

LEARNING TRANSFER IN A PUBLIC AGENCY: A CONTEXT FOR  
SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SITUATED LEARNING

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A Dissertation

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SPRING 2017

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Student: Roderick Jay Hayes

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this dissertation is suitable for shelving in the library and credit is to be awarded for the dissertation.

\_\_\_\_\_, Graduate Coordinator  
Lisa Romero, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## DEDICATION

The transatlantic slave trade successfully obliterated most paper records linking me to my ancestors. The oldest record I currently have for a paternal ancestor is George Tooley Hayes, born July 7, 1874. The oldest record I have for a maternal ancestor is Alice Doxey, born May 10, 1853. Both ancestors were born in Chariton County, Missouri. My parents were born in rural Missouri, in small towns less than fifty miles apart. My father was born in Clark County, and my mother in Chariton County. Thanks to technology and “the power of DNA,” African Ancestry ([africanancestry.com](http://africanancestry.com)) has identified my African countries and ethnic groups of origin. My paternal ancestry originated in Gabon and I am related to the Fang People. My maternal ancestry originated in Cameroon and Bioko Island, Equatorial Guinea. I am related to the Bubi People living in Bioko Island, and the Tikar, Hausa, and Fulani People living in Cameroon. The close proximity of both my patrilineal and matrilineal ancestors on the African and North American continents is both intriguing and profound. To all of my Ancestors, I thank you for how you used your natural gifts and talents to fulfill your destinies and pave the way for me to manifest some of your hopes and dreams.

To all of my family, friends, colleagues and supporters, I thank you for your ongoing support and encouragement. To all of my employers, I thank you for rewarding my initiative to prioritize my professional development.

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Abstract  
of  
LEARNING TRANSFER IN A PUBLIC AGENCY: A CONTEXT FOR  
SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SITUATED LEARNING

Roderick Jay Hayes

The purpose of this study was twofold: a) to understand learning transfer relative to teamwork competency among supervisors who have participated in a professional development program; and, b) to evaluate the relationship between the professional development curriculum and supervisors' decision-making. The phenomenon of learning transfer is an "active process" whereby employees apply what is learned in training situations, to new situations and to learn related information more quickly (Bransford, et al., p. 17). "It is estimated that only 10% to 13% of learned skills from staff training programs are transferred to the work environment (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 191)."

Six supervisors and eight social workers described their experiences of teamwork and professional development within a public human services agency (PHHS). Using a phenomenological methodology to collect and analyze data, four focus groups and one interview were conducted in order for the supervisors and social workers to describe their experiences separately. Data analysis entailed categorizing into codes and then identifying salient themes from the data. Four themes emerged in this study: (1) Precedent, (2) Opportunity, (3) Initiative, and (4) Reward. The theme of Precedent indicated that the PHHS management do not consider teamwork and professional



development priority topics. The theme of Opportunity indicated that supervisors and social workers agree that more professional development opportunities need to be made available. The theme of initiative indicated that supervisors and social workers are not creating their own teamwork or professional development activities. The theme of Reward indicated that supervisors and social workers expect job promotion as a natural outcome to their work. The study concluded with recommendations to the public human services agency for enhancing their professional development program. One recommendation is the revision of the professional development curriculum with more emphasis on leadership literature. Another recommendation calls for the introduction of the science of learning and teaching into the professional development curriculum.

*Keywords: learning transfer, professional development, teamwork, curriculum.*

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Learning occurs both formally and informally within organizations. Understanding learning transfer among supervisors within a public human services agency is one approach to understanding organizational culture. Managers in public human services agencies might increase the performance outcomes of their social workers if they ensure that a theoretical framework informs supervisor praxis (Fisher, 2009). Understanding the role of the supervisor in relation to teamwork competency and professional development is one approach to understanding learning and leading.

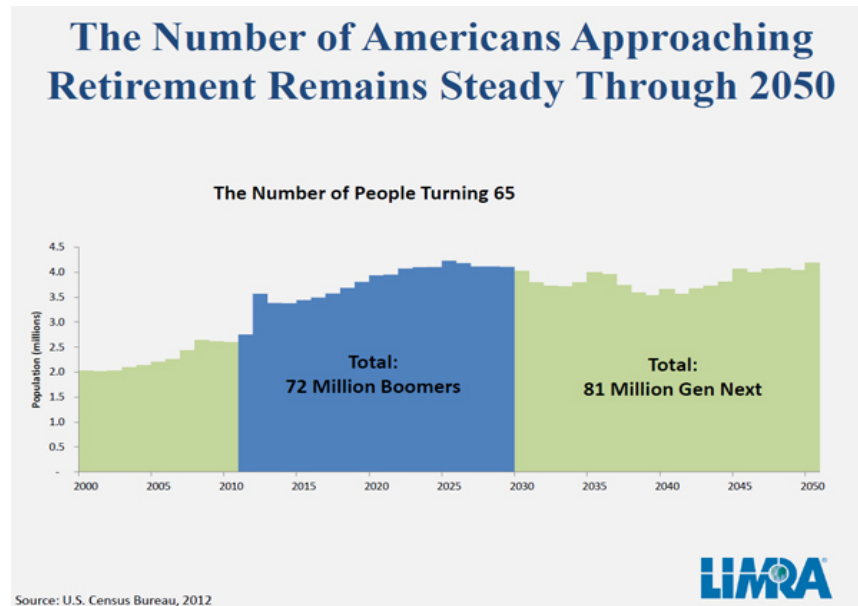


Figure 1. The Number of Americans Approaching Retirement.

The issue of learning transfer is significant given the changes public human services agencies and supervisors face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century including but not limited to loss of

human capital to retirement. Nearly half of the United States population will be 65 or older by 2050 (US Census Bureau, 2012).

Baby Boomer supervisors and managers are retiring from public agencies and leaving employers with the challenge of replacing them with competent leaders (Government Accountability Office, 2016). Baby Boomer retiree needs for direct services will likely increase as they age. The Public Policy Institute of California projects a *workforce skills gap* by 2030 in which the state will have 1.1 million less college graduates than the state's economy demands (Johnson, Mejia, Bohn, 2015). This is due in part to the retirement of the baby boomers. Furthermore, social services is listed among the professions that will have an increased demand for college-educated workers, with decreased occupational share (Johnson et al., 2015). Public agencies serving adult and senior populations must position themselves to meet the number and quality of services the aging and aged population requires. Public agencies serving adult and senior populations must strategically approach leadership cultivation to ensure that end.

Learning transfer relative to teamwork competency is significant for this researcher who considers this study as the pivotal project that defines his life work while shifting the focus from serving as supervisor, to serving supervisors. The study is significant because it has changed this researcher's approach to his position and role as manager with greater emphasis on the development of supervisors to better understand not only their roles, but also their power. The researcher approaches the project with the mindset that disunion among supervisors is a contagion within public human services

agencies that negatively impacts social workers, and ultimately, the quality of their work with agency consumers.

On the other hand, teamwork competency is a skillset that adds value to the work environment. This is significant as supervisors intentionally or unconsciously role model for social workers. One of the roles of a professional development program is to teach supervisors how to effectively role model the agency's values/mission. The target population of this study is supervisors and social workers in a public human services agency. The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the perspectives of supervisors and social workers regarding teamwork competency and professional development in a northern California public health and human services agency. The pseudonym PHHS will be used throughout the study to refer to the human services agency in an effort to protect the identity of the employer and the employees who participated in the study.

This study joins the research literature that explores professional development as a framework for leadership and organizational development. Specifically, it joins the professional development research focused on local government agencies. The researcher argues from the position that the failure of most staff training programs, is due in large part to the failure of supervisors to support learning transfer (Austin & Hopkins, 2004) from professional development classes. This study fills the gap in professional development research literature by exploring the relationship between learning transfer and teamwork competency of social worker supervisors within a public human services agency. Research literature has already addressed supervision as collaboration (Austin &

Hopkins, 2004). What distinguishes this study from previous research is it approaches learning transfer relative to teamwork competency as an expression of supervisor power.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem linked to the issue of learning transfer relative to teamwork competency is the issue of power. It is not the power inherent in supervisory positions and the changing nature of human services and supervision (Austin & Hopkins, 2004), but rather, it is the supervisors' *use* of power in those relationships that is potentially problematic. Supervising staff and contributing to the work environment has to do with relationships (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. ix). The nature of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is characterized by the use of power and authority, shared meaning, and trust (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 26). The researcher approached the topic of learning transfer from the premise that supervisors who are taught "use of power and authority" best practices, are more likely to demonstrate teamwork competency.

### **Use of Power and Authority**

Lord John Emerich Edward Dahlberg Acton (1834-1902) is credited for the maxim "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely" and is useful as a lens through which to consider the problem connected to learning transfer relative to teamwork competency among human services supervisors (Bowman & West, 2007). Without adequate training, supervisors within public human services agencies are at risk of becoming corrupt in their use of power. Professional development programs cultivate public agency supervisors. Leadership cultivation is significant across all levels of government given the complexities organizational leaders face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (U.S.

Government Accountability Office, 2006 cited by Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013).

Professional development programs may or may not teach teamwork competency to public agency supervisors as a means to positively contribute to their work environments. This study begins with the premise that *power dynamic*, or the way that power works in a given work setting, is a missing training topic in public agency professional development programs.

### **Shared Meaning**

The groups immediately affected by the problem of misuse of power are all of the supervisors who complete the mandated professional development program, and the social workers they supervise. The effective supervisory relationship consists of clear communication between supervisor and social worker, what the expectations are, and what the best practices are for serving the agency consumers (Austin & Hopkins, 2004). Ultimately, the quality of services to the agency's consumer is impacted by the problem. The problem of misuse of power can have a divisive effect on the supervisors and social workers to the extent of aggregation of control of some of the program operations, disrespect for the program manager and colleagues, abuse of overtime privileges, and insubordination. For consumers, the quality of their experiences with social workers may be negatively impacted as a result of supervisor disunion through misuse of power. Choosing not to be competent team workers is not necessarily a choice to be divisive. It may be evidence of not knowing, of supervisor ignorance of what teamwork competency looks like. What is clear is that supervisor exercise their power of choice when they either embrace or reject teamwork as an organizational value.

## **Trust**

The problem of misuse of power is significant because the PHHS professional development program this study examines is mandated for all supervisors and managers. To be clear, the courses this study addresses distinguished as *required* and *elective*, and do not include any of the leadership courses offered since October 2016. The name of the professional development curriculum is withheld from the study to protect the identity of the employer and employees who participated in the study. The professional development program is not agency specific, but rather is generic to all of the local public agencies ranging from health and human services, to airport management, from facilities management to waste management. The implication for this is that all local public departments are at risk of encountering the problem of teamwork incompetency. Most of the responsibility for establishing trust between supervisor and social worker falls on the supervisor (Austin & Hopkins, 2004). Social workers may not trust their supervisors if they observe supervisors divided against one another, or simply not working collectively (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 30). Supervisors may not instill trust that they will maintain their relationship with social workers if they are perceived as abusing their power through behaviors or words that communicate divisiveness (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 30). All supervisors for all departments must complete the same professional development program.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to solve the problem of misuse of power among PHHS supervisors. The researcher chose teamwork competency and professional

development for this study in an effort to isolate two distinct power dynamic activities which involve supervisor decision making. Supervisors either participate in teamwork activities and professional development activities, or they do not. Choosing to participate or not to participate for this work is an exercise of power.

The following research questions were inspired by Austin & Hopkins' (2004). This study incorporated the questions to determine if the PHHS agency's professional development program is teaching the social worker supervisors to work collaboratively:

Research Question 1: *What is the role of the supervisor in advancing the practices of teamwork and professional development?*

Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between the organizational culture and curriculum?*

The researcher approached the study from the perspective that it is more important what leaders do with knowledge acquired in a professional development (PD) program than the PD activity from which they acquired it (Zepeda, 2012, p. 49). This study sought to explore the phenomenon of learning transfer among PHSS supervisors after they have completed the mandatory PHHS professional development program. The study does not attempt to explore how the supervisors were changed as a result of their completing the professional development program. That would be fit for future research. Rather, the study sought to examine if the phenomenon of learning transfer is related to the supervisors' decisions regarding teamwork. The researcher wanted to know if the supervisors self-report that their experience of teamwork and professional development is related to the PHHS PD curriculum. The researcher chose a qualitative approach to

studying the phenomenon of learning transfer through supervisor self-reports and self-reports of their supervisees. Understanding the phenomenon of learning transfer relative to teamwork competency and professional development can best be achieved through a phenomenological research approach. The specific research methods utilized were focus groups, abridged transcript, open coding, and data analysis. The research design is appropriate for answering the research questions because the focus group invites supervisors and their supervisees to self-report their experiences of leadership in their own words, in a safe space, without the threat of retribution (Cresswell, 1998).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The aim of the literature review is to focus the reader on how the phenomenon of learning transfer in a public human services agency relative to the issue of teamwork competency and professional development among supervisors. The researcher sought to understand the teamwork and professional development experiences of the supervisors and their direct reports.

The study examined the phenomenon of learning transfer through the lenses of Situated Learning and Communities of Practice, and also Situational Leadership Model. The most important aspects of the theoretical concepts are a) learning happens through participation in the learning process (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and b), organizational outcomes are based more on leader decisions than policies and procedures (Hersey, Blanchard & Natemeyer, 1979). Learning understood in this framework is a means of socialization for not only the supervisors, but also the social workers they supervise. Teamwork competency, therefore, is the social phenomenon that can be tested through



examination of the relationship between leadership, professional development, and curriculum and learning. The PHHS supervisors all must complete the same PD program and have essentially the same work activities, although the volume of work varies between units. The underlying assumption of this study is that the supervisors learn teamwork through their training and their daily activities as leaders. The context in which supervisors are embedded within the PHHS adult and senior services program influences not only how they learn and develop knowledge, but also how they work collaboratively with their colleagues, managers and supervisees (Hotho, et. al., 2014, p. 57).

The presence of disunion exists within the PHHS adult and senior services program as the outcome of decisions the supervisors have made about their function and role within the organization. The supervisors contribute to the PHHS work environment based on how they perceive they are rooted within the PHHS adult and senior services program (Hotho, et al., 2014, p. 57). For example, some supervisors consider it their right or due given their promotion as organizational leaders (managers or specialists), and others consider leadership opportunities as a privilege. These two perspectives present themselves with very different behaviors in PHHS. The former perspective has manifested itself as arrogation among some supervisors and the latter as mentorship.

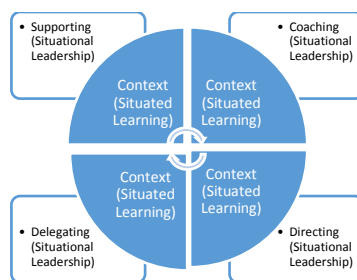


Figure 2. The Intersection of Situated Learning and Situational Leadership.

The above model demonstrates the intersection between Situated Learning and Situational Leadership. Supervisors make daily decisions based on their assessment of their supervisee readiness (Situational Leadership) and are learning leadership in the context of each encounter with their supervisees (Situating Learning) and their own supervisors. The dynamics of the supervisor relationship are characteristically the use of power and authority, shared meaning and trust (Austin & Hopkins, p. 26). What is at issue here is the quality of supervisor decision making based on their experience in the PHHS professional development program. What is at stake is the presence and health of a teamwork environment.

The PHHS adult and senior services program provides in home care for the aged, blind and disabled who are risk of injury or out of home placement. PHHS uses specialized division of labor to process and maintain applicant and recipient case files (Bolman & Deal, 2013). This specialized division of labor consists of new applications processed by teams of social workers assigned to what is called the Intake Unit. Case files for people who have been granted PHHS benefits are maintained by teams of social workers assigned to what is called the Continuing Unit. The separation of duties between the Intake and Continuing Units has been attributed over the years for producing a

backlog of work for both Intake and Continuing Units, as well as an adversarial relationship between the staff and supervisors of the two units.

The PHHS hiring process ensures that human services professionals are able to promote from within and contribute to the success of the organization. Organizational leaders who assume leadership positions at the social worker supervisor level generally promote from social worker classifications, and do not undergo leadership preparation training.

This study aimed to examine the phenomenon of learning transfer as experienced by PHHS social worker supervisors and their supervisees who work in the senior and adult services division. The supervisors have completed the required PHHS PD program, which is the PHHS professional development training curriculum.

The current design of the PHHS professional development curriculum consists mostly of PowerPoint presentations facilitated by public human resources staff. The content of the PHHS PD program was examined to identify specific learning outcomes for each of the PD courses (Zepeda, 2012). The goal of exploring the lived experiences of the supervisors and the learning outcomes of the PD courses was to identify the PD course and descriptions and to determine if the PD courses are teaching teamwork competency.

### **Operational Definitions**

#### **Professional Development (PD)**

This research differentiates leadership *preparation* from leadership *development*. The former is focused on those activities a human services professional engages in prior

to occupying a designated leadership classification, while the latter is concerned with those activities engaged once said position is secured. Leadership development targets human services administrators and social work educational leaders. Leadership preparation targets human services students and professionals. Leadership preparation is as important to the success of human services profession as is leadership development (Rank & Hutchison, 2000). Both social worker supervisors and social workers benefit from understanding how the perception of organizational leadership impacts worker performance (Elpers & Westhuis, 2008). This study argues that social workers begin their leadership preparation-training while in relationship with their supervisors. What social workers learn about leadership behaviors from their supervisors can transfer to leadership roles they later assume, although many lack formal leadership preparation for those future roles (Elpers & Westhuis, 2008, p. 40).

Professional development is planned and purposeful efforts and activities to improve the skills and performance of organizational professionals. Central to this idea is that professional development is learning from curriculum and praxis in community with colleagues, direct reports and supervisors (Zepeda, 2012, p. 275).

Social worker supervisors who incorporate leadership theory into their practices may have better outcomes with staff performances (Fisher, 2009), which will yield better outcomes for their organizations. Leadership theory informs perspective and influences practice. Human services leadership must be approached from multiple perspectives (Lawler, 2007), including from a systems theoretical perspective. A starting point for developing leadership preparation for PHHS social worker may be to ask PHHS

administrators if the role the current PHHS professional development program serves the best interests of the organization.

### **Teamwork Competency**

Teamwork or *teaming* is the work of organizing and enlisting workers to accomplish the goals of the PHHS organization in the form of operations and services (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 140). Team-building, coalition building and meeting management are essential teamwork skills for supervisors (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 140). The supervisor's ability to "develop and focus" social workers "on program outcomes is critical to the success of the [PHHS] program" that serves the disabled and senior populations (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 140). Supervisors are challenged to foster cohesion within their social worker teams and with their peers. They should competently understand group dynamics and group process to ensure team integrity (Austin & Hopkins, p. 140).

The staff meeting is one of the supervisors most concentrated contexts for use of power. The staff meeting is an opportunity for supervisors to role model healthy leadership and cooperation with management's mission for the organization.

### **Human Services**

This study distinguishes between social work and human services, management and leadership, to provide clarity and specificity to the significance of the issue and the nuances of theoretical framework employed. The PHHS uses the "Human Services" preface for the classification of Family Service Worker, Social Worker, Social Worker Master Degree, Supervisor, Supervisor Master Degree, Specialist, Planner, and Program

Manager. The importance of this designation is to impart the importance the agency places on the type of work that it provides to the community, and on its self-identity. Conversely, although the PHHS curriculum is designed for supervisors and managers, this researcher approaches it as a professional development or leadership curriculum because it is offered exclusively for organizational leaders. Granted, this does not mean that the PHHS is intended as a leadership curriculum. The study will reveal the answer to that question.

Human services as a profession is broadly defined improving the lives of the populace through linking human needs to high quality services (NOHS). The critical aspect of the definition for this study is the ongoing improvement in “accessibility, accountability, and coordination among the professionals and agencies in service delivery (Harris, Maloney and Rother, 2004, p. 123).

### **Leadership**

Distinguished from management, leadership for the purposes of this study is the ability to inspire and influence others to take action in a manner that accomplishes a common goal in a manner that that exceeds “desired outcomes” while improving the lives of the followers (Nevarez & Wood, 2010, p. 57).

### **Curriculum**

Curriculum for this study includes but is not limited to the specific professional development courses offered by the PHHS, and expected to be completed by the supervisors within two years of their appointment. The professional development courses are what Loeza describes as the intended curriculum. Curriculum also means

what Loeza describes as the delivered and meta curriculum. The “everything else” or all of the knowledge and experience that the supervisors bring to each learning experience. (Loeza, Module I, p. 3).

### **Communities of Practice**

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

### **Collaboration**

Supervisors and social workers working cooperatively toward a common goal. (Austin & Hopkins, 2004). The perspective and actions which influence organizational culture and outcomes (ibid). The mindset that seeks consensus and communicates collective value of supervisors and social worker input.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study will explore the lived experiences of social worker supervisors and their supervisees in an effort to make some discoveries and to draw some conclusions about the PHHS PD program. It is more critical what leaders do with the knowledge they acquire in PD programs than what the content of those programs are (Zepeda, p. 49). This assertion does not diminish the importance of professional development curricular content. Professional development curricular content is most effective when the abilities, skills and competencies taught in the courses are outlined and defined in the organizational leadership job descriptions (Naquin & Holton, 2003).

The topic of learning transfer is broad and has many interesting aspects which are worthy of future research. One aspect of learning transfer worth exploring is a comparative analysis of extant professional development program models within the human services or educational leadership professions. A comparison and contrast of various Anagogical styles will provide insight in how to improve local government professional development trainers. Lastly, a correlation between the learning outcomes of the PHHS professional development courses with specific supervisor decision-making behaviors would shed light on what supervisors are doing with the knowledge they acquire in the trainings (Zepeda, 2012).

