what they wanted to share, I get the feeling it's like they—it wasn't like a whole lot of thoughts were given to that process. It was like they were winging it as they go during those meetings.

[Interviewer:] So it sounds like one of the issues is that the participants were not very prepared.

Right. They weren't very prepared and it's almost like they were doing this because they think is something they needed to do because this is what upper management wanted them to do. I just get the feeling, this is just gut feeling that they have better things to do and this is not what they want to spend their time with. I'm not really sure if they actually got anything out of it per se.

[Interviewer:] Say more about that please.

Well, I mean I think if they had followed the process like we originally planned out, like if they were sitting down, having time to journal their thoughts, really focus on the different leadership attributes for the week, what did they do, what didn't they do, I think they would maybe get something. I mean they probably would have gotten something out of that whole process, but I just don't get the feeling they did. I mean it's like they show up when they show up and then they wing it as they go.

A lack of prioritization was noted at the top. A senior manager in the organization stated:

Just so you know, but it seems like, maybe it's just my impression, but every time I'm out of the office, on that day, it doesn't happen so that still tells me some people don't put the priority on it that they should. And that's happened the last two weeks now. For various reasons, I haven't been here. I still think it may be looked at as [my] thing and Dave's thing but not we all need to own it.

The lack of commitment may have been fostered unwittingly by the attitude of another senior manager who did not always hold the program as a high priority. When asked for his input on the action learning program he added:

I think if I was to rate it, it would be a 50-50 split. 50 being really good dialogue, really liked the experience and engaged. And 50%, why the hell are we here? Journals? Nobody used them. I did—not 100% of the time—50% of the time. . . . But again, I think that 50% that failed a little bit was they didn't see this as a priority or value added to them. They felt that their plates are so full and [I've] got 'em doing stuff, and [the senior manager's] got 'em doing stuff and we're off the floor. Once they started getting engaged, they felt there was some value, but until then, they were like, "Ah, it's another meeting". And frankly, there were a couple times that came across my mind, too—where schedule and work dictated priorities more so than this, not that this wouldn't earn value. But when I stack and rack my priorities for the day, that's the last thing I had to do. I have some other

things I'd rather be doing but overall it was okay. So, mixed feelings, it really depends on the day, depends on the schedule.

The manager continued, voicing concern about the personal incentive and its relationship to lack of commitment and low attendance in the weekly action learning sessions:

So, when [the senior manager] calls a staff, everybody shows up. Why? For different reasons. Because they have to? Different reasons, but they're all there. I really wish we had good attendance.

[Interviewer:] So, do you have any ideas about what maybe could have helped the attendance?

I attribute it to the buy-in or what the benefits are of that program. Is this Dave's meeting? Are they just checking the box for the Dave-and-[senior manager] show? You've heard that shit. Or are they really in it for the team building and to better themselves? I think it was the first one. Because if they were in it for themselves, and they knew reasons why they were there, they picked an outcome, they might have been there. I'm there because I want to get information, my boss wants me to be there, whatever combination that brings them to the staff meeting, why didn't they have the same interest there? I don't know.

Adding to the issue of attendance, a facilitator offered this observation:

It's kind of like a struggle sometimes to get them there. And then also on top of that, [a senior manager] probably wasn't really behind this process. He himself had cancelled a lot of these meetings so we keep having to delay these meetings, you know like put it off and put it off. I mean I think we cancelled like two or three of them. And like [a participant] said, you know you sometimes cancel meetings, you go, oh they cancelled a meeting so you kind of sometimes—you look forward to these meetings and then this whole group, almost everybody, when they cancelled it, they're happy that it's cancelled so they can go do something else operationally—you know drive results—I mean they're not really thinking the big picture. . . of how these leadership attributes—if they really focus on it—that's really gonna help them. So that's my opinion.

RQ 3 analysis. Participants identified several items as not being useful or positive.

Included in the data were concerns about the rotation cycle of participants from one learning set to another being too short and the need for additional structure. The need for

better facilitation with a common process was also a subject broached. Variation among facilitators was not seen as helpful. Finally, the varying degree of commitment among participants, in part evidenced by the low sense of priority given to the program by senior managers, was not viewed as positive.

Summary for RQ 3. Several items were identified as not being useful or positive. Included in the data were themes concerning the rotation of participants from one learning set to another being too short and the need for additional structure. The need for better facilitation was also a subject. Specifically, some participants identified the lack of a common process, or variation among facilitators, as not useful. In addition, the level of commitment, evidenced by the sense of priority given to the program, was not viewed as positive.

Research Questions 4 and 5

Team cohesiveness constructs—what are they and how are they modified by an action learning program? Data responding to RQ 4 were obtained through discovery of personal psychological constructs using a repertory grid technique. Construct matrices, called repertory grids, were developed for each leadership team member. The grids depict bipolar constructs for ways that team members demonstrate or do not demonstrate team cohesiveness. Constructs were rated by each leadership team member about each other. Two private rating sessions were held with each participant, one at the beginning of the study period and one at the end.

RQ 5 was addressed through inquiry with participants about their grids in an informal interview process. Participants were asked what occurred that influenced them

to rate the other team members differently the second time. These conversations were recorded electronically and the data collected was used to inform the research question.

Eleven leadership team members participated by identifying their constructs and rating their leadership teammates. One of the leadership team members did not choose to participate. The facilitators of the action learning sets were not included. Using the repertory grid technique, and with each of the bipolar constructs in mind, each leadership team member was asked to rate the other team members on a five-point scale. These ratings were demonstrated using a matrix, showing the bipolar construct listed on either side. A rating of 1 indicated that the rater considered the teammate to accurately typify the polarized construct listed on the left, while a rating of 5 was given for the opposite pole on the right. A rating of 3 was given when the rater believed the teammate both polar descriptions equally. In L2's case, a rating of a 3 was used when he did not see evidence one way or the other. A rating of 2 or 4 was given when the rater considered the teammate to exemplify the polar description more, but not completely. A rating of X is shown when the rater did not identify a number.

The team cohesiveness constructs matrices for the study participants are shown in Tables 4 through 13. Each leadership team member was asked to rate their leadership teammates at the beginning of the action learning study period and after the 16 weeks of the program. The first rating is indicated on the matrices with a (1), while the second is indicated with a (2).

A semistructured interview was conducted with each participant after the second rating session. The interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy of the data. During these interviews I showed each participant his matrix as shown in Tables 4 through 13. At the

beginning, I asked each participant to indicate which polar construct was seen as positive or contributing to team cohesiveness. This was done so as to eliminate any suppositions or assumptions on my part. They are marked on the matrices with a (+).

Since it was reasonable to think that team cohesiveness constructs might be positively modified by spending time in small action learning sets, I highlighted those teammates with which the rater had spent time in a learning set. These members are depicted in bold font in matrices below. I followed a typical line of inquiry, similar to the following:

[Interviewer:] What I would like to do is understand why you rated your teammates differently this second time, compared to the first time a few months ago. We don't have time to review every teammate, so I've highlighted a few of them and we'll talk about them. Do you know why I highlighted the ones I did?

None of the participants identified the highlighted names as those of their action learning set members. This is perhaps because the team cohesiveness repertory grid exercises were never identified as being associated with the action learning activities. Intentionally, to avoid contamination, I never indicated that the purpose of the action learning program had anything to do with team cohesiveness. The interviews continued in the frame illustrated below:

[Interviewer:] Where you rated the highlighted teammates differently, from the first to the second rating, would you please tell me why? In other words, what was it that you experienced to make you perceive them differently?

Each participant recounted rationale for the rating differences. It was only at the end of the interviews, when I asked specifically if the experiences in the action learning sets influenced the ratings, that some of the participants acknowledged that they may have. Only two participants cited experiences from the action learning program in their

explanations of rating changes, before I specifically asked about them. Following are brief overviews of the participants' explanations.

Team cohesiveness constructs of L1. Table 4 depicts the landscape of personal constructs regarding team cohesiveness for L1. L1 attributed most of his rating changes to the fact that, prior to the study period, he had not worked directly with the rest of his teammates. Although he would sit in meetings with them, he did not interface with them daily in the course of a business day. As he stated it:

I was not able to experience their team cohesiveness firsthand. Some of the numbers changed due to . . . starting to work with some of these people face-to-face. I started to get an idea on how they actually reacted.

In many cases, L1 rated those in his learning sets less positively after having spent time with them in the action learning program. L1 did not refer to experiences in the action learning program in his explanations, rather his rationale centered on other workplace venues.

Table 4
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L1

L1 Construct pole 1	L1 (1)	L1 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (2)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct pole 5
(+) Listens and shows interest in you	2	2	3	2	4	4	3	4	2	2	4	3	3	3	2	2	2	X	2	2	2	2	2	2	Just cares about his way and not others
(+) Willing to teach	1	2	3	2	2	3	3	4	2	2	3	3	2	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	Not interested in teaching
(+) Takes action immediately	3	2	3	2	3	2	4	2	3	2	4	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	Takes his time and seems to procrastinate
(+) Interested in working toward a common goal or requirement	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	3	2	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	Will do it his way, be independent, not collaborative
(+) Very collaborative	1	2	3	2	4	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	Tends not to collaborate, is independent
Never keeps commitments, doesn't do what he says	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	(+) Always keeps commitments, does what he says
(+) Will seek clarification or assistance with instructions	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	Will go it alone
(+) Offers to take on projects	2	2	4	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	Will push back or suggest someone else take a project
(+) Tends to focus on the business and work the issue directly	1	2	1	2	1	2	2	4	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	5	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	Seems to want to relate every business issue to a story, which is distracting

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L1; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

Team cohesiveness constructs of L2. Table 5 displays how L2 rated his teammates on his constructs of team cohesiveness. In the interview with L2 about his rationale for rating changes, he identified specific interactions with teammates in workday settings. In some cases, he did not know why he rated them differently. Even when asked specifically about the action learning experiences he did not identify those experiences as sources.

Table 5
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L2

L2 Construct pole 1	L1 (1)	L1 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (2)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct pole 5
(+) Provides a working together feedback interaction	1	1	2	1	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	3	1	4	4	2	1	3	2	2	2	3	3	No two-way conversations, only one-way
Often looks for ways to not do something	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	5	3	4	4	5	3	4	(+) Wants to find ways to help
(+) Often helps with guidance in a process or situation	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	2	Would say, "It's not my problem"
(+) Embraces teaming concepts	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Does not embrace teaming concepts
Offers suggestions	3	3	3	3	5	3	3	3	4	4	2	3	2	3	4	4	4	5	3	4	3	2	3	4	(+) Offers suggestions with recommendations
(+) Shows himself to be more flexible	2	2	2	2	3	4	2	4	3	3	2	2	2	1	4	4	2	1	3	4	4	3	3	4	Believes he has the best answer

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L2; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

Team cohesiveness constructs of L3. Table 6 portrays the team cohesiveness constructs ratings identified by L3 for his teammates. The explanations for changes in ratings included having spent more time with the teammates, which generated more interaction. In some cases, he did not know why he rated them differently. However, in one case, the teammate became his superior and, in his view, created cause to think differently about the person. In another case, L3 saw a teammate as different because of a job or assignment change. L3 did not volunteer the action learning program experiences as sources of rating changes. Only upon being asked specifically about whether the ratings were influenced by the action learning experiences did L3 reply:

So I think they were. And I think a lot of it came from interaction. Interaction that we didn't have before. . . . And it allowed me to get to know [L2] and [L6].

