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TITLE A Study of Leadership Development in the Regional Institute for Health and Environmental Leadership

RESEARCHER Linda G. Olson
School of Social Sciences
University of Denver
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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to describe how leadership practices have changed over time for public health and environment leaders and describe factors that might account for these differences.

METHODOLOGY

Participants were those alumni (N= 125) of the one-year Regional Institute for Health and Environmental Leadership during the four years of 1999-2002. The LPI was administered as a pre and post test, and Participants provided further information in a mostly open-ended survey; some (20) were interviewed. Sixty-seven participated (54% response rate). The typical respondent was female (61%), Caucasian (88%), master's degree education (54%), 46 years old (average), with 17.3 years work experience (average), holding a manager/director position (75%), and nearly half (49%) were in the same job as they held during the training program.

KEY FINDINGS

There was a significant change in all five leadership practices from pre and post-LPI scores (all $p < .001$ except for Modeling at $p < .01$). Overall 80% of the participants had at least one or more practices increase by the mean change score, 62% saw at least two LPI practices increase, and 46% saw at least three LPI practices increase by the mean amount or more of the practice. "It is clear that RIHEL fellows report themselves as practicing higher levels of exemplary leadership along the lines of the LPI. Their self-reports of practices increased with consistency and significance across the participants, demonstrating significant improvement over time" (p. 111). Year of participation, age, educational background or job functions were not significantly related to LPI scores.

Interviews revealed that RIHEL fellows reported specific utilization of the five exemplary leadership practices as well as collaborative processes taught during the program, being more self-aware and reflective in their approach to leading, being more intentional and conscious about the practices they utilized and why, and more confident in their leadership practices. Further observations from the interviews noted:

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"Even some participants who had lower or negative total LPI change scores could articulate specific practices that had changed for them" (p. 112).

"Fellows often referred to the five practices of the LPI and the collaborative principles taught in RIHEL as central to this framework. Many of the fellows gave specific examples of how important learning a particular practice was to their own development as well as to work goals and the organization. In addition, there were epiphany experiences with the principles as they suggested new areas to consider important for effective leadership, such as encouraging the heart." (p. 129)

"Self-awareness came in many forms for the fellows. The most commonly discussed was through the 360 degree feedback too, the LPI. RIHEL's use of the LPI produced profound awareness that led to fellow's re-framing their leadership thinking and practice. The framework of the five practices provided bench marks" (p. 131).