### **Organization of the Study**

Phenomenology was chosen for qualitative design as it is the method of studying how humans experience specific phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). The phenomenon in this study is learning transfer as it relates to teamwork and professional development. The goal of this approach is to interpret the lived experiences of the study participants (Cresswell, 1998). A recommendation for future study is to determine if there is an alignment between the human services agency's professional development curriculum and the science of learning. The significance of the study is threefold. It adds to the human services professional development research literature. Secondly, it will inform/advise the human services agency's organizational leaders how to improve the efficacy of its professional development curriculum (by recommending a professional development curriculum catered specifically for the supervisors and their direct reports). And lastly, it will provide an opportunity for future research exploring the professional



development curricula used in other public human services agencies in the remaining fifty-seven California counties. Ultimately, this study might contribute to the ongoing discussion of introducing and or expanding a leadership theoretical framework in CSU Master of Social Work programs.

Chapter 1 explained the researcher's study focusing on supervisors and social workers, the research questions, the nature, significance and limitations. Definitions and terminology was explained here and throughout the study.

Chapter 2 explains the significance of the study and is a review of the literature surrounding between professional development, curriculum, leadership and adult learning.

Chapter 3 has a threefold purpose: to provide a description of how learning transfer relative to teamwork competency and professional development was studied; to explain what the researcher wanted to know about the above topic; and inform the reader how the study provided research knowledge.

Chapter 4 provides a presentation of the data analysis.

Chapter 5 contains the summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research. The implications for practice and recommendations for further research are offered in a spirit of hopefulness. The researcher is confident that PHHS learning transfer, relative to teamwork and professional development, can and will evolve and expand if given the attention it deserves.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter explained the purpose of the study is to solve the problem of supervisor misuse of power within a local public social services agency. That misuse of power can be studied by understanding the supervisors' perspectives on teamwork and professional development. Participating in teamwork or professional development activities are power choices.

The literature review serves as the foundation of this study. Researchers have explored the topic of professional development (PD) in human services from various approaches that range from the identity formation of the organizational leaders (Sherwood, 2014), the distinction between leader development and leadership development (Day, 2001), the formal education and experience of the organizational leaders (Goldkind & Pardasani, 2013), and attention to learning environments (Zepeda, 2012, Bransford, Brown, Cocking, 2000). This review will address the recurring themes of PD (professional development), curriculum, leadership and learning to offer a conversation between the themes and research theory. The reason for the conversation is to help the reader understand the topic of learning transfer relative to teamwork competency among public agency supervisors from a current perspective, and provide the rationale for the research methodology (Galvin, 2013, p. 13).

The scope of the literature review is an exploration of the relationship between professional development, curriculum, leadership and adult learning (Figure 3). The chapter will begin with a discussion of the significance of the study, follow with organizational theory to explain the organizational structure of the public agency selected for the study, and end with a discussion of the relationship between professional development, curriculum, leadership and adult learning.

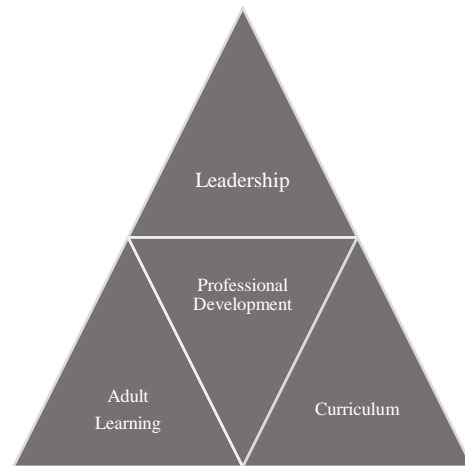


Figure 3. Scope of Literature Review.

### **Significance of the Study**

The exploration of learning transfer relative to teamwork competency among public agency supervisors is significant because the research can help PHHS management to examine and develop supervisor core competencies (Getha-Taylor, Heather and Morse, Ricardo S. (Spring 2013). This study is significant as it is a practical application of the knowledge and skills this researcher has acquired in the CSUS EDD program to enhance the working lives of his colleagues at PHHS.

Teamwork as a supervisor competency is not a new concept for public agency supervisors. The National Organization for Human Services (NOHS) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) frame the work of their representative organizations in codes of ethics. Human services codes of ethics are guides that help individuals and organizations to make appropriate decisions in their daily duties ([www.ethics.org](http://www.ethics.org)). Most of the social workers employed by the public agency adult and senior services program are familiar with the NASW Code of Ethics. The NOHS Ethical Standards for Human Services Professionals (Standards 24, 31, 36 and 37) inform this researcher's perspective regarding the significance of the research topic. These Standards address the responsibilities of human services professionals to employers, to the profession, to self and to students. The first Standard states that the human services professional (PHHS supervisors and managers) have the responsibility to help ensure that the agency maintains its effectiveness and self-assessment. The second Standard states that the human services professional will seek new approaches/techniques that are evidence based which will ensure effectiveness in their daily duties. The third Standard states that the human services professional commits to lifelong learning to ensure that the clients she/he serves receives the highest quality of service. Finally, the fourth Standard states that "[h]uman services educators develop and implement culturally sensitive knowledge, awareness, and teaching methodologies." These four Standards are the impetus through which this study is proposed.

This study joins other leadership development researchers who focus on local government in an effort to fill the gap in leadership development research which has been

approached broadly across industries and organizational types while remaining virtually silent on local government (Yuki, 2010). The extent to which this study addresses the gap will be determined by the research findings. The aim is to use extant leadership development research rationale and methodology to address the problem of disunion among public agency supervisors. The goal of the study is to inform the public agency's human resources department how they might critically evaluate and revise their professional development program.

Professional development (PD) programs are admittedly limited in their impact, particularly if the training fails to address and enhance the supervisor's personal motivation for improvement (Shuler, 1987). The problem of disunion among the supervisors may not necessarily be a conscious decision to not collaborate, but rather it might be a lack of knowledge how to competently function in alliance with one another. Professional development programs need to ask supervisors what they need to learn to become competent at teamwork. The training should complement the organization's mission and values, and be relevant to the specific work environment of the supervisors (ibid., p. 120). The implication for organizational change is the application of research theory to professional development which will better prepare the public agency supervisors to competently face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **PHHS Organizational Structure**

Leadership cultivation is now significant across all levels of government given the complexities organizational leaders face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006 cited by Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013). The State of

California Department of Social Services (CDSS) has oversight of adult and senior services programs statewide. CDSS expects adult and senior services programs to process applications for services (Intake function) and reassess for services (Continuing function) on an annual basis. Managers in public human services agencies might increase the performance outcomes of social workers if the supervisor praxis were informed by a theoretical framework (Fisher, 2009). Bolman and Deal are best-selling leadership scholars who developed a four-frame model of viewing organizations as factories (Structural Frame), families (Human Resource Frame), jungles (Political Frame), and temples (Symbolic Frame). Leadership styles for each can loosely be described as builder, nurturer, advocate and priest (Bolman and Deal, 2013).

Bolman and Deal's Structural Frame best explains how the public agency adult and senior services division builds its caseload (dividing work) and manages (coordinating) it thereafter (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 42). This frame most closely reflects the vertical and lateral coordination of the work in the public agency adult and senior services program (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 51). It speaks to the specialized roles of the Intake and Continuing supervisors and their supervisees (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 15) The PHHS adult and senior program is structurally designed to perform tasks in specialized groups (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 50). This division of labor is characteristic of not only the PHSS Program, but also of most public human services programs (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 49).

Tables 1 through 3 illustrates how the division of labor has changed among the program managers in recent years. These changes impact the ways supervisors and social

workers view the PHHS organization and influences their decisions about how they participate in the organizational culture. There was only one program manager for several years who managed all of the PHHS supervisors. That manager is remembered fondly as a competent leader with extensive program knowledge and skills. The current program managers are relatively new to their positions and are learning their supervisees.

Table 1:

Management Labor Distribution **Prior** to Fiscal Year 2015/2016.

Public Health and Human Services Agency Adult and Senior Services Division	
<b>Division Manager</b>	
<b>Program Manager</b> Administrative Services / Operations (State Hearing, Quality Assurance, Eligibility, Fair Labor Services Act (FLSA), Intake/Continuing	
<b>Program Planners (3)</b>	
<b>Social Worker Supervisors</b> Intake Unit / QA Unit (5)	<b>Social Worker Supervisors</b> Continuing Unit (13)
<b>Social Workers</b> (28)	<b>Social Workers</b> (83)

Table 2:

Management Labor Distribution Fiscal Year 2015/2016.

Division Manager	
<b>Program Manager</b> Administrative Services (State Hearing, Quality Assurance, Eligibility, Fair Labor Services Act (FLSA)	<b>Program Manager</b> Operations (Intake/Continuing)
<b>Program Planners (4)</b>	
<b>Social Worker Supervisors</b> Intake Unit / QA Unit (5)	<b>Social Worker Supervisors</b> Continuing Unit (12)
<b>Social Workers</b> (35)	<b>Social Workers</b> (61)

Table 3:

Management Division of Labor Fiscal Year 2016/2017.

<b>Division Manager</b>	
<b>Program Manager</b> Administrative Services / Operations (State Hearing, Eligibility, Intake / Continuing)	<b>Program Manager</b> Administrative Services / Operations (State Hearings, Quality Assurance, Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), Intake/Continuing )
<b>Program Planners (3)</b>	
<b>Social Worker Supervisors</b> Intake Unit / QA Unit (5)	<b>Social Worker Supervisors</b> Continuing Unit (10)
<b>Social Workers</b> (44)	<b>Social Workers</b> (74)

CDSS has oversight of all California public adult and senior programs and functions as a “control system” through its quality assurance efforts and administration of the state hearings process (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 52). The division manager and program managers’ direct supervisors who oversee social workers. The Intake Unit social workers are considered the gatekeepers of the adult and senior program, ensuring that services are granted only for applicants truly in need. The applicants who are granted services are later assigned to a Continuing social worker. Continuing social workers are considered the case managers, terminating services, decreasing or increasing services, depending on the newly assessed condition of the recipient. Intake social workers enjoy a greater sense of task completion because they will likely never encounter the applicant/recipient again once they grant or deny the application. Continuing social workers generally have to keep all of their cases until the recipient dies or unless special circumstances (i.e., female recipient uncomfortable with a male social worker, female social worker sexually harassed by male recipient, etc.) warrant trading it with another Continuing social worker.



The Intake Unit and Quality Assurance (QA) Unit are physically located together in one building. The Continuing Unit, program manager and division manager are located together in a separate building, less than three miles from one another (Figure 4).



Figure 4. PHHS work sites.

The structural configuration of PHSS is what Henry Mintzberg called the Divisionalized Form (Figure 5), wherein six divisions (Administration, Behavioral Health Services, Child Protective Services, Primary Health Services, Public Health Services, and Adult & Senior Services) form units of labor to complete the greatest volume of the work in a quasi-independent fashion (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 80). The PHHS adult and senior services social workers have direct supervisors but they independently schedule their own home visit appointments, prioritize their workload and manage their caseload with minimal input from their supervisor, provided of course that their work is accurate and current. Each PHHS division is managed by a division manager who is a direct report to the PHHS director who is accountable to elected officials.

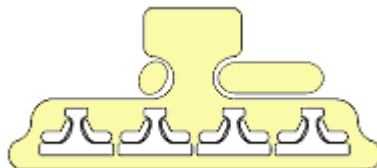


Figure 5. Mintzberg's Divisionalized Form.

In addition to state law, policies and procedures, the prescriptions (job descriptions and essential duties) of both Intake and Continuing Unit social workers help to ensure that applicants and recipients receive quality service (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 50). All PHSS adult and senior services social workers receive the same training through a partnership between CDSS and San Diego State University's Social Policy Institute, Academy of Professional Excellence, and Center on Aging.

Examining the PHHS through Bolman & Deal's Structural Frame is helpful here in understanding why Situational Leadership is an appropriate model. The Structural Frame illustrates rationality, organizational planning, goals, performance indicators, organizational structure and relationships (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 17). The PHHS agency is structurally configured as specialized divisions of labor wherein services are provided in grouping[s] by process (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 50) This division of labor is key to not only the adult and senior services program, but to the very structure of all PHHS programs (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 49). It is key because it determines how work is allocated and coordinated (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 49).

The adult and senior services program is governed by regulations enacted by the State of California, which provide the parameters that the PHHS social workers operate within to provide services to seniors and adults. However, the regulations do not address

every possible situation which community seniors and adults find themselves in. Social workers must draw from the range of knowledge and resources available to them in addition to their education and training to assess their clients' needs and decide what appropriate action is needed. Social worker supervisors do the same when they are approached by their direct reports for guidance in those *grey area* situations.

While the expectations of the social worker supervisors are the same based on their job descriptions, their essential duties differ between the Intake and Continuing units. Intake supervisors are mandated to review one hundred percent of the social worker recommendations and the case file for completion prior to authorization. Continuing supervisors review less than one hundred percent of cases, and only after their social workers authorize their own work using the state-wide computer system.

Intake and Continuing supervisors all work for the best interests of their social worker units in what Bolman and Deal call "suboptimization" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 51). Intake supervisors aim to provide a supportive and friendly work environment while emphasizing the unity of the entire PHHS adult and senior services program. On the contrary, Continuing supervisors have regularly advocated for increases in the job duties for the Intake supervisors and social workers. Intake and Continuing supervisors fail to work collaboratively to address the disunion between the two units. Some of the Continuing supervisors have been characterized as bullies and have arrogated control of key operations within the PHHS program as exemplified in the supervisors monthly meeting.

The IHSS supervisor's meeting is a context wherein the impact of specialized division of labor is keenly experienced. This meeting historically lacked cohesion and productivity as individuals considered the contextual variables of the group rather than a collective consideration thereof (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 98). The previous PHHS program manager changed the structure of the meeting from having the program manager facilitate the entire meeting to a self-managing structure (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 109). The program manager was present only during the first half of the meeting solely to relay management updates, CDSS updates, and answer questions related to said updates. Eventually, the program manager promoted to division manager and the current program manager's authority has been repeatedly circumvented in those meetings. One example includes the failure of the meeting facilitator to provide the program manager with a meeting agenda in advance of the meeting or to provide meeting minutes after the meeting. Continuing supervisors have postured themselves at times as if they have authority over the Intake supervisors. Oftentimes, Continuing supervisors have used the meeting to propose ideas for special projects which benefit only themselves, or they attempt to implement tedious policies or procedures that are in reality best practices which can be shared in an office memo or email rather than during meeting. The supervisor meeting is one example where the researcher questions if the quality of the supervisor decision making is relative to their experience in the professional development program. Furthermore, if the professional development program addresses power and group dynamics.

The specialized division of labor within the PHHS adult and senior services program, coupled with the physical separation of staff and supervisors into different buildings leads to the ongoing failure to resolve the problem of disunion among the supervisors. This failure to resolve disunion is exacerbated by several variables: new staff, an overall larger staff size compared to the 2009 layoffs, accountability, labor relations and management timidity, overtime abuse, and most poignant, and the introduction of teleworking as an alternative work schedule. More than half of the social workers have opted for the telework schedule which requires them to come to the office a minimum of once per week. Face-to-face communication between supervisors and social workers has been significantly reduced as a result of teleworking with increased use of mobile devices, email and instant messaging to staff cases or seek guidance.

Once social workers complete twelve months of probation, their employment essentially cannot be terminated for being incompetent in their duties. PHHS social workers are aware of this fact and some refuse to produce the number of monthly assessments expected of them. Plainly stated, PHHS social workers have no threat of termination for substandard performance. Many of the PHHS social workers have held their positions for decades and will retire from the same classification. The social workers with the most seniority within the agency or the county, tend to resist operational or procedural changes the most. Generally speaking, the less senior social workers are the most productive and creative workers in their approach to their duties, and create new best practices for getting more high quality work done quickly.

United Public Employees (UPE) union Local One serves to protect the employment of PHHS social workers. UPE has openly resisted attempts by management to quantify the number of monthly home assessments expected of social workers. While the current unofficial number of twenty-five visits per month reflects less than two home visits per worker per day, UPE continues to resist an official declaration of a specific number. Management has historically honored UPE's resistance to a specified number of expected monthly visits and has refused to declare one official.

In summary, the significance of the study and the structure of the organization provide sufficient detail to contextualize the problem of disunion among public agency supervisors. Disunion is the result of supervisor decision making, exercising their power of choice. While this study does not aim to find correlation between organizational structure and disunion, that might make for future research on the topic. Rather, this study is interested in examining relationships. The macro relationship to be considered is professional development, curriculum, leadership and learning relative to the problem of disunion. The micro relationship to be considered is the supervisory relationship. Effective supervision occurs in positive relationships between supervisors and social workers (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 22).

### **Organizational Culture**

*Culture: a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 2004, p. 17)*

Organizational "culture can be analyzed at several different levels, with the term level meaning the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer

(Schein, 2004, p. 25)”. The levels range from what can be seen and felt to the “unconscious, basic assumptions [defined] as the essence of culture (Schein, 2004, p. 25)”. Between the levels of culture are the “espoused beliefs, values, norms, and rules of behavior that members of the culture use as a way of depicting the culture to themselves and others (Schein, 2004, p. 25)”.

Artifacts	Visible organizational structures and processes (hard to decipher)
Espoused Beliefs and Values	Strategies, goals, philosophies, (espoused justifications).
Underlying Assumptions	Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings... (ultimate source of values and action)
Table: 4	
Levels of Organizational Culture (Schein, E.H., 2004, p. 26)	

Artifacts are at the surface of the organizational culture. The climate of the supervisors and social workers is an artifact of the deeper cultural levels (Schein, 2004, p. 26). Artifacts include the operational processes that routinize behavior, the hierarchical bureaucracy with top-down management, and the PHHS divisionalized structure that specializes units of labor (Schein, 2004, p. 27). The PHHS supervisors and social worker operate with autonomy. The social workers organize and manage their monthly calendar by scheduling home visits to the agency’s consumers. The supervisors document the and provide feedback with regards to the quality and quantity of the social worker’s monthly assessments of consumer’s needs. The managers analyze the monthly data regarding social worker monthly performance. Managers and supervisors have certain beliefs and values with regards to the quality and quantity of work produced by the social workers.

Their beliefs and values are influenced by the California Department of Social Services in the form of compliance regulations. Each county PHHS is expected to comply with the CDSS regulations. One of the tensions within the PHHS involves the values and beliefs of labor union representatives, management and social workers.

Espoused beliefs and values are generally expressed when supervisors and social workers face “a new task, issue or problem” and first solutions are expressed reflecting the employee’s “assumptions about what is right or wrong, what will work or not work (Schein, 2004, p. 27).” Social workers and supervisors expressed beliefs and values when the PHHS converted from an agency database to a statewide system, when laptops were purchased to be used by the social workers while in the field, and recently with the conversion from paper files to digital files. All of these technological changes require supervisor and social worker to learn new ways for performing their jobs. During the planning and implementation of such changes, the employees who offer solutions may assume the role of leadership but it is not until the group of supervisors or social workers “take a common action in reference to whatever is proposed” is the group considered to have “*shared knowledge*” as a collective (Schein, 2004, p. 28)”. The underlying assumptions are “the implicit assumptions that actually guide behavior, that tell group members how to perceive, think about, and feel about things (Argyris, 1976; Argyris and Schon, 1974). Basic assumptions are “extremely hard to change” because they tend not to be debatable (Schein, 2004, p. 31). “If the espoused beliefs and values are reasonably congruent with the underlying assumptions, then the articulation of those values into a philosophy of operating can be helpful in bringing the group together (Schein, 2004, p.



30).” Culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take (Schein, 2004, p. 32)”.

“Cultures begin with leaders who impose their own values and assumptions on a group (Schein, 2004, p. 2)”. Conceptually, culture helps us to consider the “invisible” powerful impact of the “below the surface phenomena” which “guide and constrain the behaviors of members of the group (Schein, 2004, p. 8)”. The concept of organizational culture is useful as it helps the reader to understand those things within the organization which are produced from “human need for stability, consistency, and meaning (Schein, 2004, p. 17)”.

PHHS supervisors and social workers make decisions about how they are going to function within the agency. They are hired into their positions through their ranking score on a civil service exam or laterally transfer into the agency from other departments. Supervisors within the division for adults and disabled are generally former social workers who have promoted. Because the nature of the work, the programmatic technology, structure and governance of the division for adults and disabled differs from any other county program, new supervisors and social workers entering the program have a different orientation than social workers who promote from within the division to the role of supervisor, or social worker who have returned to the division after having worked in another program. “If an occupation involves an intense period of education and apprenticeship, there will certainly be a shared learning of attitudes, norms, and values that eventually will become taken-for-granted assumptions for the members of those

occupations. But reinforcement of those assumptions occurs at professional meetings and continuing education sessions, and by virtue of the fact that the practice of the occupation often calls for teamwork among several members of the occupation, who reinforce each other (Schein, 2004, p. 20-21)". The PHHS requires all social workers to complete a training curriculum which is administered through the San Diego State University's Social Policy Institute, Academy for Professional Excellence, and the Center on Aging (retrieved from <http://www.sdsusocialpolicyinstitute.org/ihssta/>). Social workers are expected to complete all of the IHSS Academy courses concurrently with their full time employment. The Academy provides training to all fifty-eight California counties, and therefore coordinating social worker hire dates and enrollment in the courses is prohibitive. The counties rely heavily on peer to peer training opportunities. The more seasoned social workers are asked to help orient, train and mentor the newer social workers. It is through this peer to peer training that many of the organizational attitudes, norms and values are passed from the senior social workers to the newer workers.

The PHHS culture is one of the most stable forces operating within the organization (Schein, 2004 p. 14). One of the shared assumptions of the PHHS culture is that employees have a job for life once they pass their probationary period. Conceptually, this assumption has merit given the protections the social workers enjoy from their labor union contract between United Public Employees (UPS) and of the county the PHHS is located in. The contract stipulates the circumstances under which termination of employment is permitted. This assumption provides a strong degree of employment security to the social workers during robust economic periods, and

diminished security during lean economic periods. Social workers with the least seniority have the greatest likelihood of being laid off when there are workforce reductions.