Table 6
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L3

L3 Construct pole 1	L1 (1)	L1 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (2)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct pole 5
	Has abrasive personality	1	4	1	3	4	3	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	5	3	2	5	3	3	3	4	4	3	
(+) Very people-oriented	5	1	3	4	2	3	1	2	2	4	4	4	3	1	5	5	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	Is more task-oriented
Lacks people skills	1	5	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	(+) Has good people skills
Has a “big factory” mentality	3	5	4	4	2	4	5	5	3	4	3	4	4	4	1	1	3	3	4	4	4	4	2	2	(+) Demonstrates a “smalltown” feel or behavior
(+) Focuses on long-term goals	2	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	2	2	4	3	5	4	4	5	3	2	4	4	4	4	3	2	Focuses on near-term
(+) Very easy-going and kind of mellow	5	1	2	3	3	2	1	1	2	3	2	3	1	1	4	5	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	Very demanding and aggressive
(+) Very focused	2	2	1	1	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	2	4	5	2	3	3	4	3	3	5	4	3	3	Very easily side-tracked
Very data-oriented	4	2	1	1	3	3	4	4	1	1	2	2	4	5	5	2	2	2	4	4	4	5	3	4	(+) Not data-oriented
(+) Very dependable	2	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	2	4	3	4	4	5	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	Not dependable
(+) Very passive and understanding	5	4	4	5	4	3	2	2	3	4	3	3	1	1	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	4	Demands perfection
(+) Understands the big picture	4	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	2	4	3	3	4	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	Lacks understanding of the big picture
(+) Very decisive	2	3	4	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	5	2	2	4	2	2	2	4	3	3	2	Has to think through over and over
(+) Cares about people	4	1	2	2	2	1	3	3	2	2	3	3	4	1	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	Doesn’t care about people
Very closed-minded	2	4	3	3	4	3	2	4	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	4	2	3	3	2	(+) Very open-minded
Afraid to make tough decisions	4	3	3	4	3	3	2	1	2	2	3	3	1	1	3	4	3	4	3	2	2	2	3	4	(+) Thrives on making tough decisions
(+) Very passive, soft spoken	4	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	4	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	4	Very aggressive, outspoken

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L3; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

Team cohesiveness constructs of L4. Table 7 represents the input offered by L4.

In some cases, he did not know why he changed ratings. Rationale for changing ratings varied. In one instance, a teammate moved from swing shift to day shift, which gave L4 the opportunity to spend more time with him. In another case, working closer with another teammate resulted in generally lower ratings the second time.

When asked specifically about how the action learning program influenced his ratings, L4 responded:

I don't have any specifics, but I know we had some good conversations in our meetings, and you know, [L11], he really had some good stuff—he's really growing. Of everybody, I think [L11] and [L5] I probably learned the most of from those meetings. [L11], especially.

Table 7
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L4

L4 Construct pole 1	L1 (1)	L1 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (1)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct pole 5
(+) Cares about others and others' growth	3	3	3	3	5	5	3	3	2	2	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	Doesn't care about others, only himself
(+) Wants to help the team succeed	2	1	2	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	Not a team player
(+) Knows how to elicit a team's support	1	1	3	3	3	4	2	2	2	1	4	3	3	3	1	3	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	Does not know how to elicit a team's support
(+) Good at getting other's help	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	3	3	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	2	Not good at getting other's help
Gives the impression that he is more interested in themselves and his success	4	4	3	4	2	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	(+) More interested in the team's success
(+) Is a motivator on the soft side	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	4	4	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	Is a motivator on the hard side
Makes it easy for me to not to want to work with him	4	5	3	4	1	2	3	4	2	4	2	4	3	4	3	4	4	5	2	3	3	4	3	3	(+) Makes it very easy to work with him

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L4; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

Team cohesiveness constructs of L5. Table 8 shows the bipolar constructs and how L5 rated his teammates. Most of the changed ratings were due to daily workday interactions. However, unlike most of the other participants, L5 rated one teammate differently in the second round, due to the time he spent with him in the action learning sets. According to L5, that teammate was rated lower because:

I guess during our—was it 16 weeks? I saw some things in his personal attributes that I thought he was—you know—he got defensive and had personal alliances versus more of the business, facts-and-data driven. . . . I saw in his interaction with his peers in these 16 weeks that I saw a defensiveness and an emotional response versus facts and data.

When queried more about the influence of the action learning sets on his ratings, L5 said:

I'll make a general comment about the 16 weeks: that afforded me more time than I've had in the past to directly interact with some of these people. And so, I had perceptions prior to that with not a lot of facts and data or direct interaction. And so, during these 16 weeks I got a lot more direct interaction, so that's why I believe both directions—good and bad—there was some significant changes in the perception of these people. . . . You might find that people have attributes that aren't desirable and weren't what you were hoping for.

Table 8
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L5

L5 Construct Pole 1	L1 (1)	L2 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (2)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct Pole 5
(+) Puts business ahead of personal relationships	2	2	1	2	2	3	4	5	2	3	3	3	4	4	1	2	2	3	4	4	2	2	X	X	Makes decisions based on personal decisions
Has a routine, is resistant to change	3	2	4	4	3	2	3	2	4	3	3	4	X	3	4	2	4	3	2	3	4	4	X	X	(+) Is open-minded, flexible
Is very focused on results	3	4	3	4	3	2	X	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	1	4	4	3	3	3	4	X	X	(+) Focused on the process, not the results
(+) Is structured and organized	1	1	2	2	3	4	3	4	2	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	X	X	Doesn't care about explaining anything
(+) Is people-oriented, people first	2	2	1	2	2	4	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	4	4	3	2	3	3	2	2	X	X	Is all about results only
(+) Is an unconventional visionary (thinks outside the box)	3	3	3	3	2	4	4	4	2	2	4	3	4	4	3	3	2	3	4	2	2	2	X	X	Has a vision, but no execution
Lets politics drive decisions	4	3	4	4	4	2	2	2	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	4	4	3	3	2	4	2	X	X	(+) Lets facts, data, and people involved drive decisions
(+) Knows how to delegate and empower	4	4	2	4	2	4	3	2	3	2	4	4	2	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	2	3	X	X	Technically oriented, tries to do it all himself
(+) Is task-oriented, thorough and timely	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	2	3	4	4	4	4	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	4	X	X	Has a hard time organizing and prioritizing
(+) Is organized and structured, business-driven	3	2	3	4	2	3	4	5	3	4	4	3	4	4	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	X	X	Is focused on people and their friendship, not the business
(+) Doesn't place blame on others, stays process-centered	3	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	1	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	X	X	Places blame and makes it personal too much
Very straight-forward, is a task-master, drives for immediate results	4	4	3	4	1	2	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	2	3	3	2	3	4	2	X	X	(+) Is a mediator, focusing on the process and long-term results

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L5; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

Team cohesiveness constructs of L6. Table 9 indicates the constructs and ratings assigned by L6. During the semistructured interview about his rationale for changes L6 generally indicated that all shifts in ratings were due to the additional time spent interacting with the teammates in daily workday issues. For many of the rating changes L6 could not remember his reasoning. When questioned about whether the action learning program had influence on his choices, he responded that he could not “pin it down to the time spent in those groups”.

Table 9
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L6

L6 Construct pole 1	L1 (1)	L1 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (2)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct pole 5
	(+) Always includes the entire value stream	3	4	2	3	4	4	3	3	1	1	2	1	3	2	2	3	4	3	5	3	3	3	4	
(+) Open to new ideas, not set in stone, listens to team with no preconceived notions	3	2	2	2	4	3	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	2	5	4	4	3	5	4	3	4	4	3	Is a stand-alone, my-way-or-the-highway person
(+) Open-minded and listens to team members and encourages discussion in groups	3	2	2	2	4	4	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	2	5	4	4	3	5	4	3	4	3	4	Dictatorial in group settings
(+) Builds team cohesiveness by making sure the team members always know each other	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	Could care less about having the team members know each other
(+) Open to different viewpoints and considers them before rejecting them	2	2	2	2	4	4	3	3	1	1	2	2	2	3	5	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	3	3	Once his mind is made up, it is very hard for him to see a different view
(+) Encourages team members to look at all options and opportunities, has no preconceived notions of the answer	2	2	1	2	4	3	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	3	5	4	4	3	5	3	4	3	4	4	Always knew the answer and will not consider any other answers
(+) Are real “people persons”, they make you feel relaxed in teams	3	2	2	2	4	5	1	3	2	2	2	2	5	3	5	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	3	4	More dictatorial in his team role
(+) Encourages people to bring new ideas to the team	2	2	2	2	4	4	2	3	1	1	2	2	2	3	5	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	Has a set agenda and doesn't want new ideas
(+) Always wants to make the work environment a pleasant place	3	4	3	3	4	4	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	Is more business focused
Dictatorial in approach to solving problems	2	4	4	4	1	2	5	3	5	5	5	4	4	1	1	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	4	2	(+) Allows team members to come up with their own solutions

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L6; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

Team cohesiveness constructs of L7. Table 10 exhibits the team cohesiveness constructs and associated ratings for L7. Although he could not cite reasons for many of his changes he indicated, without prompting, that the action learning sets influenced his mental constructs. As an example he recounted an experience with L6 as follows:

I think that communication was one thing that [L6] was choosing to work on. . . . [L6] was part of one of the learning groups I was in. I think that was one of the things he took out of there—I think a lot of it is getting to know the person better. . .

[Interviewer:] So the action learning group gave you that insight?

I think it gave me that insight into him a little better. And I think it's changed some of the things he does. He seems to be a lot more effective now than he was prior to with this group, prior to that session.

Table 10
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L7

L7 Construct pole 1	L1 (1)	L1 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (1)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct pole 5
(+) Knows his people's functions and is therefore laid back and doesn't micromanage	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	1	1	2	3	1	2	1	1	Unsure of his role in support of his people
(+) Embraces the organization's culture	2	2	1	1	2	3	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	5	3	1	1	2	3	1	1	3	2	Has no concept of the culture or an appreciation for it
Doesn't hold his people accountable as much	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	5	1	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	(+) Really holds his people accountable
(+) Communicates in an inspiring way	3	2	1	2	1	4	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	5	5	1	2	2	4	1	2	2	2	Communicates in a directive way
(+) Well organized and efficient	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	Scattered and less efficient
Seems to be absent from and not engaged with his team	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	(+) Is ever-present and fully engaged with his team
(+) Fosters a nurturing atmosphere	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	2	4	4	1	1	2	3	2	2	2	2	Demeans his people
(+) Sets clear expectations and holds people accountable	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	1	3	4	3	4	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	Has unclear expectations and not too much accountability

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L7; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

Team cohesiveness constructs of L8 and L9. L8 did not choose to participate in the personal constructs exercises. L9 was not available for interviewing at the completion of the study period due to an assignment change. It was not possible to do a second constructs rating exercise. As such, no comparative data exist for L9.

Team cohesiveness constructs of L10. The bipolar list of constructs and the associated ratings generated by L10 is displayed in Table 11. He did not indicate immediately that the shifts in ratings originated with the experiences in the action learning sets. As an example, he described why he rated a teammate lower in the second round:

You get to know somebody and things change. From the day you met him—I mean [the first rating] is brand new and [the second rating] is now you know what he's really like. . . . When [the teammate] first came in, he was going along—hey, I'm the new guy—and as time's gone on he is abrasive and he pushes for his way, so you see the true person, as far as I'm concerned, come out. That's the way they really are. And so at first, you might get that first impression: ah, he's okay . . . and then you find out what they're like after things settle down and you're into it three months or four months or whatever it is. And then you get to find out what they're really like.

When asked if the 16-week experience led to any rating changes he acknowledged rationale for a change for one individual: “I heard a softer side of him that I'd never heard before. So it changed the way I looked at him.”

Table 11
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L10

L10 Construct pole 1	L1 (1)	L1 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (2)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct pole 5
(+) Lets teams be teams, doesn't have to be the point person	2	2	2	1	4	5	2	2	3	5	2	3	3	2	5	5	4	4	3	4	3	4	2	3	Controls everything
(+) Is not abrasive	1	1	1	1	3	5	2	3	2	5	1	3	2	3	4	5	3	3	2	4	1	3	1	4	Can be abrasive at times
(+) Is collaborative on a team	1	1	1	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	2	3	2	2	5	5	4	3	3	4	2	2	1	4	Pushes for his way
(+) You call, I'll haul, no sweat at all (you tell me what you want and I'll do it)	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	4	Not very responsive
(+) Wants to do the right thing	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	Doesn't care if it is the right thing
Quiet leader	1	1	1	2	3	4	3	3	4	5	2	3	3	2	5	5	4	3	3	4	3	3	2	4	(+) More vocal leader
Doesn't play well with others	5	5	5	4	3	2	4	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	2	(+) Plays well with others
(+) Will share what they are thinking, will speak their minds in a meeting setting	3	4	4	4	2	1	4	4	3	1	3	3	3	4	1	1	2	3	1	1	2	2	4	2	Will not share what they are thinking, will not speak their minds in a meeting setting
(+) Is passionate about what he is in charge of	1	1	2	2	2	2	3	4	1	2	3	3	3	4	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	2	2	3	Does not appear to be passionate about his work
(+) Can be strong-willed	3	5	3	4	1	1	3	3	2	1	3	3	3	4	1	1	2	3	2	1	3	2	3	2	Is not strong-willed
(+) Is light-hearted	1	4	2	4	3	3	4	1	2	4	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	Is very serious
Is very shy	2	1	2	1	4	5	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	2	5	5	4	3	3	2	4	3	3	4	(+) Is very outgoing
(+) Will take responsibility	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	1	1	2	3	2	4	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	Will not take responsibility
(+) Brings levity	3	3	3	3	X	3	2	2	3	4	2	3	2	3	2	4	2	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	Is a downer
(+) Gets his points across with facts and data	1	1	1	2	2	3	3	4	3	2	2	3	2	4	4	3	5	5	3	2	2	3	2	4	Gets points across with stories

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L10; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

Team cohesiveness constructs of L11. The ratings of team cohesiveness constructs for L11 are found in Table 12. During the interview, L11 did not initially express any rating changes influenced by the action learning groups' experiences. Rather, he indicated that the changes were as a result of elements such as positional change. As an example, he cited rationale for one teammate by saying:

Again, like I said, with his new role and stuff—his leadership skills have always been real high and how he has handled—conducted—himself as a leader: I think [it] rates him higher. His leadership and how he is handling himself in his new role is one the biggest reasons why you are seeing the changes on almost all of his [ratings].

