

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

research

THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

TITLE	Exploring the Leadership Behaviors of Community Leaders in Northeastern North Carolina
RESEARCHER	Jane Walker and Benjamin Gray North Carolina A&T State University <i>Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education</i> 2010, Vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 45-57
OBJECTIVE	This research study sought to determine if the effectiveness of leadership development programs upon the leadership skills of community leaders in rural communities could be measured and undertook the development and testing of such an instrument.
METHODOLOGY	Data were collected using both focus groups and interviews. During the spring/summer of 2005 Cooperative Extension agents organized two focus groups consisting of members of community groups who had participated in a community leadership development program. The first focus group had nine participants and the second had 15. Individual interviews were held with 12 leaders who had been active in their respective communities over time, some of whom had participated in the program and others who had not. None of the persons who were individually interviewed had participated in the two focus groups. The five practices of exemplary leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) served as the major categories (themes) under which related actions and behaviors from the transcripts were grouped. This grouping allowed the

researchers to determine whether the practices and behaviors previously identified for persons in business organizations were mirrored by leaders working in community groups.

KEY FINDINGS

The authors conclude:

Although Kouzes and Posner's (2007) research focused on leadership in organizations, the content analyses of the focus groups and interview data from this study revealed a relationship between leadership practices and behaviors of the community leaders and the five themes developed by Kouzes and Posner (see Table 2). The themes that seem more closely aligned with the behaviors and practices of community leaders were Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart. The leaders were less likely to talk about ways in which they "Challenged the Process," but for each of the five practices, community leaders provided strong evidence that they engage in these behaviors as they work in their respective communities. Based on this study, one can infer that an assessment tool that measures a leadership program participant's understanding and acceptance of these behaviors would be an effective tool for measuring the impact of a leadership development program.

These findings provide a first step in the development of such an assessment instrument. The findings suggest that the Kouzes and Posner's instrument, the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) can be modified to become an assessment tool for use with community group leaders. Such an instrument would focus on the behaviors or actions of leaders in community settings and

would enable program facilitators to measure the impact of their programs on the leaders they serve (pp. 55-56).