Another related shared assumption relates to quality of work. Social workers know that it is highly unlikely that they will be terminated from producing mediocre or low quality work. The consequences of producing mediocre or low quality work will result in disciplinary action which rarely leads to termination of employment.

Meritocracy is yet another shared assumption of the PHHS culture. Meritocracy is a term credited to British sociologist Michael Young's satirical novel *The Rise of the Meritocracy, 1870-2033: an Essay on education and Equality* (1961). "Meritocracy refers to a social system as a whole in which individuals get ahead and earn rewards in direct proportion to their individual efforts and abilities (McNamee & Miller, 2009, p. 2)". Among the PHHS social workers and supervisors who want to promote from their current job classification, expect that they can and will do so. Social workers have always outnumbered the supervisors and managers within the organization. Social workers have always been represented by United Public Employee labor union. Social Workers generally promote to the position of Human Services Supervisor. Human Services Supervisors generally promote to Program Specialists, Program Planners, and Program Managers.

One problem with this assumption is that some supervisors and social workers fail to reflect on how their teamwork competency or professional development factor into their potential for promotion. Additionally, not every social worker or supervisor who

wants to promote will be selected for promotion. Some will have to apply for positions outside of the senior and disabled division. Others will have to make efforts to influence the ways they are perceived by upper management. Realistically, not every employee who desires to promote will be selected.

### **Culture of Learning** (Austin & Hopkins, 2004)

Knowledge management is an organization's capacity to manage human intellect and convert it into useful products and services (Quinn, Anderson & Finkelstein, 1998, p. 182 cited by Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 11)". Supervisors who coach and work with staff to gather, use, and share information about their client and program outcomes can make better decisions when planning, developing, or improving programs and services for clients (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 11)". Organizational learning is "the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding (Fiol & Lyles, 1985 cited by Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 12)". A learning organization is an organization that is "skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights (Garvin, 1998, p. 51 cited by Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 11)". An organization is a learning organization when it demonstrates that it values "continuous improvement (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 11)". Everyone in the organization learns and can make improvements in what they do not only through policies and procedures which support learning activities, but also through best practices identified and shared among the workers (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 12)". A learning culture is therefore "an environment that promotes and fosters individual, team, and organizational learning (Garvin, 1998, cited by Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 12)".

Supervisors play a pivotal role in organizational learning when they develop mechanisms within their units and teams for facilitating learning and capturing and disseminating knowledge (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 12)”. The pivotal role is one of both benefactor and beneficiary of knowledge. “The relationship between supervisor and practitioner is the primary medium through which human service professionals learn how to do their jobs (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 22)”. Austin & Hopkins posit that the three major components of the relationship between supervisor and supervisee are “the use of power and authority, shared meaning and trust (2004, p. 26)”. The terms power and authority are distinguished respectively as “the ability to influence or control others and the right to do so (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 26)”. Learning organization literature suggests a paradigm shift from “viewing supervisors as directive and authoritarian to seeing them as collaborators, mentors, coaches, and supporters of their employees (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 27)”.

An assumption associated with the dynamic of power is that supervisors have an ethical responsibility to use their power and authority “with utmost care (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 27)”. One important way supervisors must use their power is “to educate in a way that neither squelches the learning of supervisees (I know and you don’t) nor abandons the responsibility for supervisees’ learning (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 27)”.

The dynamic of shared meaning involves clear communication which is essential for mutual understanding and agreement (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 28)” “For the supervision to proceed smoothly, several major issues require a minimally basic

understanding and, ideally, an agreement between supervisor and supervisee. These issues fall under two general categories of contract and approach to client services (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 28-29)". The former refers to explicating the terms for mutually agreed-on work and the latter refers to beliefs about what is best in service to the clients (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 28-29)". PHHS management recently worked with the supervisors to develop social Worker Guidelines which articulate specific parameters for some aspects of the social worker essential duties. Management is currently working with the supervisors to develop similar guidelines for the supervisors. These are examples of contracts. The NASW Code of Ethics in addition to PHHS policies and procedures explicate what the PHHS' position with respect to approach to client services.

The bulk of responsibility for establishing trust in the relationship lies with the supervisor which is directly impacted by the supervisees' behavior choices (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 30). "Building trust is an evolutionary process which is directly related to how the dynamics of power and authority dealt with Austin & Hopkins, 2004, P. 32)".

Organizational culture is complex and multifaceted (Schein, 2004).

Understanding the relationship between the PHHS culture and the agency's professional development curriculum will provide a better understanding of PHHS leadership.

### **Supervisory Relationship**

The premise of this section is that it is through the supervisor and social worker relationship that social workers learn how to perform their job duties (Austin & Hopkins, 2004). The quality of the supervisory relationship influences the quality of the social

worker's performance (Austin & Hopkins, 2004). Shared meaning is matter of communicating mutual understanding and agreement between the supervisor and the social worker (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p.28). The supervisory relationship is more effective when both have been successfully communicated (Austin & Hopkins, 2004). Categorically, shared meaning can be explained as contract and approach to client services (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 28). The supervisory relationship is more effective when the supervisor has clearly communicated what is expected of the social worker (contract) and the social worker has agreed to those expectations (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 28).



Figure 6. Conceptual Model of Supervision (Austin & Hopkins, 2004).

Until April 2017, the supervisors in the adult and senior services program lacked uniformity in their communicating social worker expectations. Some supervisors used a written contract that expressly stated what is expected of social worker for the first year in the classification. The supervisor and social worker who used this contract, revisited, signed and dated the form as the social worker probationary period elapses. Other supervisors used less formal methods and others none at all (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 29). Likewise, the PHHS management lacks uniformity in communicating supervisor expectations. Those expectations are currently being developed. This study advocates for a formalized structure to communicate expectations to social workers and document their progress. Formalized contracting is an excellent tool to help social workers and supervisors work collaboratively with one another in the social worker's professional development.

### **Perspectives on How Adults Learn**

This study will examine learning transfer of PHHS supervisors from the organizational culture to their daily tasks through the lens of Situated Learning and Communities of Practice theory. It is important at this point to explore how adults learn and what is necessary to ensure a close alignment between the knowledge, skills and abilities of the supervisors and the PD curriculum. Lev Vygotsky rejected three theoretical approaches to learning that posited that a) learning is external to and not involved in development; b) development is a prerequisite to learning; and c) a combination of the two above that physical maturation of the nervous system is dependent upon learning as a developmental process (Vygotsky, 1978). He explored the



Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as a new approach to understanding the relationship between learning and development. For Vygotsky and others, “learning creates a variety of internal development processes” only when there is interaction between the learner, her/his environment and peers (Vygotsky, 1978). The learning process does not occur simultaneously with the development process, rather the two are staggered with learning as the lead process, and the result of the “sequence” as zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This is important for understanding how learners internalize external knowledge. The purpose of examining supervisor learning in PHHS is to reveal if the PHHS professional development program might be revised to provide a meaningful, interactive learning experience that is researched-based and keenly relevant to the roles of the social worker supervisors.

As previously stated, there is no one adult learning model but rather several frameworks which help to explain how adults learn (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgartner, 2007, p. 103). The next step in exploring professional development and PHHS supervisors as learners is an understanding of the science of learning which evolved from research that focused on knowing as a process (Piaget, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978; Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000). From this position, humans are understood to approach any situation with pre-existing knowledge that influences how they will respond or react to those situations (Bransford, et. al., 2000). Additionally, human pre-existing knowledge determines human ability to acquire new knowledge as we recall previous situations and rely on our reason to choose our courses of action (Bransford, et. al., 2000, p. 10). The social aspects of learning must be considered when examining or developing a

professional development program (Zepeda, 2012) because the more effective models are intrinsically more interactive (Zepeda, 2012, p. 48).

This study aims to examine the phenomenon of PHHS supervisor learning transfer within the senior and adult services division. The supervisors have completed a required professional development training curriculum. This researcher is interested in examining the experiences of leadership as an interaction between what the supervisors learned in the PHHS training curriculum and their development as organizational leaders. However, doing so is beyond the scope of this project and will be recommended for future research. This study will explore the PHHS curricular content in an effort to a) establish that future research is warranted, and b) to further explicate the context in which supervisors are expected to lead. Bransford et al. (2000) assert that applying a science of learning approach to learning environments requires learning environments to be learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered (How People Learn).

It is important at this point to explore how adults learn and what is necessary to ensure a close alignment between knowledge skills and abilities and the PHHS professional development program. Lev Vygotsky rejected three theoretical approaches to learning that posited that a) learning is external to and not involved in development; b) development is a prerequisite to learning; and c) a combination of the two above that physical maturation of the nervous system is dependent upon learning as a developmental process (Vygotsky, 1978). He explored the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as a new approach to understanding the relationship between learning and development. For

Vygotsky and others, “learning creates a variety of internal development processes” only when there is interaction between the learner, her/his environment and peers (Vygotsky, 1978). The learning process does not occur simultaneously with the development process, rather the two are staggered with learning as the lead process, and the result of the “sequence” as zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This is important for understanding how PHHS supervisors internalize external knowledge.

Research has revealed that what is effective in teaching of English language learners, is effective for all learners and that professional development plans are not necessarily dissimilar (California Department of Education). Some of the features of a professional development program supported by the California Dept. of Education include “theoretical underpinnings of instruction, strategies for anticipating learning problems, collaborative lesson planning, “demonstration lessons by mentor teachers and coaches,” supported and guided implementation, and observational constructive feedback (Improving Education for English Learners).

This study will explore learning transfer in the context of the organizational culture as opposed to the professional development curriculum. However, an exploration of professional development is key to understanding the phenomena of leadership in the PHHS agency.

### **Professional Development (PD) as a Journey**

Professional development is a journey, not a destination, due to the need for continuous learning with any professional development effort (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 14). This is as true for human services organizations as it is for academic institutions.

Professional development is all about learning from one's colleagues and practices (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 14). Professional development can serve as the framework for individual and collective learning; which both support [organizational] development (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 14).

There is no one PD model or one model of adult learning that is considered the standard for organizational leaders in either the education or human services professions (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgartner, 2007, p. 103). However, there are various extant models or frameworks which are helpful in explaining professional development as a process (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgartner, 2007, p. 103). The absence of one standard model for PD is an opportunity for public agency personnel and human resources managers to develop their own model to address the unique situations that the social worker supervisors encounter in their daily duties. Professional development literature varies in its recommendations for fundamental PD program criteria. Some argue that there is a lack of evidence to support the investment in leadership development as a worthwhile endeavor, while arguing for innovations to support leadership development as a collective entity (Cunningham, 2007). Other recommendations for leadership development advocate for organizations to create their own leadership curriculum through a group effort to ensure that all participants are getting exactly what they self-report as necessary for their learning (Cunningham, 2007; Voloshin & Winkle-Giulioni, 2013). These recommendations and approaches all beg the question how effective professional development program are.

Less than 15% of skills learned in professional development programs are transferred to the work environment (Cunningham, 2007, p. 6; Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 191). Supervisors are partly responsible for this dismal outcome (ibid). Effective PD programs test not only leader learner knowledge of curriculum content, but also leader learner praxis (Penuel, Fishman, Barry, Yamaguchi, Ryoko, Gallagher and Lawrence, 2007). Effective professional development programs address leadership, adult learning, and curriculum. The assumption here is that the public agency intends to develop their supervisors' leadership skills through the PD program. Successful PD programs demonstrate an understanding of the principles of adult learning (Zepeda, p. 46). Part of supervisor development is teaching them teamwork competency with their colleagues and with the social workers. In other words, supervisors must follow up with social workers after staff training to ensure learning transfer has occurred. Likewise, managers must follow through with supervisors to do the same.

Effective PD programs contain and explore theoretical frameworks that tie together the curricula content within and between courses (Fisher, 2009). This study asserts that an alignment between student learning outcomes and PD curriculum content is key to ensuring the public agency PD program fulfills the agency's training policy and agency mission to educate supervisors in a manner that will lead to a positive outcome for leadership. Examining such an alignment will ultimately help the public agency personnel department better understand how social worker supervisors experience the PD curriculum and to make adjustments to the curriculum for future course offerings. The more immediate outcome of such an examination can be managers developing a

teamwork competency training mandated for all supervisors within the adult and senior services program. This study hopes to address the role and impact of the PD program on social worker supervisors and their supervisees. It aims to accomplish this goal through understanding how adults learn and if there is a relationship between the problem of teamwork incompetency among supervisors, and the content of the PD curriculum. In other words, the study aims to discover if supervisors learn how to work collaboratively through the PD curriculum. If they do, the aim is to glean what role learning transfer plays in supervisor decisions not to collaborate with management, their colleagues or supervisees.

This project attempts to understand professional development through the lenses of education and human services research literature. This study refrains from entering the argument whether social work is considered a profession (Flexner, 1915), but rather focuses on professional development from the position articulated by Tien ken and Stonakar (2007, p. 24) who asserted that the successful organizations are those in which all participants are learners. Professional development and teamwork matter to this study as leadership role competencies for PHHS human services supervisors (Austin & Hopkins, 2004). Austin & Hopkins explain *teaming* as the leadership competency which entails the supervisor organizing work groups while also *developing* and focusing them on program outcomes (2004, p. 140). The teaming competency is fundamental to this study's position that the supervisor holds a pivotal role in the PHHS agency. Teamwork is essential to getting anything done in well within a public agency. Professional development is essential for ensuring that the agency retains its employees and nurtures

them to be the best they can be. Ultimately, the human services supervisor determines the success of the aged and disabled program (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 140) through these two competencies. There is no one PD model or one model of adult learning that is considered the standard for organizational leaders in either the education or human services professions (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgartner, 2007, p. 103). Yet, there is much that can be gleaned from the PD research as illustrated below.

Table 5: Lessons and Practices (Zepeda, 2012, p. 9).

<b>Lessons and Practices</b>	<b>Research</b>
Professional development extends over time	Garet et.al., 2001; Loucks-Horseley, Hewson, Love, & Stiles, 1998; Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman, 2000
Professional development includes planned follow-up	Corcoran, 1995; Garet et al., 2001; Joyce & Showers, 1995
Professional development is job-embedded connecting to the work of teaching (relevance)	AERA, 2005; Ancess, 2000; Borko, 2004; Wood & Killian, 1998; Wood & McQuarrie, 1999
Professional development is content-specific and related to subject matter	Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Corcoran, 1995; Garet et al., 2001; Porter et al., 2003
Professional development promotes reflect and inquiry	Guskey, 1999; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1998
Professional development includes multiple modalities of learning – active engagement	Joyce & Showers, 1995; Garet et al., 2001; Porter et al., 2003
Professional development is site-based and includes teachers from the same grade level and subject area	Corcoran, 1995; Garet et al., 2001; Porter et al., 2000

Additionally, the research focused on professional development and teachers is instructive for this study. The research (APPENDIX A) indicates that professional development impacts the quality of teacher's performance (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Kent, 2004; Strahan, 2003).

Learning transfer is key to helping this researcher explore the problem of supervisor conflict and arrogation of power within the public agency. This study aims to answer the question if the PD program is teaching the social worker supervisors how to contribute to a cohesive, supportive work environment through teamwork and professional development.

Leadership cultivation is now significant across all levels of government given the complexities organizational leaders face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006 cited by Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013). This study replicates other research approaches which drew from the self-reports of public agency supervisors, the leadership development literature and collaborative competencies literature (Getha-Taylor & Morse (2013). This study does not aim to advocate for the development of a specific PD model. Rather, it acknowledges the advantage of approaching professional development through a triangulation of leadership, curriculum and leader self-reflection. The examination of professional development literature has helped the reader to understand what is recommended and what has been learned through professional development research. An examination of the PHHS professional development curriculum follows.



## Curriculum

APPENDICES B thru D contain itemized courses and brief descriptions of the PHHS curriculum content. APPENDIX B contains the courses which supervisors are required to take. This researcher was advised by the PHHS research review team that the courses listed in APPENDIX B are not required, however they were required when he was a supervisor, and the PHHS website states that they are required within a two-year period if the supervisor desires certification. The *required* courses focus on *administrative* topics (i.e., labor relations, FMLA, safety, etc.), while the *elective* courses focus on supervisor *development*. APPENDIX C contains some of the courses considered elective. Additional elective courses are regularly scheduled and a monthly “Events and Training” calendar is sent via email by management to all of the division supervisors and social workers to attend. The Events and Training calendar specifies if the who may attend and which training or event is most pertinent to each of the programs within the division. APPENDIX D lists the only courses that use specific metrics to gauge supervisor learning. Readers may make two assumptions upon perusal of the above curriculum; a) the professional development curriculum is not intended to be a leadership development curriculum, and b) leadership development is secondary to administrative competency.

Notably absent from this chapter is a comparison of extant professional development program models and a discussion of andragogic styles. Although an exploration of all of these would broaden the scope of this study and add complexity to it, doing so would demand more time than this researcher has to complete the project.

The PHHS curriculum is the framework through which supervisors learn to fulfill their responsibilities. PHHS management has the authority and the responsibility to examine what the courses are taught, how the material is presented and how its courses are assessed for effectiveness (Bransford, et. al, 2000). Given that leadership development is context specific, the researcher questions if the PHHS professional development curriculum is too generic and not adequately focused on the specificity of the supervisory role (Cunningham, 2010, p. 5). Designing a professional development curriculum for supervisors might approach “leadership as a collective entity” teaching them “what they need to learn to work together” which may differ between from person to person based on their “history and experiences (Cunningham, 2010, p. 5)”. Among the topics not represented in the PHHS curriculum is a course on “self-led learning” or taking the initiative to learn how to design their own professional development curriculum (Cunningham, 2010, p. 5).

The PHHS curriculum is relevant for this study because understanding how people learn in the workplace environment is as valid as understanding how people learn in other environments such as school and community settings (Mahar and Harford, 2004). Examination of the PHHS curriculum is relevant considering the size of the PHHS and number supervisors who are trained using this curriculum. Examination of the PHHS curriculum is an opportunity for this researcher to provide substantive feedback to PHHS management generally to aid in the effort to enhance the professional development of PHHS supervisors, managers and staff.

The paper will provide a three-part analysis of the PHHS curriculum to discover where development occurs in the stated curriculum. It will examine the intended curriculum from a linguistic (locus of meaning is in the text) perspective, the delivered curriculum from a behavioral (locus of meaning is in the individual) perspective, and the meta-curriculum from a sociocultural (actions, interactions and transactions between the text, the individual and others in sociocultural spaces) perspective (Sprawled, 1980). This paper differentiates between learning and development with the understanding that development occurs in sociocultural spaces.

### **PHHS Intended Curriculum**

The PHHS PD Curriculum is a byproduct of the Training Policy and Plan (TPP, fictitious title) which states:

“it is the policy of [blank] to encourage the development of [blank] employees through educational and training programs to increase their value to the [blank] and the community it serves and to enhance each employee’s opportunities for career advancement (Section 1)”.

The locus of meaning for *development* is in the text of the TPP as it addresses “in-service training, specialized training, general job-related training, Affirmative Action, and outside education and training (TPP Section 3)”. The locus of meaning of PHHS training is in the individual course handouts which are subjective to the course facilitator. The PHHS curriculum is intended to provide written material (i.e., PowerPoint presentations, policies, procedures, personnel forms, etc.) which supervisors and managers can use as a reference guide as situations occur and warrant their retrieval. Processing family leave for staff is a situation which would warrant consulting the FMLA course material. The written material provides the checklist, definitions, scenarios, list of coordinators, and

samples of completed forms which supervisors and managers can use to accurately and timely process FMLA requests. The curriculum in this example is intended to inform and protect. Supervisors/managers/staff are informed about the process for granting family leave. Supervisors/managers/PHHS are protected from liability for negligence in this matter, while the staff's job classification is legally protected during the leave of absence. The PHHS curriculum is intended to provide supervisors and managers with a uniform and comprehensive foundation of guidelines to ensure that correct action is taken with regards to the supervision of staff. Examination of the PHHS curriculum for this study is congruent with the academic conversation about teaching and learning traditionally defined as "the process by which people acquire skills, knowledge, understanding and attributes (Mahar and Harford, 2004)." A more contemporary definition of learning includes a lifelong process of cultural, social and institutional learning (Mahar and Harford, 2004).

### **PHHS Delivered Curriculum**

PHHS curriculum attendees are expected to transfer what they learn in the courses to the context of their daily routines. Most of the PHHS courses are three and one half hours in length, with a few lasting only three hours. The courses are held within training rooms of various agency buildings. The facilitators provide a safe environment wherein attendees can fearlessly self-disclose our strengths and challenges. The training facilitators are generally personnel services employees, which has its advantages and disadvantages. One advantage to using personnel services staff to facilitate the training is they are content knowledgeable from facilitating the courses multiple times and/or from

experience using the course content in their daily duties. One disadvantage is that not all of the facilitators have pedagogical knowledge to ensure that the attendees are developing through the course session. Effective facilitators need to have both content and andragogic knowledge (Bransford, et.al, 2000). Although the course attendees hold either supervisor or manager job classifications, they may vary by assigned department (i.e., Airport, PHHS, Waste Management, General Services, etc.). The format of the courses generally consists of a PowerPoint presentation with handouts. Attendees are generally asked to form dyads or small groups to discuss key portions of the trainings or to complete exercises. Pre/post tests are sometimes administered.

While each course has stated learning objectives, not all of the courses have *measurable* objectives. The use of a pre/post-test is a method to measure attendees' knowledge of the subject matter at the beginning and the end of the presentation. APPENDIX D contains the courses with administered pre-post-tests. Ten of the courses utilize measurement tools (pre/post-test and written exercises) that *assess* student learning. However, the results of the tools are not gathered or analyzed or later used in any manner to assess retention of the student's experience with the training. The experience of most of the courses does not lend itself to increased metacognition of the attendees or their likely later performance with the subject matter (Bransford, et. al, 2000).