When posed with the question of how the experiences in the action learning sets might have influenced his ratings he responded, “I think being around those guys makes you want to rate ‘em better, because of the things you’ve seen and heard from ‘em”.

Table 12
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L11

L11 Construct pole 1	L1 (1)	L1 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (2)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct pole 5	
(+) Works well together	2	1	1	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	4	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	Too busy to work together
(+) Is proactive in meeting with employees	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	4	3	4	3	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	Is disruptive due to a lack of one-on-one with employees
(+) Positively influences due to his leadership skills	2	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	1	1	4	2	4	2	2	1	1	1	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	Negatively influence due to self-centeredness
(+) Is proactive to take on projects	1	1	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	1	4	2	4	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	Reluctant to take on projects
Disruptive because he is opinionated	4	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	5	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	(+) Very open-minded and considers all options
(+) Holds people accountable	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	4	4	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	Does not hold people accountable
Doesn't pay attention when he should	4	5	4	4	3	4	3	4	5	5	3	4	2	3	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	(+) Pays attention when he should
(+) Willing to work with others	1	1	2	1	3	3	2	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	1	Not very willing to work with others
(+) Has a positive attitude	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	Does not always have a positive attitude
Very opinionated and sometimes closed-minded	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	4	4	2	2	3	4	3	4	4	(+) Always open-minded
(+) Has very good leadership skills	3	1	3	2	X	2	3	2	2	1	3	3	4	3	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	2	3	3	3	Does not have good leadership skills

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L11; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

Team cohesiveness constructs of L12. Table 13 displays the team cohesiveness constructs identified by L12 and how he rated his teammates. L12 was ambivalent in his reasoning for rating changes. In rating one individual, he stated:

You know, I didn't have a lot to help me make this decision. I think I picked that [rating] because I've seen him working with his team a little bit and I don't have that much experience on team findings-type stuff with him. So I've never seen him be led by a team or a process, but he's really level-headed and easy to work with . . . he's still in the middle of the road for me.

For the same individual, in explaining a reduced rating, he used experiences from the action learning sets and reported:

Leadership attributes? . . . I think he models them without knowing it, but I don't think he understands them at all—and I didn't see him get involved in any of our discussions. It seemed like when we were at the table together, that's the only time I would be able to say I would know about leadership attributes is when we would meet. He didn't really know how to talk about 'em and didn't know how to talk to his team about 'em. So that's why I kinda gave him a 2.

Later, when asked if the experiences in the action learning groups influenced the ratings, he acknowledged only the one teammate: "Probably just [a teammate] is the only one that stands out in my brain as specifically just wasn't prepared to have the conversations and wasn't into the leadership attributes that much".

Table 13
Team Cohesiveness Constructs Matrix for L12

L12 Construct pole 1	L1 (1)	L1 (2)	L2 (1)	L2 (2)	L3 (1)	L3 (2)	L4 (1)	L4 (2)	L5 (1)	L5 (2)	L6 (1)	L6 (2)	L7 (1)	L7 (2)	L8 (1)	L8 (2)	L9 (1)	L9 (2)	L10 (1)	L10 (2)	L11 (1)	L11 (2)	L12 (1)	L12 (2)	Construct pole 5
(+) Focuses on doing the right thing for the company, no matter what	X	2	1	3	1	3	1	3	X	2	X	3	3	3	1	2	1	2	3	3	3	3	1	2	Lets past process failures cause him to lose sight of the right thing
(+) Start at full speed, end at full speed in getting the job done	X	2	1	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	X	2	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	2	Is analytical and fails to execute because he over-analyzes
(+) More people-oriented, using the team to his advantage	X	2	X	3	2	4	1	2	X	2	X	3	X	2	2	3	2	2	X	3	X	3	2	2	Is a self-thinker and does not use the team
Thinks he needs to solve problems on his own, while placing blame	X	4	X	3	4	4	4	4	X	4	X	3	2	4	4	2	4	4	X	2	3	2	4	4	(+) Takes blame out of the situation, engages the team to solve the problem
(+) Is oriented around people and takes a light-hearted approach	X	2	X	3	3	4	2	2	X	2	X	3	4	3	2	3	2	2	X	4	X	3	1	2	Is not clear with his approach and uses a know-it-all approach
(+) Keeps the problem-solving about the process, not people	X	2	1	3	2	4	1	2	X	2	X	3	3	3	1	3	1	2	2	4	X	4	1	2	Seems to try to place blame instead of solving the issue
(+) Makes decisions based on team's findings	X	2	1	3	1	4	1	2	X	2	X	3	X	3	1	2	1	2	X	3	X	3	1	2	Makes decisions without consulting the team
Has preconceived notions; they can not entertain any other solutions	X	4	5	3	5	3	5	4	X	4	X	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	(+) Can be led to a process improvement by a team
Doesn't even know what the leadership attributes are	X	4	4	2	4	3	4	3	X	5	X	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	(+) He models the leadership attributes
Weakens the team by not having the company in mind	X	4	4	3	4	2	4	3	X	5	X	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	(+) Strengthens the team by living the leadership attributes/company's values
Focused on his own hidden agenda	X	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	X	5	X	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	(+) Process focused
Impossible to work with	X	5	4	4	3	1	4	5	X	5	X	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	3	3	3	3	4	3	(+) Easy to work with

Note. (+) = promotes team cohesiveness; **Bold** = team members in learning set with L12; (1) = first rating; (2) = second rating

RQ 4 and 5 analysis. In response to RQ 4, a repertory grid interview technique provided unbiased and substantially uncontaminated information in the form of team cohesiveness perceptions from most participants. The resultant data depicted rich, bipolar constructs. In response to RQ 5, these were rated twice by participants, before and after the action learning program. Semistructured interviews inquiring about the rationale for changes in ratings provided no consistent data supporting action learning as a means of modifying team cohesiveness constructs.

Summary for RQ 4 and 5. Conducting repertory grid exercises with the study participants is shown to be an effective way to uncover and display the bipolar personal constructs held. In a very clear fashion, the methodology demonstrates a response to RQ 4. The resultant grids or matrices for the 10 contributing participants graphically depict the team cohesiveness constructs that each member attributed to other leadership team members.

The repertory grid interviews that took place before and after the action learning program resulted in data that did not indicate a general shift in the team cohesiveness perceptions, either positive or negative, among the leadership team members. Numerical ratings assigned by the participants showed no trend and the rationale analyses conducted through the interviews with participants revealed that most did not immediately identify the action learning activities as an impetus for rating changes. Therefore, this data and inquiry methodology indicated that team cohesiveness constructs were not significantly or consistently modified by an action learning program. Inasmuch as many of the ratings changed over time, most interview responses showed little support for RQ 5.

Summary

Semistructured interviews conducted with all participants and facilitators, the use of field notes and journals, and the use of a personal construct development process helped ensure quality and triangulation in the qualitative data. Utilizing *Atlas.ti* in the coding of interview data aided in the triangulation. Following protocol set forth in chapter 3 helped guard against bias and contamination.

The data shows that most participants found the action learning program to be positive in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes. However, scores provided by senior managers on the performance management assessments does not necessarily validate this. Responding to RQ 1, some participants found a direct improvement in their ability to demonstrate an attribute, while others cited the program as a positive vehicle for observational learning and sharing about the topic. Most participants reported some elements of the program as useful.

RQ 2 was answered through specific evidence indicating that the study participants found the social aspects of the action learning program to be helpful. In addition, most participants identified the learning sets as positive and valuable as well as the interactions through coaching, questioning, sharing, and open reflection. The individual learning activities such as journaling and action planning were not reported as especially helpful or useful. It can be reasoned from this that the observational learning associated with the interaction may be considered more beneficial as a mode of learning than the experiential mechanisms of journaling and action planning. In addition,

participants felt that facilitation was a positive aspect as long as the facilitators were competent and adhered to a helpful role of assistance and guidance.

RQ 3 was addressed by participants identifying several items as not being useful or positive. Included in the data were concerns about the rotation cycle of participants from one learning set to another being too short and the need for additional structure. The need for better facilitation was also a subject broached. Specifically, some participants identified the lack of a common process, or variation among facilitators, as not useful. Finally, the level of commitment, evidenced by the low sense of priority given to the program, was not viewed as positive.

The use of a repertory grid technique provided a standard process in determining the personal team cohesiveness perceptions from most participants. The resultant data depicted rich, bipolar constructs. These were rated by participants and provided a response to RQ 4. Semistructured interviews inquiring about the rationale for rating changes before and after the action learning program provided no consistent data supporting action learning as a means of modifying team cohesiveness constructs.

All of the participants contributed to some extent in the data collection activities. One participant chose not to contribute in the team cohesiveness investigation process, while another was not accessible for the second-round, postprogram grid exercise. All of the study participants and facilitators voluntarily offered input in response to interview inquiries and each of the research questions was addressed through those responses. In chapter 5, I offer a brief summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The intent of this study was to evaluate an action learning program designed to help an intact leadership team better demonstrate results-based leadership attributes. The inquiry centered on research questions concerning the usefulness of the action learning program and its associated elements. Furthermore, additional research questions called for the discovery of team cohesiveness constructs ascribed to each other by the team members and at investigating how the action learning program might modify the team cohesiveness constructs.

The 16-week program was evaluated through semistructured interviews with each of the participants. Team cohesiveness constructs were developed using a repertory grid approach described in chapter 3. Inquiry about the changes in perception was conducted through semistructured interviews focused on understanding the rationale for those changes. Special attention was given to understanding how the action learning process might provide the opportunity to modify perceptions.

Qualitative data was analyzed and coded thematically. The contextual data was then aligned with the research questions and exhibited in chapter 4. Overall, the data showed that participants regarded the action learning program as positive. They felt that some of the aspects of the program were more useful than others. The small groups along with sharing and observational learning were highly regarded, while the general commitment to the action learning process was not positive. Team cohesiveness constructs and ratings of team members were uncovered and portrayed. Generally, it

cannot be said that the action learning program played any significant role in modifying those constructs held by the participants. In the following section, these findings are interpreted and conclusions are drawn. Associations are formed with concepts found in the larger body of literature.

Addressing Limitations

In chapter 1, several limitations were discussed. In this section, those limitations are reiterated along with insight as to how, if at all, they were mitigated or addressed. The five limitations identified were: a) participant availability, b) the researcher's familiarity with the participants, c) a performance management instrument, d) fear of consequences due to hierarchical concerns, and e) limited generalizability.

Participant Availability

Although it might be argued that availability was somewhat under the control of the participants, it was not controllable by this researcher. At times it appeared that the choice to attend weekly learning set sessions was at the discretion of each participant. At other times, by way of cancellation, the choice was made by senior managers. While the senior-most manager issued statements indicating the importance of the weekly action learning sessions, it not known if these statements had a positive influence. It is also not known how or if absences affected the action learning program results.