### **PHHS Meta-Curriculum**

The meta-curriculum is everything that the PHHS supervisors have learned and experienced about supervising, and about being supervised by others. This researcher's evolving definition of curriculum is borrowed from the Educator's Field Guide:

*The means and materials with which students will interact for the purpose of achieving identified educational outcomes. It consists of all the planned and unplanned experiences that the school offers as part of its educational responsibility.*

The locus of meaning for the supervisors' meta-curriculum is in all of the "actions, interactions and transactions" which occur as a result of their role as Human Services Supervisors in addition to their demographic, working in an agency predominantly populated by females, at all organizational levels. The supervisors' meta-curriculum includes their levels of their post-secondary education and human services certifications. The meta-curriculum is in the praxis of applying all of the intended and delivered curricula the supervisors have experienced over their collective years of serving as human services professionals.

The TPP assigns the primary responsibility of staff development to managers, with the assistance of the Training Officer, and "shared responsibility" to employees (TPP, Section 1). The agency executives and elected officials are charged with the responsibility to encourage "education, training and development" as well as "creating and maintaining a climate conducive to individual and organization development (TPP, Section 2.1)." Section 4 affirms that "the Training Officer will be responsible for

continuing evaluation of the entire program” and “regularly report results to the executive and elected officials and all agency administrators and department heads.

This section focuses on the importance of skill development as a goal of professional development curriculum. Naquin & Holton (2003) designed and implemented a best practices training model for supervisors and managers in Louisiana public agencies. They designed a skill-based model (as opposed to content based model) with the intent of providing a tool that can be used in multiple public agencies and multiple states (Naquin & Holton, 2003, p. 2). The purpose of designing a skill based training model was to ensure that leaders would acquire the essential skills to perform their job functions (Naquin & Holton, 2003, p. 2). One implication for choosing such a purpose is that the researchers were concerned more with what the leaders did with the knowledge they acquired in the training than the professional development activity itself (Zepeda, 2012, p. 49). The Naquin & Holton 2003 study is helpful particularly with regard to its approach to curriculum development.

Naquin & Holton 2003 study is helpful as it outlines the specific steps the researchers took in the design, development and implementation of the training model for supervisors and managers. The researchers used a four-phase approach consisting of assessment, course design, curriculum development and pilot delivery (Naquin & Holton, 2003, p. 2). Unlike the Naquin & Holton study, this project is not seeking to design a new professional development model for PHHS. However, this study is informed by the researchers’ triangulation of adult learning, curriculum and theory in their approach to professional development within public agencies.

Naquin & Holton relied on Benjamin Samuel Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives which asserts that four considerations must be made in curriculum development:

- *The objectives you are seeking to obtain*
- *The type of learning experiences that are likely to bring about the attainment of the desired objectives*
- *The effective sequence or organization of learning experiences that will enable the learner to integrate the content/experiences*
- *The evaluation of the learning experience* (Bloom, 1956)

Naquin & Holton's approach to PD curriculum design illustrates the importance of considering the impact of time of said curriculum. There would be no need to ponder the four considerations above if public agency supervisors were not expected to *experience* leadership during and after the training. The goal of PD curriculum is to offer attendees with an experience of theory and best practice to equip them with the knowledge, skills and abilities they need to perform their jobs (Naquin & Holton, 2003, p. 7). This can be accomplished when careful attention is given to the design and delivery of the professional development curriculum (Naquin & Holton, 2003, p. 7).

A first step in professional development curriculum design is an identification and analysis of desired competencies. Naquin & Holton assembled 20-25 subject matter experts for the examination of a competency with three purposes for the group: a) to identify tasks associated with each supervisory or managerial competency; b) identify the knowledge, skills and abilities required; and c) increase buy-in by providing additional opportunities for input from as many staff as possible (Naquin & Holton, 2003, p. 28).



Naquin & Holton's 2003 study informs this project's research methodology as it aims to use focus groups to assemble PHHS supervisors as subject matter experts to explore their lived learning-transfer experiences relative to teamwork competency. This study's approach aimed to gain an understanding of what the public agency supervisors self-report was learned in the PD courses that inform their decisions regarding teamwork. In other words, the aim is to glean if teamwork competencies were taught and transferred from classroom to the current roles of the supervisors.

The Getha-Taylor, Fowles, & Merritt (2015) study is relevant to this research project. It examined a professional development program within local government. Its findings indicate that time is an important factor when considering what PHHS supervisors retain and transfer to praxis, particularly with regard to conceptual and interpersonal skills. It is relevant to this study as it is a qualitative examination of supervisors who self-report their leadership skills over a period of time. These findings concur with the work of Burden (1928); Burke, Christensen, and Fessler (1984); Christensen, Burke, Fessler, and Hagstrom (1983); Feiman and Floden (1980); Newman, Dornburg, Dubois, and Kranz (1980); and Ponticell and Zepeda (1996) who found that teachers undergo various stages of growth in their professional development. The point here is that the content of an effective professional development program must take into account the factor of time and address the various ways that time impacts PHHS supervisors in their diverse situations, and how professional development programs can train and develop leaders over time (Getha-Taylor, 2015, p. 311).

This study examines the topic of professional development within a public human services agency through the lens of Situated Learning and Situational Leadership.

Situational Learning and Communities of Practice theory explains that humans learn through their participation in the learning process (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Situational Leadership Model asserts that organizational outcomes are based more on leader decisions than policies/procedures (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Nelson, 1993). A discussion of leadership theory relative to professional development follows.

**Leadership Theory**

Human services leaders who incorporate leadership theory into their practices may increase their effectiveness evidenced by better outcomes with staff performances (Fisher, 2009), which will yield better outcomes for their organizations. Leadership theory informs perspective and influences practice. Human services leadership must be approached from multiple perspectives (Lawler, 2007).

Table 7:

Reframing Leadership, Bolman & Deal, (2013, p. 355).

<b>FRAME</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP IS EFFECTIVE WHEN</b>		<b>LEADERSHIP IS INEFFECTIVE WHEN:</b>	
	<b>LEADER IS:</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP PROCESS IS:</b>	<b>LEADER IS:</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP PROCESS IS:</b>
<b>Structural</b>	<b>Analyst, architect</b>	<b>Analysis, design</b>	<b>Petty bureaucrat or tyrant</b>	<b>Management by detail and flat</b>
<b>Human resource</b>	<b>Catalyst, servant</b>	<b>Support, empowerment</b>	<b>Weakling, pushover</b>	<b>Abdication</b>
<b>Political</b>	<b>Advocate, negotiator</b>	<b>Advocacy, coalition building</b>	<b>Con artist, thug</b>	<b>Manipulation, fraud</b>
<b>Symbolic</b>	<b>Prophet, poet</b>	<b>Inspiration, meaning-making</b>	<b>Fanatic, charlatan</b>	<b>Mirage, smoke and mirrors</b>

Leadership PD programs informed by theory benefit from the research of scholars and practitioners by applying strategies that have been scientifically tested, and scrutinized by academic peers. Professional development programs for social worker supervisors can opt for universal or situational theories of leadership (York, 1996). Universal theories posit that there is one best approach to leadership, while situational theory states there are variables that determine leadership style in any given situation (York, 1996, page 5). This study will explore the topic of professional development through the lens of Hersey & Blanchard's (1988) Situational Leadership Model.

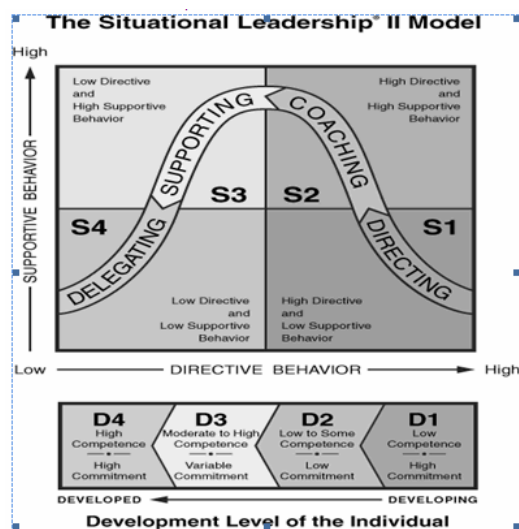


Figure 7. Situational Leadership Model, Ken Blanchard, (2010).

Bolman & Deal (2013) classify Situational Leadership Model as a contingency theory which explore how specific circumstances or situations effect leadership (p. 340). Situational Leadership “became more popular with practitioners because it is more intuitive and offers clearer practical implications (Bolman & Deal 2013, p. 342)”.

Contingency theory is Situational Leadership Model has been legitimated in the educational leadership literature (Nevarez, Wood & Penrose, 2013) and has been empirically tested in social services agencies (Hastings & York, 1985; York, 1996). Situational leadership model is also appropriate for this study because human services professionals operate in *grey area*, trained and educated to rely on their assessment skills to make appropriate decisions. *Grey area* for the purposes of this study is defined as [a]n ill-defined situation or area of activity not readily conforming to a category or set of rules (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 2005).

Situational Leadership is a leadership model based in the research of research of Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard (1972) who asserted that effective leadership is the outcome of correct decisions applied to various situations (Fisher, 2009; Nevarez, Wood & Penrose, 2013). Situational leadership model asserts that organizational leaders in human services settings assess specific situations and/or employees and determine the correct course of action based on their assessment (Fisher, 2009). This practice is a natural occurrence given the social worker practice of making psycho/social assessment of clients and applying appropriate interventions thereafter (Fisher, p. 361). Situational leadership posits that leader learners assess situations and/or employee maturity level (task readiness) of the employee (York, 1996, p. 6). Task readiness refers to the willingness and motivation of the employee to perform the task (ibid). Situational leadership model helps organizational leaders to determine whether to use task-oriented or person-oriented approaches to situations (Hershey & Blanchard, 1982).

Hersey & Blanchard (1988) posit that four leadership patterns stress relationship with high and low emphasis (York, 1996, p. 7). Quadrant 1 (telling) depicts a leader being less supportive and more directive. Quadrant 2 (selling) depicts a leader being both supportive and directing. Quadrant 3 (participating) depicts support with less direction. Quadrant 4 (delegating) is neither supportive or directive. The relevance of Situational leadership model for this study is whether PHHS supervisors are cognizant of how they make decisions in the various situations they find themselves in, and more importantly, if they learned how to be cognizant of said decision making through the professional development program. This study aims to explore the learning outcomes of the PHHS supervisors through an examination of their lived experiences of learning.

Relationship Behavior	Task Behavior	
	Low	High
High	(3) Participating  Use when followers are “able” but “unwilling” or “insecure.”	(2) Selling  Use when followers are “unable” but “willing” or “motivated.”
Low	(4) Delegating  Use when followers are “able” and “willing” or “motivated.”	(1) Telling  Use when followers are “unable” and “unwilling” or “insecure.”

Table 8:

Situational Model of Leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 342).

Blanchard (2010) updated the Situational Leadership model arguing for a shift “from leader as boss and evaluator to leader as partner and cheerleader (Chapter 5)”. The Situational Leadership II Model emphasizes the need for leaders to adapt their styles to

accommodate the needs of their followers (Bolman & Deal, 2013) and that there is therefore no one model that best suits every follower. Blanchard's contribution is congruent with this study's position that there is neither one standard adult learning model nor one standard professional development model (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgartner, 2007, p. 103). The Situational Leadership II Model matches leader response to follower development level (Blanchard, 2010). Blanchard qualifies follower development levels as not fixed but rather determined by the task they are undertaking. Leaders are considered competent in this model if they master three skills: diagnosis, flexibility and partnering for performance (Blanchard, 2010). Diagnosis refers to the leader's ability to assess the development level of the direct report based on their competence and commitment. Competence in this model refers to the "sum knowledge and skills that an individual brings to a task; commitment refers to the person's motivation and confidence about the task (Blanchard, 2010). Flexibility refers to the leader's ability to comfortably adjust their leadership style to accommodate the direct reports' development level (Blanchard, 2010). Partnering refers to the purposeful increase of quality communication with direct reports. For Blanchard, Situational Leadership applies to the relationship leaders have with direct reports, with themselves and with the organization (Blanchard, 2010), and if done well, is a four-stage transformational journey. The four stages are one-to-one, leadership, self-leadership. Organizational leadership and team leadership.

Situational leadership scholars instruct that context is influenced by relationship, task, authority and maturity (Nevarez & Wood, 2013). The relationship between the

supervisors and their supervisees is influenced by the organizational culture and/or circumstances the agency, or division or unit finds themselves in. The specific task that the supervisor finds him or herself in that requires decision-making varies in structure from one task to another (Nevarez & Wood, 2013), ranging from concrete steps to reaching an outcome, to *grey area* where the supervisor must rely on their assessment skills to determine the correct steps to take (Nevarez & Wood, 2013).

“Hersey and Blanchard’s model continues to be popular for leadership training but has been criticized for lack of research support and for generating self-fulfilling prophecies. If, for example, managers give unwilling and unable subordinates high direction and low support, what would cause their motivation to improve? (Bolman & Deal, 2013)”.

Not all scholars agree that the use of leadership models (i.e., transformational, situational, learner-centered) is appropriate and advocate a paradigm shift from model to praxis (Male, Trevor, Palaiologou, Ioanna, 2015). These researchers argue not only for a redefinition of pedagogical leadership, but unconvincingly assert that they are describing and defining a clear distinction between models of leadership and praxis of leadership. The researchers state that they are disinterested in offering a model of leadership and characterize models as “set[s] of practices” (Male, et al., 2015, p. 228). This writer understands leadership models as depictions of processes and understands the authors’ *relationship between pedagogy and social axes* (Male, et al., 2015, Figure 2, p. 220) as the depiction of a process. Situational leadership model is a praxis model that depicts the

variables present when PHHS supervisors approach various situations with their supervisees.

A discussion of various theories is helpful here. The Systems Leadership theory addresses the efficiency of an interdependent whole system and the success of its purpose. (Nevarez, Wood and Penrose, 2013, p. 105) The Intake and Continuing Units are subsystems of the PHHS adult and senior services program. The problem of supervisor arrogation of power and control backlog is negatively affecting social workers in both units individually, and the IHSS Program as a whole. The primary role of the leader in system theory is to bring together multiple subsystems in a manner that increases the quality of the work and the function of the subsystem. The IHSS program manager can change the specialized division of labor policy and eliminate the dysfunctional subsystems of Intake and Continuing Units. (Nevarez, Wood, and Rose, 2013, p. 104)

Unlike the systems leadership approach, Bureaucratic Leadership theory focuses exclusively on regulations, policies and procedures. The IHSS program manager could focus on solving the organizational problem through emphasis on program-wide compliance with state law (Manual of Policies and Procedures which governs IHSS) to address backlog. She could also order all Intake social workers to focus exclusively on the oldest applications and all Continuing social workers to focus exclusively on the overdue assessments. She could evaluate the effectiveness of this approach after thirty days and determine what her next steps are. The Bureaucratic Leadership Approach is less likely to be successful as it will require no input from the social workers or



supervisors, but rather serves to “oversee, document, govern, and determine the productivity of the worker” (Nevarez, Wood and Penrose, 2013, p. 14). Additionally, such a solution would likely increase the alienation of the social workers. Backlog and alienation are symptoms of a broken *process*, and therefore it’s the process through which IHSS completes its work that must be fixed.

Analysis of the arrogation of control and power among social worker supervisors through the Human Resource frame might address the feelings of alienation but not address either the rift among and between the Intake and Continuing supervisors, or the negative impact on the PHHS organizational culture. “[T]he key challenge to this frame is to tailor the organization to individuals-finding ways for people to get the job done while feeling good about themselves and their work” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16). The program manager could create team building opportunities between the Intake and Continuing units in an effort to diminish the alienation. Yet, the physical separation from the rest of the ‘team’ and the specialization of duties would likely serve to reinforce alienation.

The Symbolic frame is not the best fit for solving the problem of backlog as it focuses on building cohesion through ritual symbol and culture. The current specialized division of labor in PHHS is a very strong symbol of difference, not one of commonality. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 16) The PHHS adult and senior services program needs to function as a tribal system rather than just appear to be one.

The Political frame emphasizes competing interests in environments with a scarcity of resources. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 188) This frame reveals the adversarial

relationship between the social worker supervisors of the Intake and Continuing units. The program manager might focus her efforts on capitalizing on the conflict between the two units by offering a special project to address arrogation of power and control in both units to the most outspoken, assertive or aggressive of the supervisors in both Continuing and Intake. Doing so would force the units to work together to problem solve but could result in sabotage of the project if any of the supervisors are unwilling to work collaboratively.

Although the structure of the PHHS adult and senior services program has caused the backlog, restructuring the program to house the Intake and Continuing units in one building “is highly unlikely and may prove neither durable nor beneficial (Bolman and Deal, 2013, p. 70)”. Doing so would require relocation of other public programs (i.e., Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services or Probation) currently housed in those buildings. However, restructuring the PHHS *process* can be accomplished without physically moving anyone.

Borrowing from the Path-Goal Leadership theory, the PHHS program manager has the opportunity to solve the organizational problem if she “align[s] [her] leadership approach to motivate employees in accordance with the needs of work situations” (Nevarez, Wood, and Penrose, 2013, p. 37). Utilizing path-goal theory requires her to choose from directive, supportive, participative or achievement approaches (Nevarez, Wood, and Penrose, 2013, p. 38). If she chooses directive, she will focus on “defining the procedures, rules and desired outcomes for situations requiring explicit directions”. (Nevarez, Wood and Penrose, 2013, p. 38) If she chooses supportive, she will “value

respect, equitable treatment and the creation of a sense of belonging for all employees...” (ibid) If she chooses the participative leadership approach, she will “encourage employees to engage in the decision-making process (Nevarez, Wood and Penrose, 2013, p. 38)”. “The achievement-oriented leadership style is used when employees are encouraged and supported to meet and exceed high standards (Nevarez et al., 2013)”. This writer recommends that she incorporate all four approaches.

The PHHS program manager can take several steps to eliminate the supervisors’ arrogation of power and control in a collaborative manner that will diminish the current alienation of workers and supervisors. She can solicit support from the supervisors and social workers in completing a cost benefit analysis for dissolving the specialized division of labor. She can direct supervisors in both units to identify the ten highest performing social workers and invite them to participate in a special project to address the backlog. She can then dissolve the Intake and Continuing Units and assign both Intake applications and Continuing cases to the remaining social workers.

The above steps serve to reorganize the PHHS division of labor. From a structural frame, the steps realign the roles and responsibilities of the social workers and their supervisors. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 308) Through the human resource frame, the proposed steps will help the majority of the social workers feel unified as one team, and the higher performing workers will feel valued and rewarded for exceeding expectations. The special project will serve as a context through which the program manager can invite social workers and their supervisors into closer professional relationship with her. The higher performing social workers can identify and share their

best practices with all of the social workers. The political frame reveals how the proposed steps could eliminate the adversarial relationship between Continuing Unit supervisors and Intake/Quality Assurance supervisors. The symbolic frame reveals how the proposed steps would not only create a new symbol of accountability for all of the social workers and supervisors, but also a new social order wherein a greater sense of equality is established. (Bolman & Deal, 2013)

The program manager can also use the Leader-Member Exchange theory to inform her approach to the proposed solution steps. The benefits of using this theory is to gain a better understanding of her decision making regarding the problem and also predict the likelihood that her approach to the problem will be successful. In this approach, the leader links the leader's style with the employee's potential (Nevarez, Wood and Penrose, 2013, p. 83). The proposed steps invite supervisors and social workers to move between varying degrees of professional relationship with the program manager to accomplish the goal of diminishing the backlog and subsequently, the alienation of workers. (Nevarez, Wood, and Penrose, 2013, p. 85)

The structure frame illustrates how problematic misalignment of structure to current circumstance can be (Bolman & Deal, 2013, Chapter Three). The PHHS is one of the few large human services agencies in northern California which maintains a division of labor between Intake and Continuing social workers. Prior to 2009, PHHS was configured *without* the specialized division of labor but chose the specialized option in response to a Grand Jury investigation investigating fraud prevention. The current configuration occurred when PHHS was in crisis and social workers were being laid off

and/or demoted out of the program. PHHS no longer operates in crisis mode and is funded at a higher level than before the crisis began. Dissolving the specialized division of labor might heal the broken structure of the PHHS adult and senior services program and maximize the inputs, outputs and outcomes of the program.

The PHHS is a government agency and thereby a bureaucratic organization, or one in which the important decisions regarding policy and procedures are made by management. The reader may consider grey area in a bureaucratic organization to be minimal or dichotomous to one another. An examination of the PHHS organizational structure will help support the above statements.

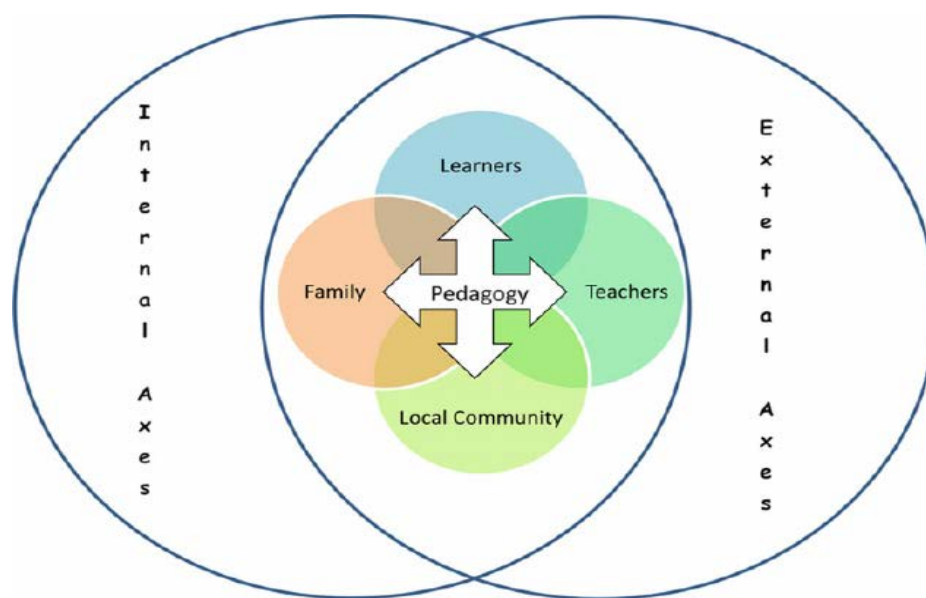


Figure 9. Relationship between pedagogy and social axes, (Male and Palaiologou, 2015, *Pedagogical leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*)

Male & Palaiologou (2015) argue that “leadership should be context dependent rather than ‘model’ dependent” and that “leadership should be concerned with the exercise of reasonable and justifiable judgements (p. 215)”.

### **Empirical Studies**

Hastings & York (1985) examined several propositions of the Situational Leadership model among social workers in multiple states and job classifications. The researchers found several of the supervisory support propositions of Situational Leadership to be inconclusive and warranting further examination (York, 1996). While the findings may deter some researchers, it is the very nature of the findings which inspired application of this particular leadership theory to this project examining supervisor learning in a public human services agency. Humans vary and will make varying decisions in varying situations. The implication here is that leader learners who are exposed to the same professional development program may transfer different knowledge from training to praxis and therefore respond differently than their peers in varying situations. Hastings & York found that social workers embraced the propositions of Situational Leadership model related to delegation of decision-making responsibilities while rejecting those related to supervisory support (York, 1996).

Kakavelakis (2011) explored Situated Learning Theory in the context of organizational change and found that situated learning is “an emergent process shaped by” the various ways in which employees participate in the various contexts of their organizations. The Kakavelakis is informative to this study as it was

The Getha-Taylor & Morse (2013) study was relevant in that it focused on leadership competencies development within the context of local government agency. The researchers acknowledge the approach to leadership development at the local government level is “notably absent (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013, p. 74). One research question asked how the training curriculum might be adapted “to emphasize” collaborative competencies (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013, p. 78-79). Another research question asked which components of the training program are best suited to develop collaborative competencies in participants (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013, p. 80). The researchers explored adult learning theory and tested the recommendations of adult learning (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013, p. 80) for training programs. The findings indicate “program content should specifically address collaboration competency development (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013, p. 71)”. The study offers support for strategic approaches to training which “reflects emerging leadership needs (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013, p. 71)”.

The Hotho, Saka-Helmhout, Becker-Ritterspach (2013) study examined situated learning and “how participation and learning are affected by broader structures (Hotho et al. p. 57)” The researchers argue that there is an “inconsistency” in the understanding of situated learning as it tends to be discussed as “learning through participation restricted to the immediate community involved in social activity (Hotho et al., p. 57)”. Hotho et al. assert that the emphasis on the centrality of *context* in the “originating work into situated learning” was lost in later applications of the theory (Hotho et al., p. 58). The “inconsistency” has resulted in “only a limited understanding” of how and if situated

learning and learning transfer differ across contexts (Hotho et al., p. 58). The study examined how situated learning “plays out” the interplay of organizational and institutional structures (Hotho et al., p. 58). The findings indicate that the interplay of organizational and institutional structures while relevant, “does not determine collective participation within the organization (Hotho et al., p. 59). The findings indicate that learning outcomes are not necessarily determined by structural conditions (Hotho et al., p. 73).

The Male & Palaiologou (2013) study examined leadership in education and found that a shift should occur toward viewing leadership as a praxis rather than a model which considers the relationship between teaching, learning ecology of the community and social set of axes in which the educational organization is set (Male & Palaiogou, 2013, p. 214)”.

Thompson and Glaso (2015) addressed the difficulty of validation with Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership Model due to ambiguity “surrounding follower competence and commitment (Thompson & Glaso, 2015, p. 527)”. Bransford et al. (2000) assert that applying a science of learning approach to learning environments requires learning environments to be learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered.

### **Other Professional Development (PD) Studies**

While several studies have been completed exploring professional development within the human service industry, none have been found to examine the science of learning and its alignment with the professional development curriculum of a public



human services agency. Dee Sherwood (2015) completed a qualitative study to determine how social work leaders define leadership within the profession. She used interviews to study social work leaders in educational, nonprofit and government settings and found that leader definition of leadership ranged widely and many were ambivalent about self-identifying as leaders.

### **Conclusion**

The literature review supports the twofold purpose of this study: a) to understand earning transfer relative to teamwork competency among supervisors who have participated in a professional development program; and b) to evaluate the relationship between the professional development curriculum and supervisors' decision making. This study adds to the professional development research within local government agencies.

### Chapter 3

## METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of this study was to test the research questions that relate to learning transfer relative to teamwork competency and professional development in a public human services agency. The purpose of the study is to solve the problem of misuse of power among local public agency supervisors. The recurring themes of leadership, curriculum, and learning theory surrounding professional development programs emerged from the literature review. This chapter presents the methodology used to test the research questions. As previously stated, there is no one model of either professional development or adult learning (Merriam, Caffarella, Baumgartner, 2007, p. 103). This chapter will explain one approach for exploring how supervisors experience learning and leadership in a public human services organization.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: to provide, to explain and to inform. The chapter will provide a description of the learning transfer relative to professional development training and teamwork competency. The chapter will explain what the researcher wanted to know about the above topic. Finally, the chapter will inform the reader how the study provided research knowledge that adds to the literature and improvement of the Public Health and Human Services agency's professional development program. The design of the study confines its scope. This chapter will inform the reader of the research approach, what questions the researcher found most relevant, the roles of the research participants, and how the researcher collected and analyzed the data. The chapter is arranged in the following sequence: research design,

role of the researcher, research questions, setting/population/sample, data collection/instrumentation, data analysis, and protection of participants.

### **Research Design**

The study used a qualitative research method to explore the phenomenon of learning transfer among public agency supervisors who have completed the mandatory PHHS professional development program. Specifically, the study sought to examine how supervisors and their supervisees self-report how they experience teamwork and professional development within the PHHS. One aspect of an effective PD program honors supervisor learning through follow up to ensure that transfer of new knowledge into practice actually occurs (Zepeda, 2012, p. 48). It is more important what supervisors do with new knowledge than the PD activity from which they acquired it (Zepeda, 2012, p. 49). Having information organized into a conceptual framework enables students to transfer new information to new situations while learning related information quickly (Bransford, et al., 2000, p. 17). A phenomenological research study is appropriate for understanding the perceptions of leadership from self-reports of supervisors and their supervisees.

Phenomenology was chosen for qualitative design as it is the method of studying how humans experience specific phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). The goal of this approach is to interpret the lived experiences of the study participants (Cresswell, 1998). This researcher aims to understand the phenomenon of learning transfer as experienced by PHHS first level organizational leaders and social workers. The experiences of the participants were examined and interpreted in terms of common themes they expressed in

focus groups and an interview (Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A., 2014). The goal was to glean useful information from the common themes that will enhance the professional development activities within the PHHS division which serves seniors and disabled adults.

The phenomenological approach to qualitative study has its strengths and limitations (Merriam, 2009, p. 52). The researcher is limited by his sensitivity to the topic and population being studied. Although he is trained in small group facilitation and interviewing, he is biased as an employee of the PHHS who has promoted him through the ranks to the position of manager. However, the research design offers an opportunity for this researcher to receive detailed descriptions of the experiences of the participants through direct conversation with the participants. The study results emerged from the articulated perceptions of the participants in their own words, as opposed to emerging from statistics (Krueger & Casey, 2015) derived from preset survey questions and responses. The researcher examined the phenomenon of learning transfer relative to teamwork competency from the views of the study participants, expressed in their own words. This approach is preferable for this study as opposed to a survey design whereby the researcher limits study participant responses to an instrument with predetermined responses from which participants must choose.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher's involvement with the participants, the data collection and analysis were all made possible due to his job classification within the public human services agency where the study was conducted. The researcher rose through the ranks

with the PHHS, previously holding the positions of social worker and supervisor, respectively. The researcher's current job classification as program planner is a management position that does not require supervision of any staff. The study participants were therefore free from any obligation to participate or fear of retaliation for refusing to participate. The researcher was the sole person who interacted with the participants, coded the transcripts and analyzed the data. The researcher is clear that the duality of his role as researcher and manager may seem problematic. The task of the researcher is to not only ensure that the study participants' perspective (emic consideration) is not subsumed in either the literature or the researcher's perspective (K. Pike, 1967).

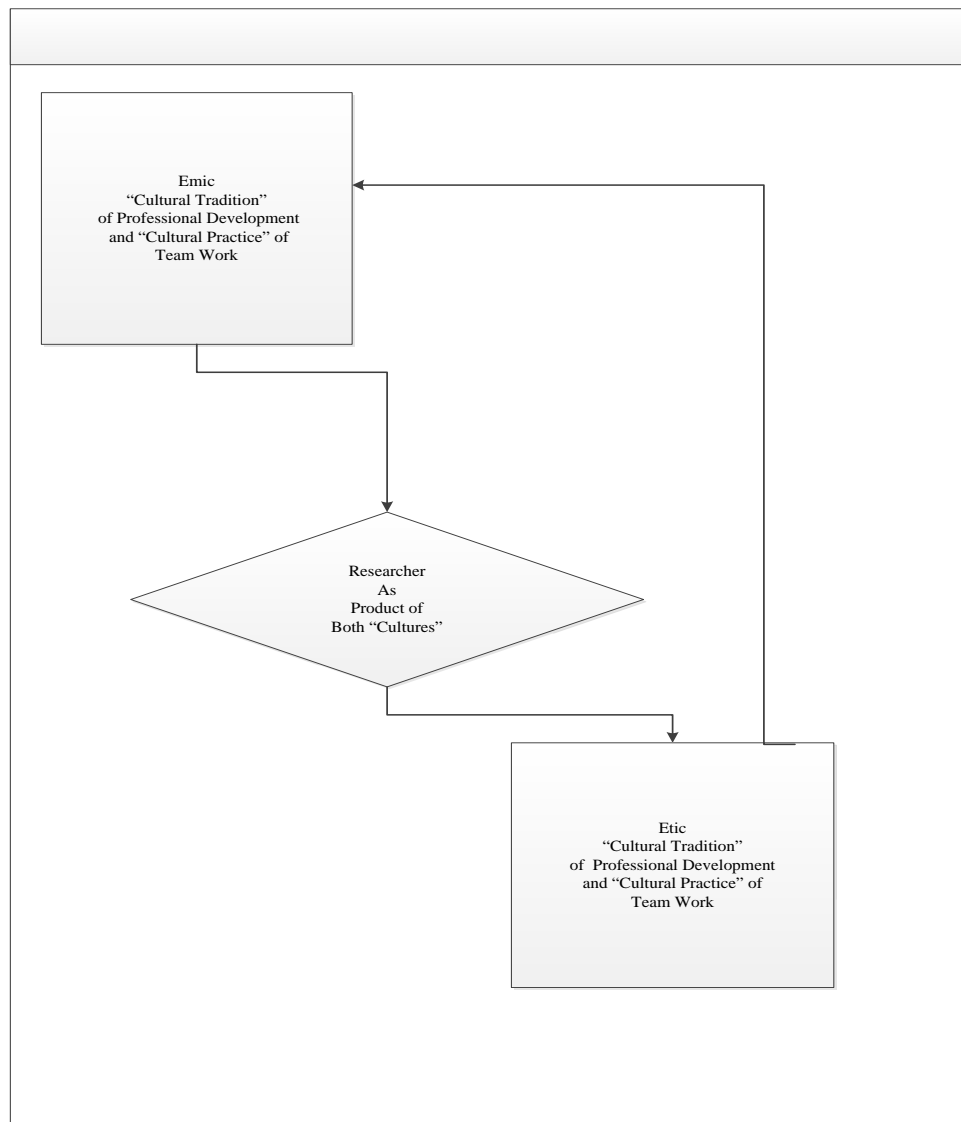
#### Emic Considerations

The participants consist of public agency social workers and their supervisors who work in the PHHS division that serves the disabled and aged population of their county. The PHHS is a county agency which serves consumers who are eligible for Medi-Cal benefits. The social workers and supervisors have faced several challenges over the past several years including multiple changes in management, workforce reduction in 2009 as a result of the national recession, an increase in caseload size, and a current influx of new social workers from either the same department, or another department within the county. The supervisors and social worker share two of the same assumptions, namely that once they pass probation, they cannot be fired and that those who want to promote, will.

### Etic Considerations

The researcher attended the required professional development administrative courses as the participants when he held that job classification in the same PHHS and division for three years. He also served as a social worker in the same PHHS and division for five years prior to promotion to supervisor. The researcher now serves as a manager in the same PHHHS and division as the participants.

The researcher balanced his emic and etic experience as a learner and leader within the PHHS culture and approached the study as if the emic and etic are “intertwined, representing a continuum in which emics serve as a source for (potentially) etic developments (Zhu & Bargiela-Chiappini, 2013, p. 383)”. The researcher has a bias for the role of the supervisor as the most important within the PHHS. The supervisor has the power and authority to influence the organizational culture and ultimately, the quality of service provided to PHHS consumers. This researcher mitigated his bias towards supervisors by speaking to his dual role as manager and researcher. Furthermore, he allowed the data to explain and tell the PHHS story rather than telling his personal story.



## Research Questions

This study sought to understand how supervisors and their supervisees experience teamwork competency in relationship to supervisor learning transfer from the PHHS professional development program to their daily routines. The research questions were linked to leadership, professional development, and learning; the recurring themes of the literature review.

Research Question 1: *What is the role of the supervisor in advancing the professional development of workers?*

Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between the organizational culture and curriculum?*

### **Setting/Population/Participants**

The study took place within the office buildings of a northern California public health and human services agency. Social worker supervisors and their supervisees were invited to participate in focus groups and an interview. The study was convened within the conference rooms of two office buildings, each located within two miles of one another. The two buildings house all of the social worker supervisors and their supervisees assigned to the adult and senior program. The conference rooms were selected to better accommodate the employees who are assigned to each work location.

The study selected PHHS employees who work within the division which serves seniors and adults. The sample selected were supervisors and the social workers they supervise. PHHS consists of approximately one hundred social workers and twenty supervisors. The aim was to study a minimal sample size of forty total participants.

A random purposeful sampling method was administered based on the purpose of the study. (Krueger & Casey, p. 244) because all of the participants had equal chance to be involved in the study. The total number of social worker supervisors and supervisees numbers over one hundred, which was too large for the number of focus groups planned for the study. An invitation email was sent via the PHHS email server to all social workers and their supervisors. The invitation (see attached) identified the researcher, his



affiliation with PHHS, and the purpose of the study. The invitation instructed the invitees that they would be selected based on random selection of every other person who responded to the invitation. The participants were selected solely based on their experiences as supervisors or supervisees of PHHS adult and senior program.

PHHS senior and adult division consists of many more classifications of worker and organizational leaders than this study is choosing to examine. The adult and senior division management team consists of a division manager who supervises the program planners, program managers and program specialists. The upper level management team was excluded from the sample due to their demanding work schedules and minimal number.

The clerical and administrative support staff fulfills a distinct and vital role which ensures the successful operation of the division which serves seniors and adults. This study does not diminish that fact. This study focuses exclusively on the job classifications of Human Services Social Worker and Human Services Supervisor. A disproportionate number of supervisors and managers promote to their positions from these respective classifications and have more influence over the fieldwork than do the other classifications. This is significant for the researcher as it is through the work of the social worker and supervisor that the PHHS measures the impact of its services on the community's seniors and disabled citizens.

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

The study consisted of double-layer designed focus groups facilitated by this researcher within the conference rooms of the two division buildings. Double-layer

design allowed for separate focus groups and interview for the supervisors and social workers. Double-layer design offered complexity to the traditional design focus group (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The double-layer design enabled the researcher to examine not only the lived experiences of supervisor learning transfer, but also the perspectives on leadership from the supervisees. The goal was not to compare the experiences of supervisors with supervisees, but rather to reveal a more holistic experience of learning transfer than what a traditional focus group design might reveal. Inviting solely supervisors to participate in the study would have failed to provide a holistic picture of the phenomenon. The purpose of the focus group is not to infer, but to understand the experiences of the phenomenon (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 80) of learning transfer. The rationale for choosing a focus group for data collection was that focus groups aim to expose the opinions of participants and give researchers the opportunity to “compare and contrast the data from across the groups (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 7)”. This researcher aimed to understand the opinions that the supervisors and their supervisees hold regarding teamwork competency and professional development within the division. Most importantly, this researcher aimed to use the focus group to reveal the motivating factors for the participant perceptions of leadership and professional development. (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 7).

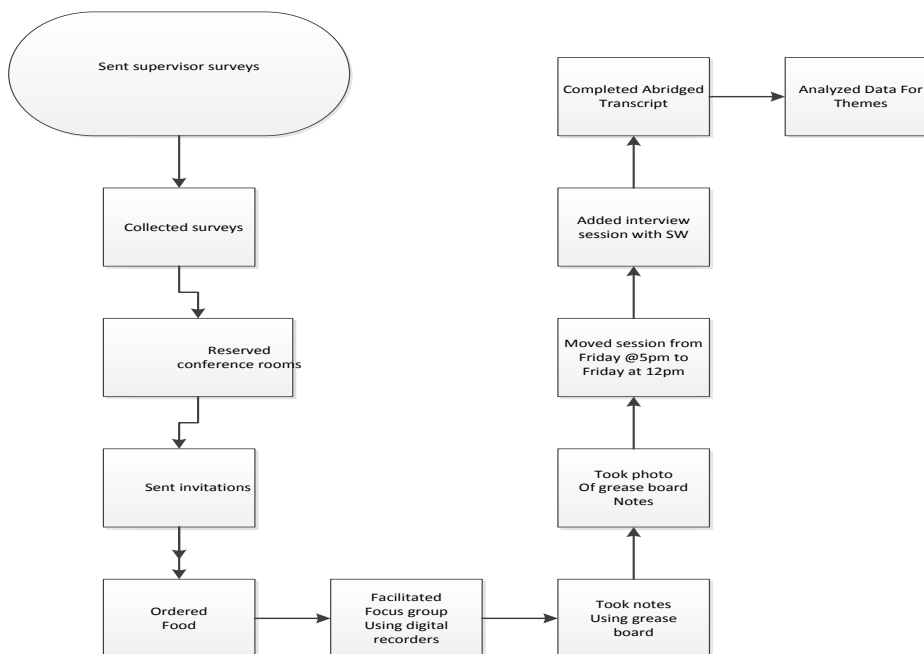


Figure 9. Steps taken to Schedule Focus Groups/Interview

The focus group was designed with care to create a safe space for the participants to express their perceptions about leadership in a “permissive, nonthreatening environment (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 2)”. The duration of each focus group ranged from sixty to ninety minutes. The researcher moderated the focus group using open-ended questions compiled as an interview guide (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 2) which became increasingly more focused as the group progressed. The researcher began with questions regarding the participants’ understanding of leadership and professional development in general, then proceeded to inquire about their thoughts and feelings regarding their experiences of teamwork competency and professional development within PHHS. The task of this researcher was to give close attention to the “feelings, comments and thought processes of the participants as they discussed the issues (Krueger & Casey, p. 2)”.

Each focus group was comprised of two to five PHS employees. The social workers and supervisors were scheduled in separate groups to ensure that participants were comfortable sharing their perceptions among their peers, as opposed to being in a mixed group. The purpose of separating the two groups was to prevent any discomfort due to the “power differential” between the two job classifications (Krueger & Casey, p. 24). A total of four focus groups convened on four separate dates. Two groups were conducted at each building. The focus groups were scheduled in the morning and during the lunch hour (depending on conference room availability) to accommodate the various work schedules of the invitees. The researcher served food trays from Rubio’s restaurant after each session as incentives for participating. The food and gift cards were distributed at the end of each focus group session to avoid distraction and/or early departure from the group.

The participants of each focus groups were asked to sit as close as comfortably possible to accommodate the two digital audio recorders which were placed on the table in front them. Two recorders were used to control for technical malfunction. At the end of each focus group, the digital recorders were locked in the researcher’s home. Once the study was completed, this researcher listened to the recordings and typed a thirty-four-page abridged transcript to analyze the conversations of the focus groups. The abridged transcript differs from a complete transcript in its brevity (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 149). The abridged transcript option is less time consuming, relies on listening to an audio recording of each focus group, and documenting only the relevant and useful portions of the discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 149).

The validity of the study was increased through triangulation and respondent validation (Merriam, p. 214-217). The researcher cross checked the data received in one focus group with the information received in another focus group (triangulation), and also solicited feedback on findings from some of the focus group participants (respondent validation).

Validity was determined through an examination of the focus group procedures to ensure that the results are trustworthy. The researcher pilot tested the focus group questions and inquired with the participants what they needed to feel safe in sharing. The food/gift cards were offered as incentives for participation. The researcher opted out of using a transcription service to review the results for quality assurance purposes. The researcher understands the purpose of the study more thoroughly than would a transcription service and was confident in his ability to develop an abridged transcript. The researcher has experience facilitating small groups and taught a small group facilitation course for a couple of years at Cosumnes River College. The researcher has the education, training, and skills to observe participants as they share and to ask clarifying questions to avoid ambiguity.

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher used open coding to extract reoccurring themes (Merriam, 2009) and organized the data by color correlating each research question by coding. The researcher used a systematic, visual and concrete process (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 152) of analysis. Two paper copies of the focus group transcripts were used; one for reference and one for cutting into individual quotes. Each transcript from each focus

group was printed on different colors of paper with each of each transcript numbered. A colored marking pen was used to identify groups within the social worker supervisor and supervisee focus groups. The transcripts were arranged by the sequence of each respective participant group. A flip chart was used to record each question asked in each focus group. Because the researcher chose an abridged transcript, the process went more smoothly because only comments each transcript contained only the comments relevant to the purpose of the study. Once the responses were arranged on the flip chart the researcher wrote a descriptive summary of the responses of each group to each question considering the following factors: frequency of the response, specificity of each response, emotion of the respondent, extensiveness or how many people made the comment (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 154). Once the descriptive summary was completed, recurring themes pervasive to all or most of the questions were sought and explained in Chapter Four this study.