The Researcher's Familiarity With Participants

Knowing that the professional relationship with the participants might cause issues with data collection, as presented in chapter 1, care and attention was given to researcher conduct throughout the study period. Rigor was enforced during the times

when I would interact with participants. My intention was to portray myself as a clinician and emphasized that their honest reporting was crucial. Yin (2003) described the need to be open to contrary findings. In this study, contrary findings were of little regard since the investigation was evaluative and exploratory, rather than predictive or explanatory. The research, by nature, was designed to consider all data.

During semistructured interviews regarding the action learning program, I consciously attempted to adhere to the outline of items shown in Appendix I. During semistructured interviews about team cohesiveness construct ratings, I was careful to merely ask why ratings were different. By asking participants to describe their experience and by asking open-ended, nonleading questions, I was better assured of getting heartfelt responses without bounds. Utilizing semistructured interview methodology also gave me the opportunity to inquire deeper into responses to gain more understanding.

Yin (2003) admonished research investigators to be wary of bias due to preconceived notions. In the present study, this researcher may have had preconceived ideas regarding generalized participant behavior, but I had none regarding what their reactions and perceptions might be about action learning and team cohesiveness. The foreknowledge about participant behavior was an advantage for I knew how to approach individuals and encourage their participation.

Performance Management Instrument

The company's performance management instrument and related process presented a possible limitation in that individuals being assessed as well as those assessing may view the criteria differently. This was outside the scope of the study and

the researcher's ability to control. Although the data from this instrument was used to inform the researcher, its degree of validity is unknown. Therefore, it can only be used to foster dialogue.

The Fear of Consequences Due to Hierarchical Concerns

I did not take steps to mitigate possible hierarchical issues within learning sets. This was intentional because, by design, the study dealt with an intact leadership team, replete with various levels of leaders. Data showed that, at least to a small degree, this concern was justified. Hierarchy-based apprehension was present at some point in the process. To what degree this limitation played a role in the action learning process was untested and is unknown.

Limited Generalizability

Generalizability might have been enhanced by conducting this study using several intact leadership teams. Using this multiple-case approach may have afforded more generalizability, but would not have been feasible. Although generalizability was not my concern, as it is not for most qualitative researchers (Creswell, 1998), Yin (2003) advocated that a single-case study "can communicate research-based information about a phenomenon to a variety of non-specialists" (p. 145). Yin's (2003) comment portrays a more accurate goal of this study.

Conclusions and Interpretations

In this discussion, the interpretation of findings is developed in two topical areas. The first is the usefulness of the action learning program and its various aspects. The second is the identification of team cohesiveness constructs and their modification

through action learning. As a result, all five research questions will be specifically addressed.

Research Question 1

How useful is an action learning program in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes? According to the data, an action learning program is regarded as useful or helpful in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes. Several positive aspects were reported. Specifically, at least four elements were identified as being positive and enabling: a) modeling, b) an open, trustful environment, c) dedicated time, and d) mindfulness.

Modeling. Also referred to as observational learning, modeling “occurs when someone acquires new knowledge *vicariously*—that is, by observing what happens to others” (Greenberg & Baron, 2008, p. 114). Action learning appears to provide this opportunity:

[L2]: It helped me to see somebody else's personal side so they're giving up their personal issues and learning that some of their issues that they're having are the same as mine and how they're dealing with it. It likely helped me decide how to go through some of those same issues with my team or my group. Just hearing other people's experiences is helpful to balance out my own things I need to follow up on or could follow up on.

Open, trustful environment. While it is beyond the scope of this project to explore the details of an open, trustful environment, it is reasonable to expect that a learning set with such a milieu would tend to reduce fear and apprehension and make it easier to communicate and exchange ideas. When openness and trust are present in an action learning program, it is seen as positive:

[L1:] People are intimidated in large groups so with these types of things—in good small groups—are better to learn the lessons on how to become truthful or open, that kind of thing. You're more apt to open up with just a few peers instead of a large team.

[L7:] So that was one of things I liked about it. Our whole team was really pretty good about sharing. . . . it seemed really honest. Really good feedback and nobody was judgmental.

Certain factors can potentially mitigate the level of trust and openness of an action learning environment. Among these is the difference in rank or position among learning set members and a person's propensity to divulge personal experiences in a group setting. The level of comfort with senior leaders can be a variable. This might be especially true in hierarchical organizations, such as the one under study. Some participants may be hesitant to share their challenges or struggles when their boss is at the table. It appears that the comfort level between ranks in a group might be partly dependent upon the demeanor of the senior leader:

[A senior manager] was in that group. He was the type of person that you could be open and honest with without any fear of retaliation so the people in that group felt a lot more comfortable versus the first group where there was [another] senior manager that might have been a little bit intimidating so they weren't comfortable to talk about their true feelings or what they were going through that particular week.

The willingness to be open, to disclose things about oneself, appears also to be a mitigating factor. It is evident that some participants may not receive the full benefit of action learning because they are less willing to give others an opportunity to learn from or about them:

[Interviewer:] What got in the way of your growth? What hindered you?

[L2:] Me and my apprehension and me and my openness to share, my lack of openness to share.

Dedicated time. Carving out time each week to focus on developing results-based leadership attributes seems to be an endorsed and valuable practice:

[L6:] Setting time aside to really focus on [the leadership attributes] helped I think. Setting the time aside.

[L5:] So first, what works particularly well is just dedicating some time to sit together as leaders and not firefight.

[L4:] So I think that helped the most: making it a set schedule each week.

[L3:] To have a dedicated time where you intentionally stop the bus, if you will, and really step out and take a look backwards. It gives you the time to seek out the smaller things that may be very, very significant.

Although it is reasonable to assume that without dedicated time for action learning activities it might be difficult to make progress, it was evident that senior leaders were at odds about the value of dedicating a specific weekly time slot. The following feedback exemplifies this dichotomy. One senior leader began by talking about his direct reports:

They felt that their plates are so full and [I've] got 'em doing stuff, and [the other senior manager's] got 'em doing stuff and we're off the floor. Once they started getting engaged, they felt there was some value, but until then, they were like, "Ah, it's another meeting". And frankly, there were a couple times that came across my mind, too—where schedule and work dictated priorities more so than this, not that this wouldn't earn value. But when I stack and rack my priorities for the day, that's the last thing I had to do. I have some other things I'd rather be doing, but overall it was okay. So, mixed feelings, it really depends on the day, depends on the schedule.

Another senior leader engaged me in this way:

My week at the [company] leadership center reinforced my thought that we should continue with this and this should be “and-on” until we display all those attributes that we talked about. Probably at a more consistent level. I am concerned about parts of my team that still don't understand the importance of it.

[Interviewer:] So you still have that concern even after these many weeks?

Yes. And if we stop, well, that was the flavor of the month, but if we continue to pursue it, you know, they will recognize it's not going away. I think there's still this feeling that oh yeah, the leadership attributes maybe we already display them we don't need to work on them. But my question would be so, how are you working on it? How are you getting better? Where are you getting the knowledge to change if we don't do this? Are you just reading a book or you know, what are you doing? So I think spending an hour a week is not asking too much. Until I see it in kinda like [lean manufacturing], until I see it ingrained in everyone's thinking, where they just talk about it all the time, or display it all the time, then we need that focused hour every week.

The perceived value of dedicated time is related to the degree of commitment, which will be explored later. It becomes problematic when the difference in the level of value senior leaders placed on dedicating time to this leadership development activity becomes obvious to others:

[F2:] I think [the senior manager] seemed not really behind it, it's like I guess it was his attitude. It's like: "Oh, we have to go do this". Or, "I didn't do my homework, I got other things to do". And when a leader shows that to the first line then they also think that was okay to do. I mean there was not 100% full support of it. Whereas [another senior manager] was. So he was really behind it.

Mindfulness. Action learning can be a way of bringing intentionality and attentiveness to bear on a particular matter. Another term, mindfulness, can be used since it refers to "a way of learning to relate to whatever is happening in life in the present moment—a way of taking charge of one's life, a way of doing something for oneself that no one else can do" (Holmes, 2009, p. 36). In the present case study, it was found that action learning provides this benefit:

[Interviewer:] What changes did you see in yourself over the span of the program?

[L3:] Awareness. So I think that by having that time to look back and see those things that you don't normally see or having the seeds planted that you don't

normally have to focus on the attributes. You make them more of a part of your everyday regime. I mean it's something that's there and you're thinking about it consciously rather than as an afterthought. Instead of going through a situation and having to go in hindsight and go, "I guess that's kinda like [*determining the course*] or I guess that was [*being a pathfinder*]"'. You kinda have it in front of you where you see opportunities to inspire others and you kinda have it up front as you head into a situation of knowing that through what I am about to do I can figure out a way to chart the course so everybody can kinda understand where we're heading. So it kept everything up front rather than as an afterthought.

Summary. As shown in chapter 4, the data positively informed RQ 1. More specifically, responses and input from study participants revealed that four characteristics about the action learning program were useful in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes. It can be concluded from the data that modeling, an open, trustful environment, dedicated time, and mindfulness were inherent in the action learning program and were all deemed to be helpful.

Research Question 2

What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as especially positive or useful? Marquardt (1999) indicated that several elements are necessary for a successful action learning program. These are: (a) an issue of high importance, (b) a small learning set, (c) questioning and reflection, (d) resolution to take action, (e) a commitment to learning, and (f) a facilitator. Each of these is discussed and addressed in the light of study data in the sections that follow.

An issue of high importance. In this study, a predominate focus was the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes, an issue identified by the organization's senior-most manager as important to the salary growth of his team members. The manager indicated that the leadership attributes ratings are "60% of your

[performance management exercise results] which goes into a score which goes into salary planning, so it's linked directly to salary planning”.

Small learning set. Data from interviews substantiates that small groups or learning sets are regarded as positive or useful. Reasons include a sense of intimacy, better opportunity to share or be included, and generally creating an environment conducive for learning. Following are representative data:

[L8:] So small groups, good! Very good! Large groups, not a lot of interaction. In smaller groups, you have to interact.

[L2:] [The small group] was probably easier than the whole group. Having four or five of us in there rather than 10 or 15 of us. So I guess it made it easier for me. Someone that did not want to open up to 10 or 15 people at once. It would be easier to open up to 3 or 4.

[L12:] I learn better within groups and if I'm on my own I'm not as good at it. Seems like when I'm talking about it, going over it together, and hearing different angles. I really like working in small groups.

Questioning and coaching from others. The use of questioning and the receiving of coaching from others can be a very positive experience. According to data, this kind of interchange can add a particular depth and richness of learning:

[L7:] I got some good frank feedback from how they perceived me, how I perceived them. We all went away pretty much richer from what we gleaned from our peers and the group. And I think that's—to me the biggest takeaway is the coaching from the others.

[L3:] The questioning and coaching—the ability to ask questions to not only your peers but your upper level managers and get opinions from multiple sources was really good.

[L11:] That's kind of what I liked the best part of it—the one-on-one coaching between the group. It was great. I really liked that. It was the biggest bang for the buck, I thought. I've only been a manager for a couple years and getting the mentoring, I guess, from the other guys was great.

The questioning-and-coaching experience, however, is apparently contingent on the level of respect one has for those doing the coaching:

[L6:] You know, sometimes the questioning, sometimes the coaching, it really depended on the three or four people you are with at the time. Sometimes it went really well. . . . you know, it gets back to: do you respect the person on the team? Are you holding them as a knowledgeable person, do you respect what they are going to tell you back?

Although participants were given a handout at the beginning of the program that consisted of a list of coaching questions to ask (see Appendix D), it appears that participants often did not employ them to the extent possible. A journal entry from one facilitator stated, “One thing I noticed is everyone didn’t really use the coaching questions.” Asking open-ended questions in a coach-like manner is not a natural activity for everyone in this group of leaders. This is apparent as the following data disclose:

[L5:] I think we struggled with coaching because we all want to help people. That’s our human nature to want to offer suggestion. More like solutions than kinda asking open-ended questions. So, we’re not good at that yet, because we’re asked all the time to provide a solution to our bosses and to our team.

[F1:] It was tough for some, easy for some of the others. We did have a couple of people who I thought were very, very good in the sessions. They helped me with some of the pulsing questions on things to keep the direction of the conversation and to keep it moving down to the lower levels of details. But then again, others were, oh wow, I can’t go there.

[F2:] I think that is something very new for these managers as to what coaching is really about, you know, asking coaching questions—open-ended questions. I do remember that seldom happened in the group. I keep reminding them, use your coaching questions. Look at the back of your book, you’ve got coaching questions there but I remember that very seldom happened. It’s a difficult adjustment I think for them to do that.