### **Protection of Participants**

Social worker supervisors and their supervisees were invited to participate in the study with assurance that their participation was strictly voluntary and that there were no repercussions for declining to participate. Participants were instructed to refrain from using any social worker or supervisor's name during the discussions of each focus group. Additionally, all participants were instructed they can withdraw from the study at any time, without consequences. A sign-in sheet was used to document which social workers and supervisors participated in which focus group. The abridged transcript is kept on a password protected computer. The researcher keeps the digital recording and sign-in

sheets in a locked and secure place in his home, and will destroy it once the dissertation has been approved. The digital recording will be erased, the paper abridged transcript and the sign-in sheets will be shredded, and the computer file will be deleted after this study has been approved.

### **Summary**

This chapter restated the purpose of this study and presented the research questions. It explained how the researcher would design an approach to learn if the supervisors self-report that their experience of teamwork and professional development is related to the PHHS PD curriculum. The participants were social workers and social worker supervisors in a local public human services agency. They were invited to attend focus groups to answer open ended questions regarding their experiences of teamwork and professional development. The researcher was solely responsible for the facilitation of the focus group and interview, transcribing of the recorded sessions, and analyzing the data.

## Chapter 4

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### **Overview**

The purpose of the study was twofold: a) to understand learning transfer relative to teamwork competency among supervisors who have participated in a professional development program (PD); and b) to evaluate the relationship between the professional development curriculum and supervisors' decision making. The goal of the project was to understand how learning transfer influences supervisor leadership in their daily duties. The aim of the literature review was to focus the reader on how the phenomenon of learning transfer in a public human services agency is relative to the issues of teamwork competency and professional development among supervisors. The researcher sought to understand if and how the teamwork and professional development experiences of the supervisors and their direct reports are informed by the organizational culture. This chapter includes the analysis of the qualitative data. The qualitative method addresses Research Question 1: *What is the role of the supervisor in advancing the practices of teamwork and professional development*; Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between the organizational culture and curriculum?*

The phenomenon of learning transfer was examined through the lenses of Situated Learning and Communities of Practice, and also Situational Leadership model. The most important aspects of the theoretical concepts are a) learning happens through participation in the learning process of any given context where the learning is applied (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and b), organizational outcomes are based more on leader



decisions than policies and procedures (Hersey, Blanchard & Natemeyer, 1979). Learning understood in this framework helps to emphasize the importance of organizational culture. The successful public agencies are said to be “those which can routinely create new knowledge, disperse it throughout the organization, and incorporate it in new practices and services. These successful organizations are called learning organizations: daily activities are viewed as learning and growth opportunities for continual improvement (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 4.” Teamwork competency therefore, is the social phenomenon that can be tested through examination of the relationship between leadership, professional development (PD), curriculum and learning. The purpose of this study was achieved by exploring the experiences social workers and their supervisors expressed with regards to teamwork and professional development. The exploration of teamwork and professional development experiences was intended to reveal relevant information about the organizational culture. The study sought to understand how the organization’s culture relates to the development of its supervisors and social workers. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis for the two research questions.

### **Focus Groups/Interview**

The data included thirteen open-ended questions administered in two focus groups for supervisors, eleven open-ended questions administered in two focus groups for social workers, and eleven open-ended questions administered in one interview for a social worker. All of the focus groups and one interview were audio recorded and transcribed

using Microsoft Word documents and Olympus digital recorder. The data was analyzed using the coding process and read multiple times.

### **Study Participants**

The sample consisted of thirteen participants; five supervisors and eight social workers. Seven of the participants are female and six are male.

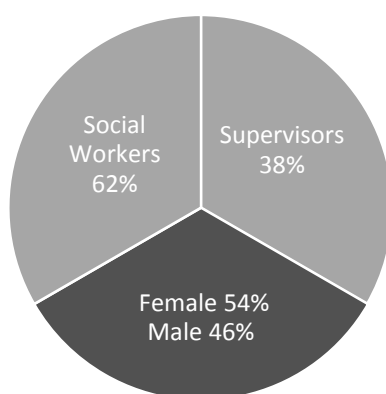


Figure 10. Study Participants' Descriptive Statistics

The ethnicity of each participant has been withheld and their gender is not attributed to their job classification to ensure identity protection. None of the responses to the focus group or interview questions are attributed to any of the participants. All of the participants have held their current job classification for more than one year.

Participants consisted of PHHS supervisors and their direct reports (social workers) assigned to the PHHS division that serves disabled and senior consumers. The supervisors were asked to complete a survey regarding their participation in any of three

specific leadership professional development trainings that were offered to the PHHS supervisors prior to January 2017. The survey was emailed to all of the supervisors in the division that serves the disabled and senior population, using the agency's email server. Six supervisors responded and attended the focus groups. Of those six, only two stated they had attended one of the three identified leadership courses, none could recall neither the learning objectives of the courses, or any of the content.

Supervisors Surveyed N = 22	Respondents / Participants N = 6	Percentage of Course Recall 0 %
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Table: 9

#### Supervisors Surveyed for Prior Leadership Course Participation

The researcher invited supervisors and social workers to participate in focus groups and were asked to answer a series of open-ended questions regarding professional development and teamwork. Separate focus groups were scheduled for supervisors and social workers with the intent of having eight to ten participants each. The supervisors and social workers were each asked eleven identical open-ended questions, with two additional open-ended questions posed strictly to the supervisors. Six supervisors and eight social workers participated. All of the participants have held their current positions within PHSS for at least one year. Each focus group lasted approximately sixty minutes. The focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. The researcher chose to create an abridged transcript. The transcript data consisted of thirty-six pages and thirteen thousand words. This researcher read the data multiple times and used open coding to

digitally analyze the data. Microsoft Word's Track Changes Add Comment feature was used in conjunction with digital hi-lighting and Find (Control F) features to discover the emerging categories.

Table 10:

Supervisors Invited to Participate

Supervisors Invited N = 22	Social Workers Invited N = 98
Supervisors Participated N = 6	Social workers Participated N = 8

This study included two Qualitative research questions:

1. *What is the role of the supervisor in advancing the practices of teamwork and professional development?*
2. *What is the relationship between the organizational culture and curriculum?*

### **Discussion of Findings**

It is helpful here to explain the rationale used to draft the research questions. The topic of professional development within a public agency crystalized for this researcher while enrolled in the CSUS Curriculum and Instruction Issues for Educational Leaders (EDD 610) course taught by Dr. Porfirio Loeza in July 2015. Portions of this chapter were first introduced by the researcher in that course as a class assignment. The researcher realized through the completion of the EDD 610 course requirement (a professional development assessment and plan) how he can immediately make a significant and lasting difference in the lives of the social workers and supervisors at PHHS.

The researcher considers the role of the supervisor to be the most vital role in the PHHS organization not only because the supervisors hold the power and authority to affect the organizational culture, but also without effective supervision, the likelihood of effective teamwork diminishes (Bolman & Deal, 2003). The researcher is biased towards the role of supervisor given his previous classification and positive experiences in that

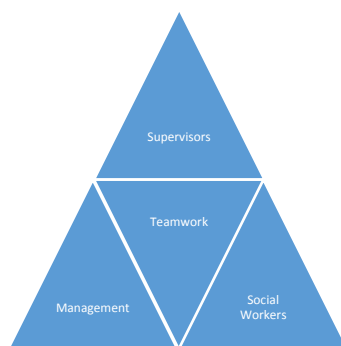


Figure 11. PHHS Organizational Culture Components

role. The researcher's bias is understood through the lenses of the study participants, the literature review, and his experiences within the PHHS culture. The researcher mitigated his bias by allowing the data to tell the story of the participants experience with teamwork and professional development. The researcher intentionally refrained from differentiating supervisors as front-line, middle and top level (Austin, 1981; Hasenfeld, 1983; Kadushin, 1976), but rather includes all individuals who are assigned direct reports. While the project focused on front-line supervisors and their direct reports for the purposes of the focus group participation, this worker does not diminish the importance of front-line supervision from top level management. Research Question One is seeking to understand the role of advancing professional development and teamwork for all

PHHS employees, not just front-line supervisors, who are assigned direct reports. Due to the time limitations for this project, only front-line social work supervisors and their direct reports were invited to participate in the focus study. The primary distinction between front-line supervisor and the other levels of supervision is the scope of responsibility versus performance of a competency (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 137). For this researcher, the role of any supervisor for advancing the practices of teamwork and professional development is the same for all supervisors, irrespective of the level of supervision.

The impetus for Research Question Two is the researcher's commitment to lifelong learning. Generally, organizational cultures teach employees how to cooperate with one another (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 14). Organizational cultures characterized as learning cultures invite and reward expressions of dissent and challenge (ibid.). Learning cultures understand what is known about the organization and courageously explore what is not known for the purposes of building upon what has preceded the current culture (ibid). "The goal in building a culture of learning is to redesign work processes to maximize knowledge sharing and facilitate peer consultation processes (ibid)". This researcher has experienced learning cultures in various organizational settings but never had the opportunity to study them. Research Question two was drafted in response to the researcher's reflection on the potential transformation that can occur within the PHHS agency through the conscious promotion of a learning culture.

Four themes emerged from the analysis: precedent, initiative, opportunity and reward. References to the four themes from this point will be characterized as findings.



Figure 12. Findings Categories

This researcher linked the findings relative to *precedent* and *opportunity* with Research Question One and the findings relative to *initiative* and *reward* with Research Question Two.

Table 11:

Findings Linked to Theoretical Framework

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Theoretical Framework</b>
Precedent (RQ1) Role of the Supervisor	Situational Leadership Model (Decision-making versus policies/procedures)
Opportunity (RQ2) Culture and Curriculum	Situational Leadership Model (Decision-making versus policies/procedures)
Initiative (RQ1) Role of the Supervisor	Situated Learning Theory (Learning through participation)
Reward (RQ2) Culture and Curriculum	Situated Learning Theory (Learning through participation)

The analysis of the findings entailed repeated reading of the abridged transcript for all four focus groups and one interview. Eventually, the researcher was able to

categorize the responses using a coding system which linked responses within each focus group and one interview (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The goal of the coding system was to methodically identify the participant responses which most closely answer the two research questions. Those linkages are indicated in Table 4.5 as the keywords or phrases that most frequently occurred in the participants' responses and led to the four categories of findings.

Table 12:

#### Frequencies of Keywords and Phrases

Responses that most closely answered research questions the most often	Frequency	Focus Group 1 (SW's)	Focus Group 2 (Supes)	Focus Group 3 (Supes)	Focus Group 4 (SW's)	Interview (SW)	Theme Correlate	Most Frequent Responder
don't know about PD	24	5	9	4	4	1	Initiative	Supervisors (13)
don't talk about TW or PD	3		2	1			Initiative	Supervisors (3)
collaborate	5		3	2			Initiative	Supervisors (5)
Academy	5		2	5			Opportunity	Supervisors (7)
applicable training	4	1	1			2	Opportunity	SWs (3)
formal / informal learning	20	2	5	7	4	2	Opportunity	Supervisors (12)
opportunity	11	5	3	1	1		Opportunity	SWs (6)
learning	20	3	2	6	7	2	Opportunity	SWs (12)
teaching	23	5	9	2	6	1	Opportunity	SWs (12)
access to information	2	1	1				Precedent	n/a
access to supervisor	2				2		Precedent	SWs (2)
announce training	9	1	2	5	1		Precedent	Supervisors (7)
communication from management	26	7	7	2	6	3	Precedent	SWs (16)
experience of TW or PD	12		3	1	4	4	Precedent	SWs (8)
priority of TW and PD	23	6	7	7	2	1	Precedent	Supervisors (14)
supervisor	30	5	6	11	8		Precedent	Supervisors (17)
manager	26	3	7	1	8	7	Precedent	SWs (18)
planner	8	2	2	2			Precedent	Supervisors (4)
specialist	5	2	1	3			Precedent	Supervisors (4)
culture	11	5	3	1	1	1	Reward	SWs (7)
promote	15	8	3	2		2	Reward	SWs (10)

#### Analysis of Frequencies Table

Below are the findings of most interest to the researcher pertain to the most frequent responses of the supervisors and the social workers. The researcher found the amount of overlap between the responses of supervisors and social workers to be most surprising. Some similarity was expected, given the fact that most of the supervisors



promoted from the position of social worker within the division that serves the aged and disabled.

### **Supervisors**

- were not only mentioned most frequently in the participant responses (30 times), but also referenced themselves most often (17 out of 30 responses)
- stated that they don't know about professional development opportunities (13 out of 24 responses), don't talk about professional development or teamwork using those specific terms (3 out of 3 responses), and don't hear or read announcement pertaining to professional development opportunities (7 out of 9 responses)
- acknowledged the formal/informal contexts in which learning can occur (12 out of 20 responses)
- addressed teamwork and professional development as competencies or priorities of management (14 out of 23 responses)
- used the words "collaborate" (5 out of 5 responses)

### **Social Workers**

- used the words "opportunity" (6 out of 11 responses), "learning" (12 out of 20 responses) and "teaching" (12 out of 23 responses)
- referenced management (18 out of 26 responses) or communication from management (16 out of 26 responses)
- *described* their experience of teamwork and professional development (8 out of 12 responses)

- used the words “culture” (7 out of 11 responses) and “promote” (10 out of 15 responses)

### **Analytical Commentary of Frequencies Table**

Supervisors hold the power and authority to affect the organizational culture. Their decisions to actively participate in teamwork and professional development activities influence not only the way they are perceived by others within the organization, but also the set of assumptions they share with the social workers (Austin & Hopkins, 2004). The findings indicate that supervisors mentioned themselves and were mentioned most frequently in the focus groups and interview. The supervisor responses indicate a lack of knowledge about professional development and teamwork activities, but also the lack of use of the terms “teamwork” and “professional development.” Supervisors are contributing to the shared assumptions surrounding teamwork and professional development through their lack of knowledge, and consequently, lack of vocabulary surrounding either. Teamwork and professional development are therefore less likely to be perceived as competencies prioritized by PHHS management unless and until supervisors begin to treat them as competencies. Supervisors understand that competencies can be taught and that learning occurs both formally and informally.

Social workers share the power and authority to affect organizational culture with the supervisors. They also make decisions with regards to their participation in teamwork and professional development as competencies. The distinction between the two roles is that social workers tend to subsume supervisors and managers together as culpable for

what is lacking (professional development and promotional opportunities), while implicitly giving themselves credit for what is working well (culture of teamwork).

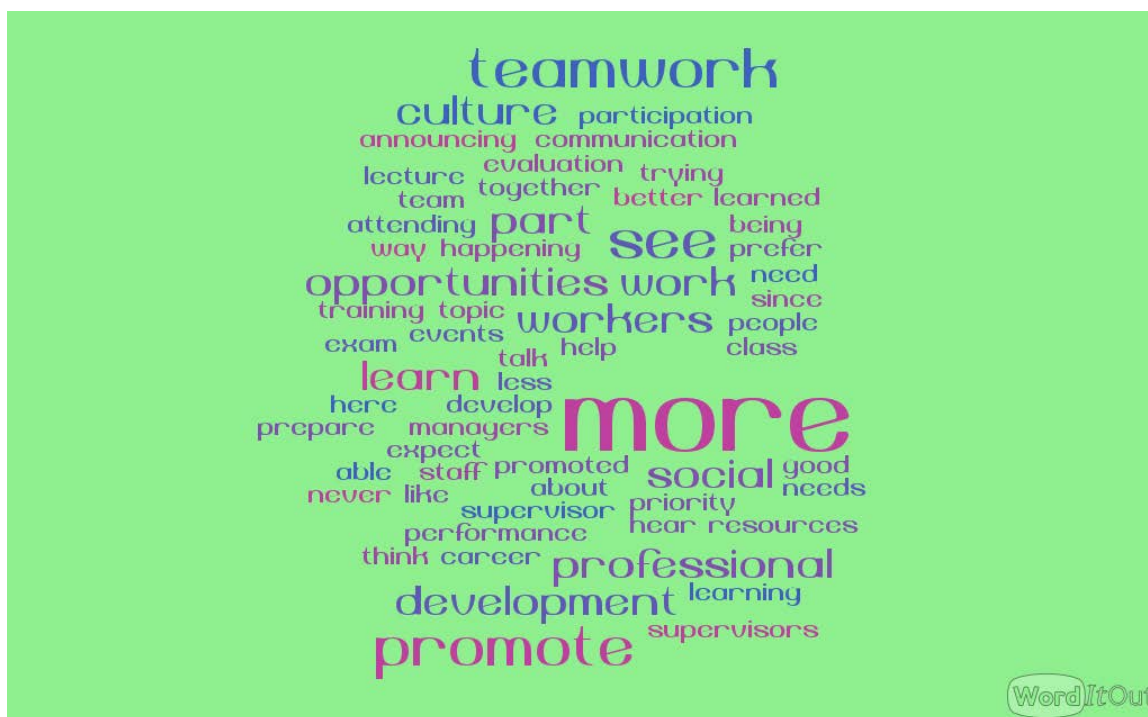


Figure 13. PHHS Findings Word Cloud

Figure 14 offers another way of understanding Table 12. Supervisors and social workers desire more from management than what has historically been offered with regards to teamwork and professional development activities. Participants stated that there needs to be more opportunities announced, and an increase in the ways the announcements are made. Suggestions included more fliers or innovative ways to draw attention to emails which pertain to teamwork and professional development activities.

## Report of the Qualitative Data

### *Qualitative Data Addressing Research Question 1*

#### *Research Question One*

1. *What is the role of the supervisor in advancing the practices of teamwork and professional development?*

#### **RQ1 Finding: Management needs to communicate that teamwork and professional development are a priority**

*Precedent: an act, statement, legal decision, case, etc. that may serve as an example, reason, or justification for a later one. 2. A practice based upon earlier precedents. (Webster's New World College Dictionary, 2005, p. 1131)*

Supervisors play a pivotal role in communicating management's precedence for teamwork and professional development. The findings of Research Question One indicate division supervisors and social workers desire from management regular and varied communication approaches surrounding teamwork and professional development as valued enterprises. Understanding the finding of *precedent* through the lens of Situational Leadership Model, the supervisors and social workers indicate that they have an expectation of management to make the decision to demonstrate through ongoing communication and action that they prioritize teamwork and professional development activities. What this means to the researcher is that supervisors are not making the decision to prioritize teamwork or professional development activities.

Supervisors and social workers are interpreting the absence of formal activities and ongoing verbal discussions about teamwork to be indicative that said topics are not a priority for management. This interpretation constitutes logic fallacy *ad ignorantium*; the

absence of affirmations and the minimal number of trainings on the topic of teamwork does not necessarily mean that management does not consider teamwork to be a preeminent topic of ongoing discussion. The supervisors themselves may not be promoting teamwork using the word and developing particular activities that convey it as a priority. The theme of initiative will be addressed in the discussion of Research Question 2. Supervisors and social workers are taking pride in giving precedence to teamwork as evidenced by the social work culture in which they work. Sample verbal responses relative to teamwork are below in Table 13.

Table 13:

*Sample Comments in Response to Open-ended focus Group and Interview Questions  
Relative to Teamwork*

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Communication is cordial and helpful either in person or over the phone or email.

I think managers expect supervisors to be good team workers.

There are more job classifications working in this building than at the other building so communication is better among everyone.

Positive reinforcement would help if management actually mentioned the names of people who work together on different projects.

What I do with my social workers is I tell them let's work together.

If my supervisor mentioned something about teamwork in my performance evaluation that would motivate me to make sure I am making it a priority with my social workers.

Management could tell us they are glad we are glad we are working together and encourage us to do more and announce more projects.

In team meetings we self-identify as a team.

The context is primarily in program meetings that you hear about teamwork.

**RQ1 Finding: Professional development is not a management priority**

The findings indicate that PHHS management lacks a cohesive, systematic method of communicating professional development as a prioritized, available and accessible opportunity to all supervisors and social workers. “The primary cause of managerial failure is faulty thinking rooted in inadequate ideas (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 21)”. The findings indicate that some supervisors and social workers blame management for not offering professional activities or not adequately communicating their availability. Blaming management for not knowing about professional development opportunities does not solve the problem. Desiring a cohesive, systematic method of communication is a reasonable best practice. Supervisors and social works overwhelmingly blame management for not taking the first step in making a clear and regular statement about the professional development as a priority for the PHHS organization. Sample verbal responses relative to professional development are below in Table 14.

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Table 14

*Sample Comments in Response to Open-ended focus Group and Interview Questions*

*Relative to Professional Development*

I would like to see more professional development opportunities and ways that I can trickle it down to my staff.

A better way of announcing professional development events would help.

If we had supervisor guidelines like we have social worker guidelines it would help us think more about professional development.

Supervisors should ask during our meetings what kinds of things we want to learn to promote.

During our staff meetings supervisors should ask us what are our goals and tell us about training opportunities that are coming up.

Supervisors are supposed to lend you guidance on how to grow and be successful.

A certain program planner will send emails and announce classes and presentations.

Make an announcement, send an email, or hang a flier; do something that lets us know that it is important.

Sometimes we rely too heavily on email. How about putting a flier in the worker's mailbox, because some people are better with paper?

Sometimes there is communication that is shared with the supervisors by management that is not passed on to the social workers.

The supervisors could ask about my career goals in my one-to-one meeting and check on my progress quarterly or annually and make suggestions or give me information about opportunities that might help.

Management needs to disseminate information about trainings better.

Having access to the information that trainings are available would help.

Discussions about opportunities, trainings and information could happen in the program meetings and people in different classifications could make presentations.

**RQ1 Finding: teamwork and professional development is happening formally and informally**

*Opportunity: 1. Combination of circumstances favorable for the purpose; fit time; 2. A good chance or occasion to advance oneself (Webster's New World College Dictionary, p. 1012)*

The findings of Research Question Two indicate that the division supervisors and social workers understand that the activities of teamwork and professional development are occurring both formally and informally. PHHS division of seniors and disabled has undergone a crisis of leadership change with five social workers promoted to supervisor classification, and five managers either promoting or changing positions within the past

year. This crisis can produce opportunities for supervisors and social workers to develop themselves and improve the quality of services the senior and aged division delivers to the community (Austin & Hopkins, 2008). Additionally, the PHHS has offered teleworking as an alternative work schedule. Having social workers physically in the office less frequently presents supervisors with opportunities to become creative in how they provide quality supervision to their staff.