Reflection and sharing with others. Data from the study indicates that the act of reflecting openly and sharing learning with others in the learning sets is quite beneficial,

especially in terms of enhancing relationships among team members and experiencing learning vicariously:

[L7:] So that was one of the things I liked about it. Our whole team was really pretty good about sharing.

[L10:] Sitting down and listening to others—that helps because I haven't been a manager as long as some of them here. It was more like stories about how somebody had this and here's how they resolved it. . . . So that's kinda how those small groups focused for me as listening to those experiences that [certain participants] had or somebody else had that I hadn't seen yet. And maybe I still haven't seen them but I kinda heard how somebody else did it. How it worked. How it didn't work. That part was helpful to me.

[L3:] The ability to share experiences and reflect on things that happened the previous week were dynamite. They were very valuable.

Recall that the study group is composed entirely of older White men. The fact that many would view sharing and reflecting as a positive experience is noteworthy, for such behavior is not a not a strong norm. This conclusion is supported by the following:

[Interviewer:] What about the reflection and sharing with others? We've talked about that quite a bit. You're hesitant, if I understood you correctly, you're hesitant to open yourself up and describe what happened and sort of talk about yourself in that way?

[L2:] Yes. Whether it's something I think I did well or something I did not so well. I just don't like to talk about myself.

[L1:] My belief is that you need a lot of opportunity to sit together and to get to know each other well enough to work through—to be honest, to be open and honest because we don't know how to do that. I think we need some help. It's hard and that was probably a good opportunity to start the dialogue.

One of the senior leaders apparently interpreted reflection and sharing as a type of negotiation, where one side challenges the other and expects the other side to push back.

This lack of aggressive exchange left the leader less than satisfied:

Reflection and sharing with others? Again, I didn't get a lot of—I like to be challenged, we all do, right? Sparring is good, knocking the opponent out is no good, but sparring is good because we learn from it, right? So often, I try and push, raise the bar with some of my managers in hopes that they would push back and they don't. I think it's the culture. Okay, all right boss. . . . I'll say things to have them think or inspire different ways of doing things. Before I know it, they're out there on the floor doing exactly what I say. That's not what I want. I want them to think of a way and find a way and what does it look like? Well, how would you do it, boss? And that's how they play catchball with me. Well, if I was to do it, it would be this way but I'm looking for what you would do, what do you think? Throw it out. And too often or not I'll make a suggestion to get them to think. Next thing you know, they are implementing the damn thing. Am I making sense? So, when you talk about reflection and sharing, I didn't get a lot of push-back.

If the other participants were, as the leader surmised, not culturally attuned to his style of interplay, it is easy to understand how others might not be willing exchange ideas with the boss. It is possible that his ways could be misunderstood as dictatorial and not open to feedback, input, or the sharing of optional views. It may be that strategies to increase emotional intelligence might help bridge the gap between predisposed styles.

Resolution to take action. The resolution to take action can be operationalized in the creation of a tangible action plan. The idea of creating action plans was seen by study participants to be beneficial:

[L10:] So [the action planning sheet] worked. I liked that.

[Interviewer:] How was that useful for you?

[L10:] Well it gave me steps that I could go take because once I had my goal, once I saw where I was and where I put my goals, it was easy to put steps to get there. . . . When I look at my action plan that I put together, it gave me some things to go work on. Thinking about those steps I have to take and it gave me a goal to go oh I have to go take that step to get here. It's kind of like if you don't set a goal if you say hey let's go have coffee, and you'll never set a time, you'll never have coffee with that person. So it gave me those steps to go hey I need to go do this. So that was a positive thing.

Active action planning for this set of manufacturing leaders was not seen as effective in practice, for it was not done to any significant degree. Perhaps additional encouragement was required. Marquardt et al. (2009) offered that action learning team coaches can use insightful questioning to reinforce and energize actions and associated learning, making the experience more positive when team members' actions do not produce the desired results. Cited as an element which could be strengthened, a participant offered this feedback concerning facilitators and the lack of consistent action planning:

[L7:] I guess the thing that I come down to is the thing for me that didn't work as well was there was no real accountability for going through the process. In other words you could sit down, go through the meeting, get the nuggets and the pearls from the meeting and the interaction and the thoughts that went on in there and stuff. But as far as anything going on out of there, there was no accountability for that part of it. . . . I would like to see a little more facilitator interaction in our group but it's by design. . . . I don't know what the facilitator's role was supposed to be by design. I think gatekeeper as more part of the role would have been more helpful on that.

[Interviewer:] And when you say gatekeeper?

[L7:] Keeping us on task. . . . I think we could have gotten a little more done and had our facilitator had a little more knowledge of it, of the process. I think it would have kept us on course a little better. . . . We never formally wrote down, at least I don't remember anybody writing down, any action plans. . . . So it's almost like an organization around needing structure around what we would have done. . . . So that might have been something that the facilitator might have helped us with as far as realization that we needed to document more what we were doing what we were talking about as opposed to just talking about it and each week going over what we talked about the previous week. So I think we could have been better about our action plans. That's for sure.

It appears evident that many action learning participants do not bring the intention to take action to fruition. This is due, in part, to other priorities taking precedence. As a

result, the resolution to implement actions is not fulfilled. The following supports this notion:

[L6:] On a scale from one to ten in my mind I was committed—a ten. My actions and follow through to the process was way less.

[Interviewer:] How do you account for the difference?

[L6:] I mentioned it many times. It's the work. We're very busy here.

A commitment to learning. In an ideal action learning approach, “everyone is expected, strongly encouraged, and assisted to learn” and, as such, “the group environment is highly conducive to change and learning” (Marquardt et al., 2009, p. 40). In the action learning program described in this study, there was not a strong, united commitment to learn. To a certain extent this was demonstrated by senior leaders as evidenced by the decisions to cancel action learning sessions and the apparent lack of clear messaging regarding relative priority of the action learning process. This may have contributed to the low commitment of the subordinate participants. Issuing an appraisal of others in his learning set, one participant added credence to the probability that a strong expectation towards learning was not in place:

[Interviewer:] What about the process did you find to be not as helpful perhaps an obstacle or somehow hindered you?

I don't think anything hindered me. I think the only thing that really kind of killed it all was a couple of manufacturing guys who were not so open minded about it.

[Interviewer:] In what way were they not open minded?

They thought it was a little bit funny. Kind of a little bit too touchy- feely for them. Not a manly thing I guess. I got the feeling there were 2 or 3 of them who probably went and hammered on the boss and said we have real work to do. I think that's what hurt it a little bit. . . . [Two managers] were not into it at all.

[Interviewer:] How did you know that they weren't?

They didn't do their homework. They weren't really involved. Like [a manager] for instance. I don't think he ever did his homework. He's a good guy and everything but he'd come in completely flat-footed and didn't know what we were talking about. You could tell who was prepared and who wasn't.

The generalized lack of a commitment to learn may have had another foundation.

Successful action learning programs involve urgent problems that are owned by participants “as passionately as the [program’s] sponsor” (Yeo & Nation, 2010, p. 200). Because 60% of the participants’ performance management assessment is based on results-based leadership attributes scores, it was assumed that participants would consider the enhancement of those attributes a worthy problem with sufficient urgency. This may not be true. Prior to the action learning program, the average score for all participants for all attributes, based on a five-point scale, was 3.55 (see Appendix H). This may not warrant enough of a sense of urgency, especially because many participants may understand that a 4 is likely to be the highest score they will receive. According to the senior-most leader:

I've had a lot of dialogue with a lot of people on my team that—I find it very hard to give someone a 5 exemplary relative to the leadership attributes because I believe there's always room for improvement and that says that that is a role model or industry model for others.

A facilitator. The study data clearly yields the perception that facilitators were necessary and beneficial to the action learning process. Simultaneously, there is the belief that the perception of facilitation competence is critical as well and that competence should be exhibited throughout the action learning program in each of the learning sets. Following are supporting and exemplary data:

[L2:] the facilitator did work good for me with regard to comfortably bring out some questions from me, but it made it difficult because there are some difficult questions or requests that I was asked to do or answer.

[L3:] Facilitator definitely was good in the fact that you kinda go off in bunny trails and things like that kind of need to bring you back in.

[L6:] I think the facilitation of those small groups in this endeavor was a necessary step. I'm not so sure that that I—you know—I'm not sure that the facilitators were trained or I didn't respect them enough. You know, so each facilitator was different. When you run across a facilitator you don't respect, you're not going to, you know—it just throws a different dynamic into it.

[L5:] The other thing that I thought wasn't helpful was we didn't stick to the process like we probably should have with having three different facilitators. They all had a thought on how strictly we should follow the process and the tools were given and in some cases the three teams followed a different process. I think it would have been better if we made it clear we were all going to stick to a certain process whatever that may be in the end so we could do a little more comparison of team to team development. . . . I think having a facilitator is good. I think the facilitators could have been more consistent in the application of the tools and the process. Possibly a few of them could have been more knowledgeable in what we were trying to do and maybe spend some time outside of those meetings organizing themselves in doing some reflection themselves about the process because it was really hard for the three to get together.

[L8:] So a lot of times I took the role to start the conversations going. We'd be fumbling, we'd be waiting, we'd be: "OK, so where'd we leave off last week? [Participant], you were gonna go do something, right?" And I would try and get the things going. And as you know we rotated facilitators, some are stronger than others, some are weak. And I'm not a facilitator, I'm not there to coach or counsel. But there was a lot of times that they weren't there. And when they were there, we had to get the conversations going. . . . I would get some experienced facilitators that are used to drawing things out getting people going and try to stay to an agenda.

[L4:] Facilitators? Love 'em dearly, but on this type of a thing: I wish we would have just had one—you—you ran each meeting on a different day or something. We all broke into different groups. Your facilitation is different than the other facilitators.

It can be concluded that the quality of facilitation is clearly believed to impact the quality of the learning set sessions. Further, it is apparent that there was a perception that

the facilitators were not equally suited for the position. Finally, it can be concluded that additional clarification, expectations, and education in preparing facilitators for the role is required. Marquardt et al. (2009) submitted an exhortation that emphasized the need for a qualified facilitator or coach:

[Action learning] is dependent on a few simple rules and processes. The [action learning] team coach ensures that these norms and learnings and processes are followed. The central role of the coach is to ensure that the group takes time to learn. . . . Without an [action learning] team coach, the team would likely slip into the familiar pattern of activities that characterize task forces. In this environment, team members can easily go on “autopilot”, mindlessly displaying habitual behavior that has been well-rehearsed and reinforced over years of organizational life. (p. 41)

Summary. Inquiry was made regarding 5 elements of action learning: (a) a small learning set, (b) questioning and reflection, (c) resolution to take action, (d) a commitment to learning, and (e) a facilitator. The resultant data aligned with and provided a more complete exposition of RQ 2. It is clear and I can conclude that the leadership team members under study held a positive regard for the small learning sets and the process of questioning and reflection. Simultaneously, there was less positive data supporting Marquardt’s resolution to take action, a commitment to learning, and a facilitator. Additional information to augment the understanding of disparities may be found in the following section, where data is discussed relevant to RQ 3.

Research Question 3

What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as not positive or useful? Inquiry into RQ 3 revealed relatively little about the obstructive structural or design aspects of action learning. In some cases, topics mentioned above will be reiterated for clarity and alignment to this research question. Several areas were identified

as hindrances by some participants. As mentioned earlier, the quality and consistency of facilitation was cited. Action plans and journaling were seen as onerous. The team member rotation from set to set after 4 weeks was seen as too short. In addition, open sharing was regarded as uncomfortable, though not for everyone. Following is data that exemplifies these concerns:

[L5:] The other thing that I thought wasn't helpful was we didn't stick to the process like we probably should have with having three different facilitators. They all had a thought on how strictly we should follow the process and the tools were given and in some cases the three teams followed a different process.

[L1:] Like I said since designing a project and trying to carry it through to me it just seemed like another assignment so it seemed like extra workload on a person so that part didn't work for me. The other part that didn't work well was probably four weeks was barely enough time to getting comfortable with your teammates so the rotation time was a little quick. I think we were just starting to get to the point of just opening up a little then it was time to rotate so now you got a new fresh team. So that probably didn't help me much.