The findings indicate management decision making determines the organizational outcome for opportunities for teamwork training and activities. Understanding this finding through the lens of Situational Leadership Model indicates that supervisors are not viewing daily activities as learning and growth opportunities for continual improvement (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 4). Learning transfer for teamwork competency is not occurring from purposeful decisions and actions of supervisors to identify teamwork as competency per any written policy, procedure, or structure activity. Rather, supervisors and social workers are responding to one another on an individual and at times collective basis and learning from one another in those moments when supervisors are assessing workers' readiness for task completion. Sample verbal responses relative to teamwork are below in Table 15.



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*Table 15: Sample Comments in Response to Open-ended focus Group and Interview*

*Questions Relative to Teamwork*

Teamwork learning activities would be helpful.

I don't know if teamwork learning activities would be helpful because we are already doing it.

I haven't learned teamwork from a class.

Learning from mentors is a way to better understand what others do and how their goals are tied to the organizational goals.

We can follow up with social workers and ask them what they learned from serving as Acting supervisors.

I would hope that my staff promoted because they learned how to do their jobs well.

It's always interesting to learn what the specialized units are doing.

I prefer more participation and less lecture when I am learning.

**RQ1 Finding: Management needs to provide more opportunities for professional development**

The findings indicate that management needs to increase the quantity and quality of professional development opportunities that are accessible to the supervisors and social workers. Management decision making is determining the organizational outcome for professional development opportunities. Research indicates that teamwork training and professional development training opportunities must be made available if they are a "critical learning objective" of the agency (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013, p. 95; Naquin & Holton, 2003, p. 28). The supervisors and social workers expressed the desire for more structured training.

Sample verbal responses relative to professional development opportunity are below in Table 16.

Table 16: *Sample Comments in Response to Open-ended focus Group and Interview*

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*Questions Relative to Professional Development*

There needs to be more opportunities for staff to develop; more resources and more communication.

Retreats, workshops and teambuilding activities are ways to learn our coworkers, interact with one another and make stronger connections.

Professional development is learning skills and how to utilize tools.

Training should help us learn how to develop our professional style.

We used to have professional development classes years ago but nothing recent, prior to the training offered at the end of 2016 and early 2017.

There is no formal class where we learn that management wants us to be competent team players.

It would be helpful if we had training on how to learn our social workers.

I don't like webinars; I learn best in classrooms where there is interaction and activities.

We need to go beyond learning about the population we serve and move to skills-based training that will help us do our current and future jobs.

It's come up in the Academy training that we have an on the job training culture and everyone is receptive to learning that way.

Professional development can be informal through mentors, learning hands on how to do your job.

I like being able to see my social workers promote and learn.

I would like training to learn better engagement techniques with our population.

Some of the trainings have been helpful in the sense of learning about what the county does.

Sometimes the workers will report out about a training they had or what they learned.

I can study the county's preferred supervisor style so that I can better prepare for the exam.

*Summary of the Data Addressing Research Question 1*

Division supervisors and social workers assess that they are competent at teamwork, yet none of them use the word teamwork or discuss the topic with any formality such as a training or in the context of a staff meeting. Division supervisors and social workers desire regular and varied approaches to communication surrounding professional development as a valued enterprise. They want verbal and written affirmations from management that specifically indicate professional development of the social workers and supervisors is a priority for them. The participants conclude that the absence of said affirmations and the minimal number of training opportunities are indicative that management classifies professional development as a nonpriority topic.

*Qualitative Data Addressing Research Question 2*

*Research Question Two*

2. *What is the relationship between the organizational culture and curriculum?*

**RQ2 Finding: Teamwork is learned through the organizational culture**

*Initiative: 1. The action of taking the first step or move; responsibility for beginning or originating. 2 the characteristic of originating new ideas or methods; ability to think and act without being urged; enterprise (Webster's New World College Dictionary, p. 735)*

A rigorous process of cultural examination occurred in 2008 when the PHHS director hired outside consultants to work with management and social workers to examine the organizational culture and work through the challenges that were negatively impacting employee morale. This “think tank” occurred during budget cuts that had resulted in layoffs and demotions for social workers and supervisors. The majority of the

current social workers assigned to senior and disabled services division were working in the same classifications during that crisis. They have shared memory of the crisis, but have not initiated any activities for organizational assessment.

The findings indicate that teamwork was not is not taught in a formal training to supervisors prior to 2017, never offered as a training to social workers, but is learned by both groups through the organizational culture. Understanding the findings through the lens of Situated Learning Theory indicates that supervisors and social workers consider themselves operating within a “culture of social work” which inherently nurtures effective teamwork practices. Both supervisors and social workers concur that they are learning by doing teamwork; that the word *teamwork* is rarely spoken and none can recall the title or content of any formal teamwork or team building activities prior to 2017. Sample verbal responses relative to organizational culture are below in Table 17.

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Table 17: *Sample Comments in Response to Open-ended focus Group and Interview*

*Questions Relative to Organizational Culture*

Some things can be learned in the work setting through our experiences.

Employees are expected to achieve in a culture of positivity and respect.

It’s part of the culture here to work together.

Things run better here because we have a culture of teamwork.

A common theme is how receptive everyone is to our culture of on the job training.

Teamwork is happening as part of our social work culture.

There are so many of us supervisors and only a couple of program managers, so we don't have a lot of interaction with them.

The supervisor says that we work together well as a team, offering to help out the new people; you see a lot of the older people helping out the new people.

You see a lot of teamwork in the department among the social workers.

It's interesting that all of us who came to this session have had positive experiences with teamwork, but there are people not in this room that have not had positive experiences.

It would be nice if the manager let the supervisor know that they are appreciated and that they want to be part of the team and not just issue directives.

Things changed over the years with the management regime changes; they took more feedback from social workers and other workers.

Sometimes supervisors can confer with their peers to see how the other social worker teams are feeling and then the supervisors can mitigate problems.

I don't see teamwork as a priority topic because we have good teamwork in our department and I don't think management sees it as an issue.

Supervisors have the option of delegating to their team members so that you have a whole team of problem solvers rather than just an individual.

### **RQ2 Finding: Professional development is alien to supervisors and social workers**

Supervisors and social workers concur that they learn teamwork competencies and professional development both formally and informally. Research suggests that participants in professional development and teamwork trainings perceive teamwork as a valued work requirement and worthy of effort (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013, p. 89).

Formally, each topic can be taught in classroom settings, team meetings, one-on-one session with supervisors. Informally, teamwork competencies and professional development can be learned through cooperation with peers in one's assigned team as well as with other social workers assigned to other teams. The informal learning occurs

through the supervisors and social worker participation within the social work environment (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Sample verbal responses relative to curriculum are below in Table 18.

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Table 18: *Sample Comments in Response to Open-ended focus Group and Interview*

*Questions Relative to Organizational Curriculum*

I don't hear about professional development.

I don't hear the words *professional development* used.

I don't hear people talk about professional development.

I don't see management really pushing professional development; there's more emphasis on policy and procedures.

My program manager and program planner asked me to do some training, to try something different.

Professional development is not a priority for management otherwise they would talk about it more and offer more trainings.

I feel it should be part of the supervisor's responsibility to inform us about professional development classes.

Supervisors should let us know if we can pick trainings that may be out of town that we can attend and the county pay for.

Supervisors need more training on professional development so that they can foster it with their social workers.

I feel that with the new program planner positions that we have been getting more emails regarding professional development.

It looks like the program planners are scheduling and emailing us information about professional development but it's up to us to make time to attend.

I would like to see the program planners make their professional development emails stand out and grab our attention.

## **RQ2 Finding: Job promotion is the expected reward**

*Reward: 1. something given in return for good, or sometimes evil, or for service or merit; 3. compensation; profit (Webster's New World College Dictionary, p. 1229)*

The qualitative data from the focus group and interview open-ended questions show that the division supervisors and social workers expect to be rewarded for their efforts to develop themselves and others. Reward can come in many forms and not necessarily financial; recognition, self-satisfaction of job well done, etc. The findings of research question two indicate The qualitative data from the focus groups and interview open-ended questions show that the division supervisors and social workers do not consider professional development to be a present tradition within their organization.

The findings indicate that the overwhelming expectation of social workers and supervisors is that job promotion is the outcome for their teamwork and professional development efforts. Sample verbal responses relative to organizational culture are below in Table 19.

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Table 19: *Sample Comments in Response to Open-ended focus Group and Interview*

### *Questions Relative to Organizational Culture*

I want to be viewed as someone who is interested in advancing my career.

Career progress happens over time as the employee comes to understand what they want and what to do to get it.

There must be a better way to track an employee's development, like a career progress chart.

Other employers use the performance evaluation to track the supervisor's effectiveness developing their staff.

I have never had a performance evaluation since I promoted to supervisor.

I don't see is managers mentoring their direct reports, but more supervisors mentoring their peers.

I have only had a few managers tell me what to expect at the next level.

### **RQ2 Finding: PHHS Curriculum as a vehicle for reward**

The findings of research question two indicate that supervisors and social workers are receptive to formal training as a means to grow and promote. Professional development training can benefit both the participants and the agency particularly with regards to self-awareness and commitment to public service (Getha-Taylor & Morse, 2013, p. 87). Essentially, the participants are identifying job promotion as the ultimate outcome to formal training. Absent from the majority of the participant responses is any mention of the reward of accomplishment, or certification or licensure from formal training. Sample verbal responses relative to organizational curriculum are below in Table 20.

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Table 20: *Sample Comments in Response to Open-ended focus Group and Interview Questions Relative to Organizational Curriculum*

The more knowledgeable your staff is, the less stress and more confidence they have.

We want to grow and advance to the next level of our career.

I heard about one class they were teaching people how to progress in their career path but I had a schedule conflict and couldn't attend.

I see attending training as trying to get more out of your career and to promote.



We did the Colors training and the teambuilding training in the past couple of months ago to help us improve and develop.

My other employers talked about the market changing and the need to enhance your skills so that you don't become stagnant.

We need to be taught the skills to become a supervisor, or a manager or a lead.

We need more opportunities to learn how to prepare for an exam and promote.

I want to gain knowledge and information to promote to the next level; that is my incentive.

## **RQ2 Findings Integrated with Literature Review**

Prior to the administration of the focus groups, this researcher understood transfer learning of supervisors in PHHS through the intersectional perspective of Situational Leadership Model. Supervisors have numerous opportunities to interact with their direct reports. Given the level of social worker's readiness to perform various tasks, supervisors assess not only the social worker's readiness, but also the level of their relationship with the social worker. Four categorical task behaviors are associated with level of challenge for each task (coaching, supporting, directing and delegating). Situational Leadership Model provides an image of what occurs between supervisors and direct reports given the complexity of any given task coupled with the level of relationship between the supervisor and the social worker. Situated Learning theory helped this researcher understand that learning occurs with every activity; that learning, context and application occur intertwined in every activity, within and outside of organizational settings. It is in the intersection of Situational Leadership Model and

Situated Learning Theory that teamwork, professional development, culture and curriculum can be understood within the PHHS, as depicted in Figure 14.

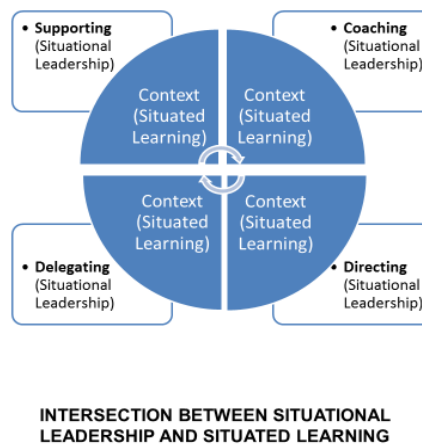


Figure 14. Intersection of Situational Leadership Model and Situated Learning Theory

### **Conclusion**

The findings indicate four areas in need of attention:

- Supervisors and social workers have the perception that PHHS management does not consider professional development priority topics.
- Supervisors and social workers expect management to provide more opportunities for professional development.
- Supervisors and social workers have not been motivated to take the initiative to create their own formal professional development or teamwork activities.

- Supervisors and social workers expect job promotion as a reward.

### **Learning transfer from the organizational culture**

The four areas illuminate the important role the PHHS organizational culture plays in learning transfer. The organizational culture is characterized by core values and a set of underlying assumptions shared between supervisors and social workers. The above section provides examples of the data which support that transfer learning from organizational culture to daily activities is more evident than transfer learning from the professional development curriculum to daily activities.

Rogoff's (1990) work focused on the development of children through participation in their communities. She joined the researchers who build from Vygotsky's *zone of proximal development* which asserts that learning occurs as children engage with peers and adults who are more experienced and can therefore assist children to perform beyond their capabilities had they not so engaged (p. 282). While Vygotsky's work focused on formal academic learning and Rogoff's work focused on learning through participation in one's culture, this researcher is interested in how learning occurs within the PHHS from both formal activities as well as from the organizational culture.

Rogoff's *guided participation* helps to understand how children learn in diverse ways through their participation in cultural communities as they are guided by the values and practices of those communities (2003, p. 284). The findings indicate that supervisors and social workers are learning in a similar fashion as they are guided within the PHHS organizational culture. Rogoff intended the use of the term "guided" to have greater

scope than the engagements between and among supervisor and social workers that involve instruction for completing tasks (ibid). Rather, Rogoff includes the participation of children in the “values, skills and practices of their communities” to explain how human development (ibid). Rogoff’s work is instructive as this study seeks to understand the role of the supervisor in promoting teamwork and professional development as well as the relationship between the organizational culture and curriculum within the PHHS.

Rogoff’s *guided participation* is similar to Lave & Wenger’s (1991) *legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice* in that learning is a process of participatory change (Rogoff, p. 284). The findings indicate that the supervisors and social workers are willing to make the effort to change how they participate in teamwork and professional development activities.

The PHHS organizational culture is fertile for introducing formal trainings and making revisions to the extant professional development curriculum. Supervisors and social workers are learning from the meta curriculum meta curriculum (team meetings, one-on-ones meetings between supervisors and social workers, peer-to-peer encounters, etc.) how to “fit” into the organizational culture as full members. Both supervisors and social workers expect that there is a reward for participating in their own development and the professional development of others linking job promotion to that reward.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Introduction**

The presentation and analysis of data was reported in the preceding chapter. This chapter consists of a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, and conclusions. The implications for practice and recommendations for further research serve to elucidate the ideas that were studied in an effort to further research that focuses on professional development (PD) within public sector human services agencies. Specifically, those sections will serve to support this researcher's efforts within PHHS to design and implement a formalized in-house professional development curriculum. The conclusion serves to synthesize the scope and significance of this study.

#### **Summary of Study**

This chapter begins with a summary of the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework, the research questions, methodology and findings. The study explored the topic of transfer learning within a public human services agency. The purpose of the study was to examine the experience of learning transfer relative to teamwork among supervisors who have completed a professional development program. The study hoped to determine if and to what extent that supervisor decision making is informed by the content of the professional development curriculum. The study found that through its small sample size of supervisors, it was unable to determine if supervisor decision making is informed by professional development curriculum content. Of the twenty-two

supervisors who were invited to participate in the study, six actually participated. Of the six, one stated that they had participated in one of the identified leadership courses. The researcher therefore moved forward with the focus groups and one interview to allow the data to answer the research questions.

Situated Learning Theory and Situational Leadership Model were the lenses through which understanding of transfer learning relative to teamwork and professional development was sought, and the relationship between curriculum and decision-making was evaluated. Situated Learning Theory was selected because of its orientation for communities of practice. Public human services organizations are communities of practice for social workers and management. Situated Learning Theory asserts that learning occurs in the same context the learning is applied (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The three criteria of *learning*, *context*, and *application* must be present for this model. For Lave & Wenger, “learning is viewed as an aspect of all activity... (1991, p. 38)... learning as participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world (ibid., p. 49).”

Situational Leadership Model was selected because of its criteria that assessment of worker readiness is congruent with the PHHS social work culture that relies heavily on the usefulness of assessment as a tool for service delivery. Situational Leadership Model complements the social work culture which “operates in the grey” which is akin to how social workers and their supervisors operate.

Hersey et al. (1979) stated that a leader’s power is associated with their potential to influence followers to comply with their wishes (Hersey et al., 1979, p. 418). Leaders

assess worker readiness for completing tasks, their own level of relationship with the supervisee, and their “possession and use of power (Hersey et al., 1979, p. 418) if they are to understand how they influence others. The process (leadership) of influencing others and the means (power) to gain compliance are inseparable (Hersey et al., 1979, p. 419) and multilinear. Leader behaviors and decisions impact others within the organization.

*Theoretical Framework: Situational Leadership Model*

*Theme: Precedent*

*Precedent: an act, statement, legal decision, case, etc. that may serve as an example, reason, or justification for a later one. 2. A practice based upon earlier precedents. (Webster’s Dictionary, 2005, p. 1131)*

Leadership is a process through which PHHS supervisors influence social workers to comply with the mandates of CDSS in the administration of services to the elderly and disabled. Leadership is also a process the supervisors influence social workers to work as effective team members with the expectation that social workers will develop into through their participation in the organizational culture and curriculum. The role of the supervisor is therefore to ensure effective team work and professional development among their direct reports.

One problem the theme of precedent reveals is that supervisors may not understand that the dual nature (process and power) of their role as organizational leaders. Some supervisors may embrace their power as if it is inherent in the job title, while dismissing or misunderstanding their responsibility to assess their influence on social workers. Supervisors have the process and power to influence teamwork and

professional development just as they have the process and power to influence social worker compliance with CDSS.

*Theoretical Framework: Situational Leadership Model*

*Theme: Opportunity*

*Opportunity: 1. Combination of circumstances favorable for the purpose; fit time; 2. A good chance or occasion to advance oneself (Webster's Dictionary, 2005, p. 1012)*

The findings indicate that PHHS supervisors and social workers learn teamwork and professional development both formally and informally. Leaders need information about how others perceive their power and what those sources are (Hersey, et al., 1979, p. 425). Social workers perceive the power of their supervisors through their supervisor's behaviors towards them, and it is incumbent upon the supervisors to articulate their actual power to others (Hersey et al., 1979, p. 426).

Supervisors and social workers perceive that all social workers and supervisors possess the power to create opportunities for advancing teamwork, given they work in a social work culture. However, the findings indicate that most of the participant supervisors and social workers do not think that management is exercising its power to create professional development opportunities to the best of its ability.

One problem the theme of opportunity reveals is that "truth and reality do not necessarily evoke behavior, but rather it is the follower's perception of the leader's power that influences behavior or induces compliance (Hersey et al., 1979, p. 425). Given the absence of formal teamwork activities and training, and minimal professional development activities prior to 2017, management would do well to assess how their power is perceived and to communicate the power to provide teamwork and professional development activities.



*Theoretical Framework: Situated Learning Theory*

*Theme: Initiative*

*Initiative: 1. The action of taking the first step or move; responsibility for beginning or originating. 2 the characteristic of originating new ideas or methods; ability to think and act without being urged; enterprise (Webster's Dictionary, 2005, p. 735)*

Lave and Wenger's "legitimate peripheral participation" offers a way to consider 'the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice (1991, p. 29)". Newcomers become part of a community of practice through process (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). Learning intention and learning meaning are shaped as the newcomer becomes a full practitioner of knowledgeable skills within the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29).

One problem with the theme of initiative is the arrogation that can occur when supervisors misunderstand or dismiss, or fail to assess the duality of power and influence they possess as organizational leaders. In that instance they will not take the first step in originating new ideas that will nurture a healthy relationship between the organizational culture and curriculum. Furthermore, they may wait for management to take those steps and then criticize those efforts. Worse yet, they will use their power of influence to negatively impact the new supervisors or social workers.

*Theoretical Framework: Situated Learning Theory*

*Theme: Reward*

*Reward: 1. something given in return for good, or sometimes evil, or for service or merit; 3. compensation; profit (Webster's Dictionary, 2005, p. 1229)*

Lave and Wenger posited that empirical studies of apprenticeship narrowly focus on the activity of learning task knowledge and skill for "intrinsic rewards (1991, p. 111)". Yet they argue that it is through the process of becoming part of the community that yields the greater reward (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.111), namely, identity.

The findings indicate that supervisors and social worker participants embrace meritocracy or promotional opportunities as a core value. They expect monetary reward for their participation in in the processes of the PHHS. Unlike non-government agencies, the PHHS is strictly monitored by Civil Service and Equal Employment Opportunity regulations which determine the processes by which employees can promote within the organization. Also, incentives and rewards such financial bonuses or raises cannot be arbitrarily offered to supervisors or social workers for their participation in the organization. There may be and most often is a delayed gratification if supervisors or social workers are seeking monetary reward for hard work.

One problem with the theme of reward is that not all social workers or supervisors get selected for promotion. The findings indicate that there is an implicit expectation that equates increased learning with increased financial compensation. There are other rewards that are valuable and more likely than promotion such as experiencing the joy of work well done; a positive professional reputation among consumers/colleagues/management; self-confidence and commitment to lifelong learning; personal satisfaction for striving to be the best human services professional one can be; actively participating in the configuration of a learning culture within the PHHS which will ultimately benefit all of the staff and the quality of service to the consumers.

### **Reward of Developing a Learning Culture**

This researcher was motivated to choose the topic of learning transfer and professional development because of his experiences within PHHS, his educational endeavors and poignantly, the way that the four themes emerged at various junctions of

his career. Particularly in the roles of program manager for a nonprofit social services organization, as supervisor for PHHS and currently as program planner for PHHS.