[L5:] [What I found to be not helpful or useful was] possibly the short rotations within the team. It was like 4 weeks and sometimes you would have a team member gone a week or two and so you only had a couple weeks potentially to develop trust and the relationship with someone. So possibly the rotations might be longer. Six or eight weeks or something. Because it's all about developing trust that you can share things with that smaller group of people without being criticized or going on the defensive.

[L2:] I don't like to show my feelings out to—I don't like to be that open. I'm more personal, more private, I like to keep things to myself. So getting out there and letting everybody know my strengths and weaknesses I guess is uncomfortable. I'm humble. I don't like to share my strengths or my weaknesses.

Summary. The list of items identified by participants of aspects that were not useful or helpful in the action learning program is relatively small. However, the data is conclusive indicating that the quality and consistency of the facilitation of the learning sets is important and often seen as unsatisfactory. For this group of manufacturing

managers it can also be concluded that journaling and action planning is not seen as valuable activities. Just as significant is the conclusion that the low commitment level was not a positive aspect. Journaling, action planning, and preparing for and attending the weekly learning sets was often seen as burdensome and extraneous. An additional item was the duration of the first rotation of team members of only 4 weeks. One participant found the open conversations to be personally uncomfortable and threatening.

Research Question 4

What team cohesiveness constructs do team members (participants) ascribe to other team members? In investigating the constructs of team cohesiveness held by the leadership team members, I chose to allow participants to describe and define cohesiveness in their own terms. These personal constructs or perceptions were uncovered through a process called repertory grid technique, a methodology established by Frank Kelly, the founder of personal construct psychology (Fransella & Bannister, 1977). Repertory grid technique was used to minimize researcher bias and contamination. The bipolar constructs produced emanate solely from the interviewee's mental map, rather than from concepts offered by me.

The constructs offered by 10 of the 12 participants in the present study are listed in the matrices found in Tables 4 through 13 and also represent the response to RQ 4. They are presented in raw form. That is, they are listed as the participants stated them. Little clarification was requested, except with respect to grammar usage. No laddering up of constructs was attempted. Laddering up refers to a process of interviewer inquiry which results in understanding the interviewee's core constructs or preferences (Stewart,

2010). Such a laddering process was not undertaken, because the focus was on changes in perception over time, rather than driving for clarity. Therefore, it was not vital to understand why an interviewee identified what they did. Yet, it was necessary to understand which pole of the construct was seen by the interviewees as enhancing team cohesiveness, or positive, for this was not always evident to me. As an example, in Table 6, L3 identified the following bipolar constructs: has a *big factory* mentality—demonstrates a *smalltown* feel or behavior, very data-oriented—not data-oriented, and very decisive—has to think through over and over. I did not assume to know which pole was positive. Inquiry was made to ascertain this from the interviewee's perspective.

While no analysis or categorization was conducted regarding the constructs, most could fit easily into the broad dimensions of task and relationship orientations. In Table 10, for example, L7 lists both relationship-oriented constructs (e.g., is ever-present and fully engaged with his team) as well as task-oriented (e.g., well organized and efficient). Although the interview context was clearly centered in the domain of behaviors and characteristics around team cohesiveness, the curious reader might wonder how the perceptions expressed by members of the leadership team could possibly inform other aspects of organizational life. Recall that four elements were identified in effective teams: productivity, cohesion, learning, and integration (Thompson, 2003). It seems reasonable to postulate that each might have task and relationship orientations. This in mind, Schein (1992) posited:

In a stable environment it is safe to be completely task oriented. In a complex, turbulent environment in which technological and other forms of interdependence are high, however, one needs to value relationships in order to achieve the level of

trust and communication that will make joint problem solving and solution implementation possible. (p. 371)

It is possible that some of the constructs appear to be conflictive or inconsistent. This is neither unique nor abnormal. Constructivist psychologists are often interested in understanding this phenomenon and methods have been designed to quantitatively measure and analyze ambiguous construct systems (Bell, 2004). Such measurement goes beyond the scope of this present work and no quantitative interpretive investigation of this nature was accomplished.

Research Question 5

How does the action learning program modify the team cohesiveness constructs? In order to understand how constructs of team cohesiveness were modified through action learning activities, to address RQ 5, a two-part investigation was conducted. First, each participant was asked to rate his teammates before and after the 16-week action learning period. Second, each participant was interviewed. During the interview, participants were asked to describe why they rated others differently. Questions were only asked about those who were in learning sets with the interviewee.

Some evidence was found to indicate that team cohesiveness constructs were strengthened through action learning interactions. Without prompting, L7 reported that an increase in rating was due to the action learning experience:

I think that communication was one thing that [L6] was choosing to work on. . . . [L6] was part of one of the learning groups I was in. I think that was one of the things he took out of there—I think a lot of it is getting to know the person better.

[Interviewer:] So the action learning group gave you that insight?

I think it gave me that insight into him a little better. And I think it's changed some of the things he does. He seems to be a lot more effective now than he was prior to with this group, prior to that session.

When prompted to consider how the action learning experiences may have contributed to higher positive ratings, some participants responded that the experiences did have a positive influence:

[L3:] So I think they were [influential in the rating]. And I think a lot of it came from interaction. Interaction that we didn't have before. . . . Just the open dialogue back and forth really helped [L4] and I. And it allowed me to get to know [L2] and [L6].

[L4:] I don't have any specifics, but I know we had some good conversations in our meetings, and you know, [L11], he really had some good stuff—he's really growing. Of everybody, I think [L11] and [L5], I probably learned the most of from those meetings. [L11], especially.

L10 offered this when asked about a learning set member: "I heard a softer side of him that I'd never heard before. So it changed the way I looked at him."

Although some constructs were modified positively over the course of the action learning program, some were not. It may be that spending time with teammates one hour each week may not be enough to increase a sense of team cohesiveness. L5 illuminated this possibility:

I'll make a general comment about the 16 weeks: that afforded me more time than I've had in the past to directly interact with some of these people. And so, I had perceptions prior to that with not a lot of facts and data or direct interaction. And so, during these 16 weeks I got a lot more direct interaction, so that's why I believe both directions—good and bad—there was some significant changes in the perception of these people. . . . You might find that people have attributes that aren't desirable and weren't what you were hoping for.

It seems apparent that, if increased perceptions of team cohesiveness were the goal, other intentional means would need to be employed. It appears, too, that the

psychological and social elements involved with team cohesiveness are complex. Teasing apart this complexity might be necessary in order to establish a good strategy for enhancement. One study participant alluded to the complicated nature in his response to the issues of trust and respect in the learning set:

You know, sometimes the questioning, sometimes the coaching, it really depended on the three or four people you are with at the time. Sometimes it went really well. . . . you know, it gets back to do you respect the person on the team. Are you holding them as a knowledgeable person, do you respect what they are going to tell you back?

[Interviewer:] Say a little bit more about this respect notion and that relationship aspect of team mates.

An example is that, you know—I'd probably answered this different some other day but—today we went through the constructs, and they were extremes, and they were my constructs. I suspect everyone had different constructs, but in my constructs the dictatorial type people versus the people that allowed openness and teamwork and ideas from outside. The more dictatorial you were with me, the less I'm going to respect you, is what it came down to, I think. . . . It's not that I don't respect the dictators. Their things are suspect because they're telling me, as opposed to somebody I trust, and allow me to give them answers. Then I'll take their answers back, but if you never want my opinion, it's less likely I'm going to accept your opinion.

[Interviewer:] And if I'm following you that has something to do with the team cohesiveness idea.

Yeah.

[Interviewer:] So respect is associated with team cohesiveness?

Yeah. You know, I don't know. 'Cause, I can be cohesive with the team. There's struggles with different types of people on the team, but I'm still, you know, I've never gotten to the point where I didn't feel like I wasn't part of the team anymore. I get frustrated, but cohesiveness, and the understanding that certain people—that's just the way they are—they are very dictatorial in their approach. That didn't affect the cohesiveness of the team. It was more on the respect side. The willingness to understand or the willingness to accept what they're telling me.

Summary. Some data exists that indicates that action learning can be helpful in positively modifying team cohesiveness constructs toward other team members. At the same time, it is evident that a 16-week action learning program might also provide opportunity for only enough interaction between team members so as to influence those constructs negatively. What it is that enhances perceptions of team cohesiveness may be complex. Understanding this complexity better may assist researchers and practitioners in designing additional strategies.

Recommendations for Action

The results synthesized from the data in chapter 4 should be especially relevant for several populations within manufacturing organizations. First, prospective participants in action learning activities would benefit from the study results because it would bring an awareness of some of the potential benefits of action learning as well as some of the potential problems. Second, those chartered with the selection of leadership development strategies might benefit from understanding the rich information found in the data. Providing these results satisfies, to some degree, one of the purposes of this study. Third, the results inform members of senior leadership and management in understanding their role in the action learning process. How they can influence the likelihood of success of a results-based leadership attributes action learning program is meted out forthrightly in this chapter. It is realistic to suggest that the results of this study should be submitted to senior Human Resources leaders who would then disseminate the information to the above populations upon need and interest.

Several aspects of action learning were evidently positive and useful to participants. Nevertheless, the data uncovered opportunities for growth, change, and enrichments to the process. Future iterations of results-based leadership attributes development utilizing action learning might be more successful by embedding the suggestions that follow, arranged as pertinent to the research questions.

Research Question 1

How useful is an action learning program in improving the demonstration of results-based leadership attributes? Action learning is a means of modeling through sharing and open reflection and, as such, is useful as a method of developing results-based leadership attributes.

Action learning is modeling. How useful action learning is, is dependent, in part, on senior organizational leaders. Senior leaders in the organization should demonstrate the type of leadership and culture they desire through modeling. By sharing stories, experiences, and anecdotes that exemplify results-based attributes, they promote the image of the acceptable behavior set. Sharing and demonstrating open, public reflection encourages others in the organization to display similar vulnerability. The action learning process is designed as a vehicle to do this. Over time, this expression can engender a more trustful and positive climate (Cameron, 2008).

Protracting the action learning program. Because action learning is useful it seems reasonable to suggest that learning to demonstrate an entire set of results-based leadership attributes might well take longer than 16 weeks. Senior leaders should consider lengthening the period of action learning and conduct occasional interviews with

participants to gauge the level of learning and competency. Moreover, senior leaders should continue to participate in the learning sets and rotate from set to set. Finally, allow and require a dedicated time for learning sets to meet. Apply discipline in not allowing this time to be subjugated by other activities.

Research Question 2

What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as especially positive or useful? Certain aspects of the action learning process are seen as especially useful. Following are some recommendations to strengthen some of these elements.

Strengthening coaching and questioning skills. Powerful questions lead to personal discovery and growth as well as forming a foundation for effective coaching (Hargrove, 1995; Marquardt, 2005). Senior leaders need to ensure that leadership team members have the opportunity to learn and practice coaching and questioning skills. Since they are fundamental for modern leaders, senior management should determine ways to measure these skills.

Strengthening facilitation skills. A facilitator with good facilitation skills, who acts as a learning coach for learning sets, is a key to the action learning process (Sofa et al., 2010). Choosing a facilitator or facilitators who demonstrate competency in this regard is also a key decision. Supplying training or other development for facilitators is a wise investment.

Monitoring action plans. It can be argued that the action learning methodology falls under the genre of continuous improvement techniques. The action plan is a tangible record of progress toward improvements, whether in behaviors or processes. Requiring

team members to produce action plans and monitoring those plans by senior management may be an effective way to produce accountability and commitment in the action learning system.

Research Question 3

What aspects about the action learning program are regarded as not positive or useful? The commitment to learning was not highly regarded as a positive element in the present study. It is recommended that organizations develop solidarity in senior management concerning the relative importance of applying action learning in strengthening results-based leadership attributes. Promote clarity around the messaging and the strategy in relation to the other priorities that demand time from the team members. Adopting and implementing a communication plan regarding these factors may make a positive impact in the way that an action learning program is received by participants.

Research Questions 4 and 5

What team cohesiveness constructs do team members ascribe to each other and how does an action learning program modify those constructs? It is not clear how action learning might be modified, if at all, so as to produce more team cohesiveness among team members. Senior leaders may consider that lengthening the action learning activities, including longer periods of rotating members from set to set, might be conducive to team cohesiveness. Additional time may promote additional understanding and serve to strengthen relationships. This may be especially true if participants become more skilled as coaches.

In the current study, team cohesiveness was not a discrete topic of development in the weekly action learning sets. It may be that providing an action learning program, focused on developing team cohesiveness, many of the personal psychological constructs could be used as basis of discussion and action planning.

Recommendations for Related Research

In this study, there was no attempt to investigate whether action learning actually resulted in a measurable, positive change in the demonstrated behaviors as defined by the results-based leadership attributes. Nor was there an attempt to fully understand the personal constructs of team cohesiveness of the leadership team members, gain clarity about them, and devise specific action learning structures to strengthen cohesiveness. In addition, the repertory grid technique was not used specifically for management or leadership development. These matters are worthy of additional investigation and research.

There is a need to determine the effects of an action learning program designed to enhance results-based leadership attributes. In such a study, researchers might gauge action learning program outcomes by gauging others external to the participants. Multi-rater feedback mechanisms, random interview approaches, and other forms of survey design, conducted before and after an action learning program, might be useful in delivering qualitative and quantitative data.

A study to investigate the effectiveness of action learning in enhancing team cohesiveness is also warranted. Researchers could utilize personal construct psychology and the repertory grid technique to more fully ascertain and gain clarity about how

participants view team-cohesive behaviors. Action learning could be used as a means of intentionally clarifying, practicing, and embedding behaviors that strengthen team cohesiveness. With attention placed on some of the learnings brought forth in this study, inquiry could be made into the process, yielding discovery about useful practices and experiences.

Work has been done in using repertory grid technique in association with group reflection, individual reflection, and personal experience in management development (Osterlind & Denicolo, 2006). A study demonstrating the identification of personal constructs of leaders regarding their managerial and leadership activities and putting those in juxtaposition with their company's expected set of results-based leadership attributes could be quite useful to participants. Grids and their constructs could be used individually and in groups in reflection activities. Action learning could be used transformatively by first identifying, then reducing gaps between current management practices and the ideal expectations. Similar to the preprogram and postprogram construct ratings done in this study, such data could be used in a qualitative and quantitative blended fashion.

Each of these study suggestions has the potential to deepen the understanding about using action learning in a leadership development context. Furthermore, there is the possibility of developing greater understanding of the usefulness of repertory grid technique in the constructs of team cohesiveness and leadership enrichment. The possibilities for combining action learning and repertory grid technique appear almost endless.

Possible Social Impact

As indicated in chapter 1, the quality of leadership can affect the quality of the organization. Leadership behaviors can have an impact on intangible assets, such as trust. Results-based leadership attributes are formulated such that, when operationalized, they enhance the general quality of the organization and positively impact relationships. In this study, evidence has been provided to indicate that an action learning program and its elements can be regarded in a positive sense as a mechanism for promoting the development of results-based leadership attributes. Not as clearly, it has been demonstrated that action learning can have an influence in strengthening positive perceptions of team cohesiveness toward others.

Since work represents a substantial portion of many adults' lives, there is reason to expect that, if action learning could be employed as a leadership development process for results-based leadership attributes on a broader scale, a broader positive social benefit could be realized. More specifically, however, since action learning promotes the operationalization of concepts, manufacturing leadership groups and teams that engage in such action learning exercises might see edification in the demonstration of results-based attributes. In turn, these may have an enabling effect upon the larger organization, enhancing trust as well as productivity, product quality, lowered costs, and continuous improvements in business processes.

In the manufacturing organization in this study, it was discovered that the levels of dedication and commitment to the action learning program and the associated expectations were not shared by the organization's senior leaders. Such a lack of

solidarity carries with it larger, overarching implications. When senior leaders do not demonstrate similar commitment, confusion may be bred and priority clarity may suffer. When priorities are not clear, efforts may not be aligned and energy may be applied cross-purposefully. In many modern lean production systems, leaders are taught to be vigilant against all forms of waste ("Shedding corporate weight," 2003). Generally, defects are seen as waste. When defects are created, rework must be applied to correct the defects. In a very real way, leader-generated confusion and lack of clarity can be regarded as an organizational defect requiring rework and, therefore, waste.

In the case of leadership development and utilizing an unfamiliar process, such as action learning, leadership unity must be brought to bear. It must be manifested in clear expectations and prioritization. As in other organizational areas, performance requirements for leadership development participation should be levied consistently. Any other approach may surely dilute intended outcomes. A clear and united top leadership voice can help ensure against the undesirable mitigation of leadership growth.

Concluding Statement

In this section, I offer personal reflection and views. Candid insights about the research experience and its significance are shared. Researcher expectations and a clear exhortation are included.

Personal Reflection

From the outset of this study I had concerns about the ability to conduct activities and investigations in an unbiased manner. If not checked, my familiarity with the participants could have colored interactions with them and eventually contaminate the

data. For this reason, I was especially careful to approach interview opportunities with a great deal of rigor. This care was demonstrated, in part, by trying to not ask leading questions and keeping the inquiry based in open-ended questions that allowed participants to generate responses that were their own. Nevertheless, I did have preconceived notions that presented themselves as expectations.

I expected the group leaders in this study to take on the action learning activities in a more deliberate fashion. I expected them to hold these activities in a higher frame of importance and priority. I also expected the senior leaders in the group to continually reinforce the importance and purpose of the action learning program. These expectations were sound in my estimation. After all, the results-based leadership attributes is a set of behaviors and expectations levied from the company's CEO himself. What I failed to consider in my stream of logic is that the learning of the leadership attributes, and their demonstration, is considered in respect to all the other concerns that face managers daily. Chief among these, in this manufacturing setting, is production. While results-based leadership attributes are regarded highly, they are not elevated above producing quality products on time.

In general, my expectations regarding the demonstration of the leadership attributes and the behaviors of the managers and senior leaders were not realized. As an external researcher, I saw a group of leaders who had the capacity to learn about themselves and each other and to improve the demonstration of the results-based leadership attributes. The managers themselves and the senior leaders may have had a far

different sense of that capacity, somehow lessened by the myriad minutiae of the production line.

The leaders may have also had their own form of bias that stems from comparisons with other organizations in the company. Following is an exchange between me and a senior leader that exemplifies this. In this account, I was sharing the performance management scores (see Appendix H) for the leadership team under study:

[Interviewer:] I want to give this to you now and that piece of paper actually has the names associated with the scores. One of the questions I want to ask you has to do with your opinion on the accuracy of those ratings. You didn't do all these ratings but you certainly are around your team an awful lot. I'd like to get some feedback as to the accuracy. Let me explain a little bit why I'm asking that question. If I was to look at these scores and associate a letter grade to these . . . I'd be looking at a C+, in general. Almost a D in some cases. And I'm wondering, from your vantage point, how accurate that is.

[Leader:] I go back to the performance management criteria and the middle score, so let's say a 3, is not really a C. It says "meets all expectations". So, I'm not sure that's a C. Would you think in terms of a spectrum of 1 to 5 that 3 would be a C? I think this bell shaped curve is not a true bell shaped curve. It's skewed a little bit. The hard time I have is that—we're saying possibly that we're C's or B minuses—is that if I were to compare this to other areas I think we're higher than a C or B minus because I see the behaviors in some of the other areas. If we take it and say in a purist sense that we have a scale 1 through 5 and we're in the 3's or 4's and that's a C, then I guess I'd have to accept that but if I compare it to other people that are really focusing on how they do the job, and not what, first of all there aren't very many that seem to care and secondly they take an analytical approach to how we're doing it. From a theorist and concept standpoint, it might be a C or B minus, but from an application and if you looked at the total population at [the company] it would be at least in the Bs and B pluses.

Although I was generally content with my behavior and conduct as a researcher, the experience taught me much. I learned that more specific information is required for all participants, beginning with the senior leaders who are sponsoring the program. Careful dialogue must be engendered so as to assure common understanding. The

selection and training of facilitators should also be a priority. In this program, I could have done more to prepare the facilitators for a successful, value-added role. Finally, during the study period, my work responsibilities forced me to be away from the study group at times. It is possible that these absences added to the lack of continuity and sense of commitment experienced by the participants.

Final Comments

Action learning has been promoted as an effective means of developing leadership (Leonard & Lang, 2010; Marquardt et al., 2009). Studies have also shown it to be useful (Choi, 2005; Kim, 2003; Lee, 2005). However, little evidence has been found that demonstrates how action learning can be useful in developing results-based leadership attributes. Moreover, no study data appears to exist that delineates the effect that an action learning program has on the personal psychological constructs regarding leadership team cohesiveness. This study has provided results that help to fill those gaps.

More research is required to better understand the nuances involved with successful programs. There is substantial opportunity to investigate how team cohesiveness, action learning, results-based leadership attributes, and repertory grid technique can be brought together synergistically in research inquiry. Both qualitative and quantitative study designs may be warranted.

It appears clear that action learning, replete with its various elements explored in this study, represents a powerful methodology for groups to learn concepts, solve problems, and grow collaboratively. However, such an approach, while simple in design, demands significant discipline from all members involved. Senior leaders, participants,

learning set facilitators, and action learning designers must all come together with clarity of purpose and resolve.

In my experience, manufacturing leadership groups could benefit greatly from leadership development through action learning. At the same time, because of the gigantic gravitational pull imposed by the relentless and ubiquitous production system, precious little energy is expended on sharpening the leadership saw.

What are required are leaders who will redefine the production system. No longer can it be seen as a series of parts, paper, equipment, and tools that flow in some kind of sterile stream which is unaffected by human values and behaviors. Rather, it must be seen as a system of energized human agents who are intentionally influenced by leaders such that both personal and company goals are met. Results-based leadership attributes and team cohesiveness, if embraced and operationalized, can help bring about this redefinition. These concepts, arguably belonging to the larger sphere of positive leadership (Cameron, 2008), involve the creation of a positive climate, positive meaning for organizational members, positive communication, and positive relationships. I argue that we need leaders who will emphasize these human-centric organizational characteristics. Such leaders are those who have faith and believe that, if attention is given to developing leaders in this newly defined production system, all production system members will be more involved, more engaged, more enabled, and more empowered. As a result, leaders will be better able to conduct valuable reflection and collaborative, purposeful learning.

It appears that some positive leaders may be emerging. They are beginning to set structures in place, similar to the action learning program categorized in this study. I believe there are those within the larger manufacturing community who share the views offered by a senior manager participating in this study. The excerpt below begins with a response from him about the desired outcomes for his leaders:

I would say [the outcomes] might look and feel like every leader can't wait for the Wednesday 10 o'clock [leadership development] meeting. They're disappointed when it's cancelled. Their attendance: I don't have to round them up. They're early. Everyone is engaged. There isn't a defensive mechanism in the room. We can talk honestly and openly and when we leave the room we don't hold that against anyone. There's total amnesty and the willingness to 100% accept feedback. In the sense of listening, it doesn't mean that you're gonna change everything. It just means that you're willing to listen. In the last exchange we had in our Wednesday meeting, my thought was the one person that you know really well was getting feedback, they became defensive, rather than say, "Thanks for the feedback, I can understand your perspective."

[Interviewer:] You just spoke of outcomes. . . . What would those preferred actions on your part look like?

My first thought is it has to be in their PMs. And in their performance management discussion I'll make it very clear that is a very important initiative. Secondly, we're gonna continue our Wednesday meetings. Probably need to lead that meeting a little bit better with organizing the agenda, really driving out the process pay off type of thing. Think through the agenda a little better. Sometimes it's so random. Lastly, I could take a stronger leadership role in the meeting itself that when we see the behaviors that aren't necessarily acceptable or leading us in the right direction then we need to capture those moments and reflect on them. I need to control those a little bit. I don't have a hard time doing that but also I'm trying to pick the moment to let the conversation carry itself because you have to let it out from the individuals. In order to have a dialogue, you gotta share it. And you don't want the boss stopping it at every turn saying, "Wait don't do that, you can't say that." That just becomes my meeting and it should be our meeting. So I guess that's another outcome. I'd like to see it as our meeting not just [my] meeting. I think there's people at one end of the spectrum where they really want to improve and want to reflect and learn from others about how we do things. There's another end where they don't really want to spend the time to look at it at all because they think they do it the right way already. And I think there's a big group in the middle that are a little bit watching to see what happens. Not totally

engaged with it. And that's the group I want to sway as much as I can. That's the one thing I try to continue to do is lead by example. So capture those moments of the right attribute being displayed and try and reflect and analyze those moments where the wrong attributes are being displayed. Look at that as a learning experience and not as we failed or it was wrong necessarily but how it might have been handled differently.

[Interviewer:] And sharing that learning with your team? Is that what I'm gathering?

Yes. I learn as I go, too. Everyone wants to turn that meeting into an operationalized meeting where we just handle lists of tasks and I don't want it to be that. I'm gonna have to reiterate the purpose is not what we're doing but how we're going about what we're doing. So I think I have to reiterate that in every meeting possibly. Focus on not what, but how.

[Interviewer:] How do the leadership attributes relate to trust?

I think they directly relate. Because leadership attributes are about engagement, empowerment, motivation, inspiring. If someone doesn't trust you there's no way you can inspire someone to go beyond what you ask them to do. I think I've talked to you about this before that in my mind the totally engaged, inspired, motivated, cohesive team is one that gives you more than you ask before you ask for it—and is willing to help each other to get there to do that. Versus my boss didn't ask for it so I'm not going to provide it even though you want it. You're gonna have to have him ask me and fall back on organizational hierarchy and that kind of thing. So give me more than I ask for before I ask for it. That shows the passion and proactiveness and willingness to work with each other without the boss having to direct it.

This bespeaks of a crisp, deliberate intention, with no ethereal quality. It is the same approach we see in assuring that products are engineered and produced through a production process. Such an intention is likely to produce leaders who, in turn, create organizations that are energizing and life-giving for their members.

Like a production system, leadership development should be a process that is purposely designed for a particular outcome. Similarly, all those who are chartered with the organizational definition should be totally committed to the process. Action learning,

if conducted properly, is a leadership development methodology that can deliver designed outcomes. These outcomes can be manifested as improvements in results-based leadership attributes or team cohesiveness. Just as important, if action learning is sponsored and embraced throughout a hierarchy, it can be used to teach managers how to be leaders who are learners—who deliberately spend time and personal energy so as to demonstrate personal proficiency (Ulrich, Smallwood, & Sweetman, 2008). Action learning can be an effective method for helping leaders learn about their learning and become intentional learners. The data and results of this evaluative case study may offer insights and guidance to those who are charged with the design and implementation of leadership development action learning programs.

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APPENDIX A:

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT RESULTS-BASED LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES
ITEMS**Determines the Course**

- Starts and ends with the customer
- Moves strategy into actionable objectives and plans
- Communicates clearly individually and in group settings
- Conveys information that motivates others
- Maintains direction, balances large scope of business with day-to-day issues

Creates High Expectations

- Sets high expectations based in assuring competitiveness
- Sets personal high expectations first
- Has courage to improve continuously and “raise the bar”
- Is accountable for continuous improvement
- Communicates expectations directly and effectively
- Coaches people and teams how to stretch

Inspires Others

- Incites enthusiasm, energizes, and motivates others
- Creates and models a confident and winning environment
- Builds a team whose impact is synergistic
- Inspires in alignment with company values
- Celebrates success and learns from non-successes
- Creates an atmosphere where others see opportunities to stretch, take risks, create, make contributions, and learn

Pathfinder

- Continuously monitors customers and operations
- Faces reality and keeps commitments
- Models confidence and demonstrates changes as opportunities
- Uses company complexity to his/her advantage, not an excuse

Demonstrates Company Values

- Models, leads, and demonstrates company values, principles, and business-conduct policies
- Earns trust and is respected by all company stakeholders
- Assures compliance to business requirements and financial controls
- Promotes integrity in everything
- Demonstrates how to use diversity as a competitive advantage
- Creates an atmosphere of respect and inclusion
- Uses positive language and enabling behavior
- Balances personal pursuit of excellence with company needs and reputation of the company

Achieves Results

- Keeps promises
- Is personally accountable and teaches others what accountability means
- Demonstrates strong operational skills and business acumen
- Leverages all the Leadership Attributes in meeting commitments
- Capitalizes on unforeseen opportunities, disappointments, and changing circumstances to meet commitments

Each of the above items is rated using this scale:

- 1 = Did not meet expectations
- 2 = Opportunity for improvement
- 3 = Met expectations
- 4 = Exceeded expectations
- 5 = Model leader

APPENDIX B:
FACSIMILE OF PERMISSION LETTER

[Name on original]
Senior Manager
[Address on original]
[Phone number on original]

October 9, 2009

Dear Mr. Troupe,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Using Action Learning to Develop Results-Based Leadership Attributes and Team Cohesiveness within the [Name] organization. As part of this study, I authorize you to conduct semi-structured interviews, make observations, and collect data through learning journals. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

[Signature on original]

[Name on original]
Senior Manager
[Address on original]
[Phone number on original]

APPENDIX C:
CONSENT FORM

You are invited to take part in a research study of an action learning program applied to a leadership team. You were chosen for the study because you are a member of the leadership team. Please read this form and ask any questions you have before agreeing to be part of the study.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named David Troupe, who is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand the outcomes of an action learning program over a period of about four months.

Procedures:

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in weekly action learning activities
- Keep a learning journal and share it with the researcher
- Be interviewed occasionally, both formally and informally, by the researcher. Two formal interviews are planned and designed to take no more than 2 hours.
- Submit results from your company 360-degree feedback reports

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you want to be in the study. No one within the organization or company will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. If you feel stressed during the study you may stop at any time. You may skip any questions that you feel are too personal.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Risks of being in the study include the discomfort of learning new skills or attributes and practicing them in the workplace. It may also be uncomfortable sharing about your learning in small groups. Because this is a time commitment, you may feel additional stress and may consider this commitment an additional statement of work.

The benefits to you for this commitment include the possibility of demonstrating yourself to be a better leader. As a member of the leadership team, the way others see you may be strengthened.

Compensation:

Participation in the study should be regarded as a leadership development exercise and will not be compensated above your current salary.

Confidentiality:

Any information you provide will be kept confidentially in all circumstances. The researcher will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in any reports of the study.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher's name is David Troupe. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Lilburn Hoehn. You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via [phone number] or at [e-mail address] the advisor at [phone number] or [e-mail address]. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Director of the Research Center at Walden University. Her phone number is 1-800-XXX-XXXX, extension XXXX.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form to keep.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have received answers to any questions I have at this time. I am 18 years of age or older, and I consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of

Participant

Participant's Written

or Electronic* Signature

Researcher's

Written or Electronic*

Signature

Electronic signatures are regulated by the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act. Legally, an "electronic signature" can be the person's typed name, their email address, or any other identifying marker. An electronic signature is just as valid as a written signature as long as both parties have agreed to conduct the transaction electronically.

APPENDIX D:

EXAMPLES OF COACHING QUESTIONS FOR USE IN LEARNING SETS

Questions to assess

Where are you now?
Where did you come from?
Where do you want to go?
Where do you want to be?
What do you want to do?
What's going on with you now?
What is it that you want?
What have you learned?
What do you want to get out of this?
What behaviors do you want to change?
What do you want to accomplish?
What do you want?
What kinds of feedback are you getting?
What's getting in the way?

Questions to challenge someone to move forward

What do you want to do with that?
How do you get there?
How can you get there?
Is this something you want to do anything about?
How will you know if you get it?
How will you know you have succeeded?
What legacy would you like to leave behind?
What would be a demonstration of it?
If you got what you wanted, what else in your environment would change?
What's stopping you?
What's in your way?
What can you do to get it out of the way?
What are you going to do about it?

Questions to support

How can I help?
What kinds of people do you need to ...?
What resources do you have?
What can I do to support you?
Will you let me know how it's going?
What else I can do to help?

Outcome questions

What would it look like?
What would success look like?
How will you know when you're doing it?
What would you have to do?

How did that impact ... ?
 What would you have done differently?

Clarifying questions

What do you want to get out of this?
 What are your expectations?
 What else do you need to know about me to be comfortable with this?
 What do you mean?
 What does it feel like?
 What seems to confuse you?
 Can you say more?
 What do you want?

Expand questions

What is most important to you?
 What is it like at work for you?
 How might this affect your job?
 Will you elaborate?
 Will you tell me more about it?
 What else?
 Is there more?
 What other ideas do you have about it?

Exploration questions

May we explore that some more?
 Would you like to brainstorm this idea?
 What other angles can you think of?
 What is just one more possibility?
 What are your other options?

Focus questions

Have you faced a similar situation before?
 How did you handle it?

Deeper Probing Questions

- 1) What do you want?
- 2) Where are we?
- 3) What's next?
- 4) Where do you want to go from here?
- 5) What do you see?
- 6) What did you learn?
- 7) What do you think?

Especially Powerful Questions

- 1) What are you not telling me?
- 2) And if that fails, what will you do?

- 3) What was humorous about the situation?
- 4) What is your part in this?
- 5) How do you suppose you could improve the situation?
- 6) What are you unwilling to change?
- 7) Where are you selling out on yourself?
- 8) How can you find a way for this to be fun?
- 9) In the bigger scheme of things how important is this?
- 10) So what?

APPENDIX E:

JOURNAL ENTRY EXAMPLES OFFERED TO PARTICIPANTS

Week X, Weekly Learning Team

Today, Bill shared about his success with his team. Said it was due to his commitment to listen fully. I intend to ask Bill how he made the shift. Then I will practice this week.

Day/Date

Talked with Bill about listening fully. He gave 5 steps: 1) when someone wants to talk, stop what you are doing, 2) say their name as means of connecting 3) don't interrupt when they start talking 4) don't think about what you want to say, but stay focused on their message until they are finished, and 5) say back in your own words what you think you heard and ask if that's accurate. With the 5th step, you are actually hearing the message again and checking your understanding.

Day/Date

Herman approached me today again with the same problem. I tried to follow the 5 steps, but got impatient and interrupted him. I think it was because I've heard it so many times before.

Bring this issue to the next weekly meeting.

APPENDIX F:
QUESTIONS USED TO GENERATE ELEMENTS FOR REPERTORY GRID
TECHNIQUE

Who is someone you really enjoy(ed) working with?

Who is someone you found it very difficult to work with?

Who is (was) someone you feel to be a very positive influence at work?

Who is (was) someone you feel to be a negative influence at work?

Who is someone who is (was) a great teammate?

Who is someone you work(ed) with whom you greatly admire?

Who is (was) your favorite manager?

Who was your worst manager?

Who do you spend the most time interacting with at work?

APPENDIX G:
VERBIAGE FROM NIH RESEARCH ETHICS COURSE-COMPLETION
CERTIFICATE

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that David Troupe successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 08/09/2009

Certification Number: 265009

APPENDIX H:

PREPROGRAM AND POSTPROGRAM RATINGS FOR RESULTS-BASED
LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

The following data demonstrate ratings of leadership attributes, both before and after the action learning program, based on a 5-point scale. A rating of 1 is low, while 5 is high. The preprogram rating for L12 was given by a senior manager outside the study organization. All others were rated by study organization senior managers.

	Determines the Course		Creates High Expectations		Inspires Others		Pathfinder		Demonstrates Company Values		Achieves Results	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
L1	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	4
L2	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4
L3	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	4
L4	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3
L5	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3
L6	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	3
L7	3	3	3	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3
L8	No Data Available											

	Determines the Course		Creates High Expectations		Inspires Others		Pathfinder		Demonstrates Company Values		Achieves Results	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
L9	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
L10	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	3
L11	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	4
L12	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4

APPENDIX I:

TYPICAL ITEMS IN SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Describe your experience with the action learning program.

What in the process was useful or helped you improve your leadership attributes?

What in the process was not helpful or useful?

What could have been done better?

Please comment on the following:

- Small groups (learning sets)
- Action plans
- Journaling
- Questioning and coaching from others
- Reflection and sharing with others
- Facilitation and facilitators
- Your commitment to adhering to the action learning process
- What did you learn from the experience?

CURRICULUM VITAE

David Troupe entered his collegiate experience in 1970. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1974 with a B.S. in Environmental Health. Many years later, with a family of 3 children, he attended Western Washington University, graduating in 1996 with a M. Ed. in Adult Education Administration.

For almost three decades David has worked in the aerospace manufacturing industry, holding leadership positions in Learning and Training organizations, Human Resources, and Manufacturing. Currently, he works as a professional coach and internal consultant immersed in leader and leadership development, organizational renewal, value networks, positivity in corporate structures, engagement, continuous improvement, and employee involvement and enablement.

David is immensely fascinated by human beings. Other personal interests include photography and the splendor of natural wonders.