Austin et al. (2002) provided a triangular framework for Menefee and Thompson's (Menefee, 1998, 2000; Menefee & Thompson, 1994) twelve competencies in social work management practice. The traditional three levels of management are top, middle and front-line supervision (Austin, 1981; Hasenfeld, 1983; Kadushin, 1976; Kettner, 2002; cited within Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 137). The three management levels "correspond to strategic, tactical, and operations management, respectively (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 137)". Generally, supervisors lead, interact and analyze (ibid).

*(1) lead by engaging external and internal stakeholders in the process of envisioning the future and aligning the agency or program so that future will be realized; (2) interact with multiple constituencies to inform, motivate, advocate, and guide them in their work toward achieving the goals and objectives of the agency or program; and (3) continuously analyze and manage the current conditions, processes, and structures within the agency or program to maximize effectiveness and efficiency. To fully appreciate how this model applies to the front-line supervisor, it is necessary to set aside traditional hierarchical paradigms that organize management roles and responsibilities by level. (ibid)*

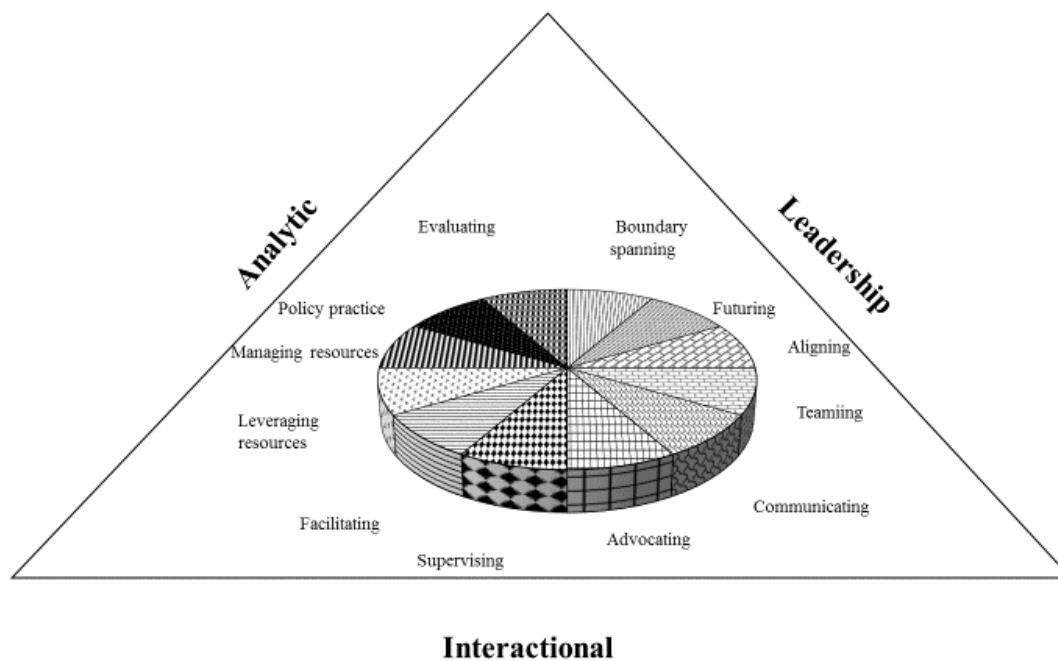


Figure 15. The Triangle of Practice Model (Menefee and Thompson, 1994) found in *Supervision as Collaboration in the Human Services: Building a Learning Culture* (Austin, and Hopkins, 2004), page 139.

“The Austin et al. framework of twelve competencies covers the entire domain of management practices in three logical constructs (Austin & Hopkins, 2004, p. 137). It is comprehensive in explaining the managerial roles of the supervisor. However, it is inadequate for explaining said roles in the context of a learning culture.

Austin & Hopkins et al. did not offer a learning culture model in the 2004 edition of *Supervision as Collaboration in the Human Services*. This researcher offers the Culture of Learning Matrix (Figure 16) to depict not only the intersection of Situational Leadership Model and Situated Learning Theory with the integration of this study’s emerging themes.

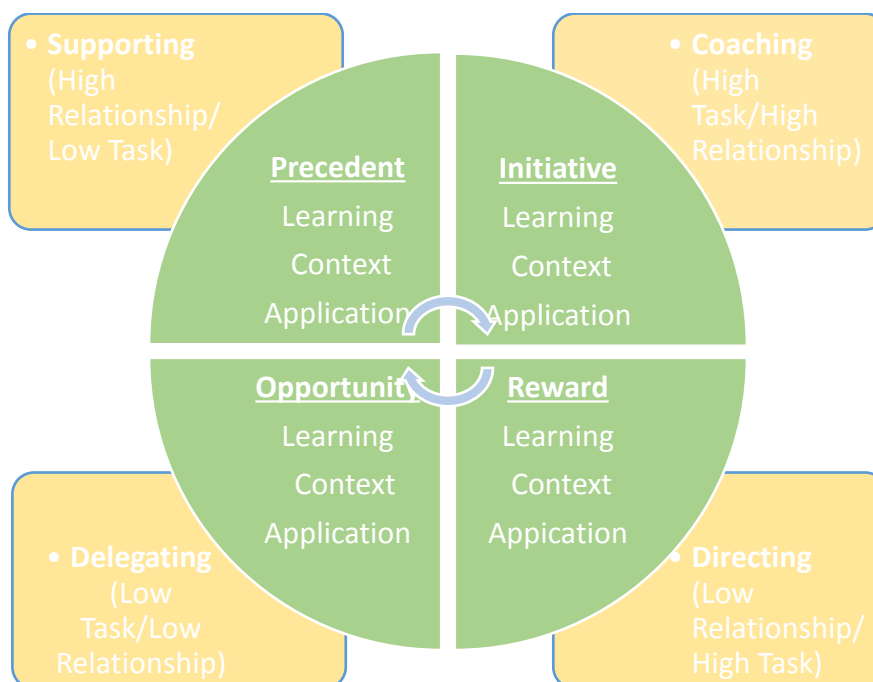
## Culture of Learning Matrix

### Situational Leadership

### Situated Learning

Assess Worker Task Readiness

Assess Worker Task Readiness



Assess Worker Task Readiness

Assess Worker Task Readiness

**\*Matrix – an environment or material in which something develops.**

**\*\*Teamwork and PD develop from a culture of learning**

Figure 16. The Culture of Learning Matrix

This study did not find a relationship between the professional development (PD) curriculum and supervisor decision making. Rather, it found that learning transfer is happening between the supervisors and the organizational culture. The PHHS organizational culture serves as a *situated curriculum* that is teaching supervisors what their role is, and how teamwork competency and professional development fit with their

role. Supervisors have the opportunity to understand how they use their power within the organization, and how others perceive their use of power (Hersey et al., 1979). One significant way to achieve both is to focus on what supervisors learn about their role and how they learn it.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Further study is needed to understand the learning transfer from specific leadership courses and how the course content influences supervisor decision making. This study discovered that learning transfer is happening more from the organizational culture than from structured professional development courses. This finding is due in large part because the supervisors who participated in the study either did not attend any professional development courses prior to the fourth quarter of 2017, or they did not recall any of the course content. Further study would help to identify methods to increase the learning transfer rate.

Additional study is needed to understand the relationship between attendance in the PHHS professional development training and the rate of promotion for training participants. A starting point might be an analysis of the PHHS Workplace Development survey soon to be released to all employees. The survey was designed to inquire about what all county employees think and feel about professional development opportunities.

### **Implications for Practice**

Some of the implications for practice within the PHHS were first submitted by this researcher while enrolled in the CSUS Curriculum and Instruction Issues for Educational Leaders (EDD 610) course in July 2015, taught by Dr. Porfirio Loeza. It was

in his course that the researcher became clear that the topic of professional development would be the topic of his dissertation and he wrote the plan with the intention of using the most salient portions of the plan for this dissertation.

The first implication for practice is that the PHHS curriculum needs to be revised from focus on management to focus on *leadership*. The curriculum can be revised to be more knowledge-centered, learner-centered, assessment-centered and community-centered (Bransford, et al., 2000). This writer asserts that the PHHS curriculum (content and delivery) as well as management's approach to advertising and promoting professional development, are outdated. The PHHS curriculum fails to adequately guide supervisors as adult learners who make sense or meaning out of their social contexts "neither as purely subjective event[s], nor as an objective or mechanistic one, but only when subjectivity and objectivity are united (Freiere, 1970). Anthropologist James Spradley's nine dimensions of social interaction matrix asserts that if any one dimension is changed, the social context is changed. The PHHS curriculum will better serve supervisors and managers if it presents itself as more than written text or PowerPoint presentations which focus on specific content, but rather as a continuing conversation and interaction between the attendees in a manner that acknowledges and celebrates the knowledge and experiences that each person brings to each course.

The PHHS curriculum delivery methodology needs more robust instruction (Zepeda, 2012). It needs to offer a standardized approach to the subject including pre-posttests that capture not only the attendees' knowledge of the subject, but also why they responded to the questions and exercises the way that they did (Zepeda, 2012).

Furthermore, the PHHS curriculum course learning objectives can be revised to include concepts and principles of leadership with exercises and examples which measure the attendees' engagement with said concepts and principles (Zepeda, 2012).

The TPP assigns the primary responsibility of staff development to managers, with the assistance of the Training Officer, and "shared responsibility" to employees (TPP, Section 1). The agency executives, personnel manager and elected officials are charged with the responsibility to encourage "education, training and development" as well as "creating and maintaining a climate conducive to individual and organization development (TPP, Section 2.1)." Section 4 affirms that "the Training Officer will be responsible for *continuing evaluation* of the entire program" and "regularly report results to the elected officials, the agency executive and all agency administrators and department heads.

An introduction of the science of learning and leadership theory into the PHHS curriculum will manifest a closer alignment between its intended curriculum, the delivered curriculum, and the meta curriculum, thereby enhancing the learning experience of both the attendees and the facilitators. This implication for practice is driven by the thesis that *learning is at the core of professional development* (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 14).

Professional development (PD) is a journey, not a destination, due to the need for continuous learning to be ever present with any professional development effort (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 14). This is as true for human services organizations as it is for academic institutions. "[P]rofessional development is learning and learning from one's practices,



from colleagues, and from students is at the center of professional learning (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 14).” Human services organizations can benefit as an organization and a culture through the ongoing development of its employees. (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 14). “Professional development can become the glue to support individual and collective learning; both support [organizational] development (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 14).

### **Standards**

The National Organization for Human Services (NOHS) and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) frame the work of their representative organizations in codes of ethics. Human services codes of ethics are guides that help individuals and organizations to make appropriate decisions in their daily duties ([www.ethics.org](http://www.ethics.org)). Most of the social workers employed by the Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) are familiar with the NASW Code of Ethics. This writer is most familiar with NOHS Ethical Standards for Human Services Professionals. I was first introduced to the NOHS and its Ethical Standards while matriculating at the University of Illinois in the Master of Human Services degree program, with a concentration in Social Services Administration. Standards 24, 31, 36 and 37 inform this writer with regards to the implementation of this professional development plan for the PHHS. These Standards address the responsibilities of human services professionals to employers, to the profession, to self, and to students. The first Standard states that the human services professional has the responsibility to help ensure that the agency maintains its effectiveness and self-assessment. The second Standard states that the human services professional will seek new approaches/techniques that are

evidence based which will ensure effectiveness in their daily duties. The third Standard states that the human services professional commits to lifelong learning to ensure that the clients she/he serves receives the highest quality of service. Finally, the fourth Standard states that “[h]uman services educators develop and implement culturally sensitive knowledge, awareness, and teaching methodologies.” These four Standards are the impetus through which I propose this professional development plan.

This plan is an appeal to DPS’s ethical leadership through the lens of theory. (Nevarez, et al 2013). Axiology is the Greek word for values, although this metatheory is “more concerned with virtues than values (Nevarez, et al).” Values consist of those concepts and characteristics that are important to the organization. (Nevarez, et.al). Virtues are the “highly esteemed” values of an organization (Nevarez, et al.). It is this writer’s aim that PHHS’ ethical leadership demonstrates that its “highly esteemed” values of leadership development and integrity through the implementation of this plan. Integrity’s primary definition is “the quality or state of being complete; unbroken condition; wholeness; unimpaired, perfect condition; soundness (Webster’s New World, 2005).” The implementation of this professional development plan will provide the PHHS curriculum with the cohesion it lacks between its intended, delivered and meta curriculum. What’s at stake without the implementation of this professional development plan (or some other plan) is the integrity of the DPS Training Program generally and the Leadership/Organizational Development Unit specifically.

PHHS curriculum can be revised by introducing pedagogy courses into the curriculum which will help align the intended, delivered and meta curriculum. PHHS

facilitators are generally personnel services staff who are mostly subject matter experts for each course they instruct, and unfortunately novices in adult learning knowledge. Both adult learning knowledge and content knowledge are essential for effective learning. (Bransford, et al, 2000). The personnel services facilitators understand their content in large part because it relates to their daily duties, yet few demonstrate an understanding or skills to facilitate learning within the courses they facilitate. This researcher differentiates the meanings of facilitator, presenter and teacher. Facilitator means one who makes easy or easier; presenter means a person who presents something or someone; a teacher is someone who shows or helps someone to learn how to do something (Webster's, 2005). This writer has experienced far too few teachers in any of the PHHS courses. The curriculum facilitators have the potential of transforming into teachers through the introduction of andragogy courses into the curriculum.

Introduction of andragogy courses will benefit both the facilitators and the attendees. Through pedagogy courses, facilitators will learn how adults learn, how diverse learning styles impact the learning experience, how best to provide an enriching learning experience for the attendees and themselves, how to transform themselves into teachers and most importantly, how to help attendees transform themselves into leaders. Supervisors and managers will greatly benefit from enrollment in the pedagogy courses as it would improve their ability to train direct reports. Moreover, PHHS graduates will teach some of the PHHS courses, thereby bringing their experience to the course content as organizational learners skilled in pedagogy. This change will lead to a richer learning experience for all concerned. The opportunity to teach some of the PHHS courses is an

opportunity for supervisors, managers and PHHS facilitators to actively participate in ongoing self-development. Plainly stated, new promotes will benefit more from learning PHHS course content from a peer who knows how to teach course content, than from a subject matter expert who knows only how to present course content.

Currently, PHHS facilitators generally distribute copies of a PowerPoint presentation, copies of agency policies/procedures, and agency forms during the PHHS courses. Many of the facilitators incorporate dyad work, role play or group exercises into the training. Some provide pre/post tests for their course. However, most fail to utilize effective methodologies for assessing for learning with understanding. Aside from pre/posttests, the facilitators generally are unable to quantify the learning of the attendees.

Another strategy to align the intended with the delivered curriculum is the introduction of the lesson study (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 10). Derived from the Japanese terms *jugyo* (lesson) and *kenkyu* (study), the meaning of the phrase is “research lesson (Zepeda citing Wiburg & Brown, 2006). “The lesson study is a form of job-embedded learning that is grounded in data (Zepeda, Chapter 10).” In essence, teachers are observed by their peers in the classroom and receive feedback. The purpose of the interactions is to for teachers to refine their practice and reflect on their analysis of the lesson (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 10). PHHS training facilitators along with supervisors and managers as facilitators will incorporate this methodology into their practice facilitating PHHS courses.

This researcher has observed co-facilitation in the PHHS courses, team-taught community college human services courses, and understands how lesson *plans* are

essential for providing organized, coherent, and relevant content for a course. The lesson plan is essentially a roadmap for each course. However, the lesson *study* goes beyond a lesson plan and serves as a powerful learning tool for both the facilitator and the attendees because it provides a process through which teachers can think more deeply about their teaching (Zepeda, 2012, Chapter 10).

Introducing leadership theory into the PHHS curriculum will help align the intended, delivered and meta curriculum. Supervisors and managers complete the PHHS courses with virtually no mention of theoretical frameworks in the course content. The intent of the PHHS courses is to prepare competent organizational leaders and it stands to reason that leadership theory ought to be present in the content of each course.

“Leadership theories are concerned with gradations of influence and how such influence is used to reap the most beneficial outcome for the organization (Nevarez-Wood)”. PHHS facilitators will include leadership theory in the class exercises or dyadic discussions. For example, facilitators will instruct attendees to use decision-making tools such as the Nevarez-Wood Leadership Case Study Framework, or self-assessment tools such as the Nevarez-Wood Leadership Inventory. PHHS content can include specific leadership theories (i.e. organizational, bureaucratic, democratic, path-goal, ethical etc.) and facilitators will teach attendees to self-assess for their overall leadership approach as well as identify situation specific approaches to various scenarios (Nevarez-Wood, 2013).

Bransford et al. (2000) assert that applying a science of learning approach to learning environments requires learning environments to be learner-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered (How People Learn). Revising

the PHHS to implement this professional development plan is taking a learning science approach to the development of PHHS agency leaders. Introducing andragogy to the PHHS curriculum creates a learning environment that helps the facilitators to “pay close attention to the knowledge, skills and attitudes learners bring into the classroom; what is taught, why it is taught and what competence or mastery looks like; help students and teachers to monitor their progress and identify problems that need to be remedied; establish a community of learners among the PHHS facilitators (Bransford et al., 2000).”

### **Conclusion**

This study offers recommendations that serve as a professional development plan for the revision of the PHHS curriculum. This study is neither a policy nor a procedure and therefore does not attempt to provide the intricate details of implementation. Provision of such detail is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, this plan offers a blueprint or “big picture” of what professional development will look like as it relates to the current PHHS curriculum. This study will serve as a catalyst to engage in leadership preparation dialogue between the PHHS personnel services and agency supervisors, managers and staff.

The PHHS curriculum is targeted for what Bolman & Deal (2013) call the “professional bureaucracy,” or in sociocultural terms, the professional elite of its staff. Supervisors and managers are expected to ensure not only that the various departments, programs and services are effective and efficient, but also that the employees are supported with the tools needed to perform their daily tasks. Personnel services is expected to prepare and provide supervisors and managers with the tools they need to

perform their tasks. The paradox to the current sequence of training is that only employees holding the classification of supervisor or manager are permitted to enroll in the PHHS courses. The PHHS “leadership preparation” curriculum is offered only after employees promote to leadership positions, and then fails to train them using either learning science or leadership theory.

Contemporary research has produced the science of learning which helps us understand how best to approach the learning process. One of the PHHS’ department directors holds the doctorate of Education and is on record for being an advocate for data-based decision making. An introduction of the science of learning and leadership theory to the PHHS curriculum would be welcomed by at least one director. The recommendations of this paper are congruent with the NOHS Ethical Standards, the County Training Policy/Plan, and are researched based. The recommendations are informed by learning research and leadership theory. What is at issue is the current PHHS curriculum is outdated and is inadequate as a leadership preparation plan. What is at stake is the integrity of the personnel services Training Program and its mission to develop competent leaders who hold the classifications of supervisor.

The lesson learned through this research process is that we cannot understand organizational leadership without understanding organizational culture. Supervisors play a vital role in the PHHS organization because they serve as the transition between the vision of management and the social workers, the people who are expected to implement management’s vision. The supervisors and social workers experience opportunities to learn and lead with each encounter. The number of encounters has been diminished due

to the introduction of teleworking as an alternative work schedule. Management faces the challenge of influencing the organizational culture, or the shared set of assumptions, in a manner that positively impacts



## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

Impacts on Teacher Performance (Zepeda, 2012, p. 53).

<b>Impacts on Teacher Performance</b>	<b>Research</b>
Professional development should provide for different learning styles, include hands-on activities, and allow for individual teacher goals and self-directed activities	Glickman, Gordan, & Ross-Gordon, 2009
Professional growth must meet the needs of the individual teacher as well as the needs of students	Fenwick, 2004
Participation in ongoing professional development increases improved teacher pedagogy	Levin, 2003; Printy & Marks, 2004
Teacher development is the center of professional development	Gordon, 2004
Teachers who participate in professional development related to their content field improve their teaching strategies	Frome, Lasater, & Cooney, 2005; smith, Desimone, & Ueno, 2005
Learning that is job-embedded at the site, ongoing, and involves group and peer participation is more effective than professional development that is held offsite	Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001
The longer the duration of professional development activities in terms of time and contact hours increases the effectiveness of the activity in terms of teacher learning	Garet et al., 2001
In schools in which the entire staff	Murphy & Lick, 2004; Printy &

engages in professional development and then focuses collaboration on school improvement, the success rate is higher	Marks, 2004
Collaboration at the school site allows teachers to problem solve among themselves	Randi & Zeichner, 2004
Teacher learning is more effective when professional development activities are learning-centered, knowledge-centered, assessment-centered, and community-centered	Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999
Professional development that supports learning communities has the potential to meet teacher needs	Bransford et al., 1999

## APPENDIX B

Intended Learning Outcomes	
Required Courses	
ADA/FEHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the County's obligation to our employees under ADA/FEHA</li> <li>• Gain understanding of the County's ADA/FEHA process</li> </ul>
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the various roles in the discipline process</li> <li>• Understand the importance of corrective action and consistency</li> </ul>
Ergonomics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the meaning of ergonomics</li> <li>• Understand how to conduct an ergonomic evaluation</li> </ul>
FMLA/CFRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain an understanding of the eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Determine when to provide an employee with FMLA/CFRA designation notice</li> </ul>
Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with and ensure the investigation is fair, legal and objective</li> <li>• Learn how to appropriately document the investigation</li> </ul>
Labor Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the Collective Bargaining process and gain insight into the Grievance Process</li> <li>• Identify unfair practices and learn how to avoid them</li> </ul>
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate the financial impact of claims</li> <li>• Awareness of the claim process</li> </ul>
Safety in the Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify your role and responsibilities in providing a safe and healthful work environment</li> <li>• Understand how to implement the County's Injury and Illness Prevention Program(IIPP)</li> </ul>
Unemployment Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain a better understanding of the Unemployment Process</li> <li>• Understand the importance of detailed documentation</li> </ul>
Workers' Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the supervisor's role in the Workers' Compensation process</li> </ul>
Workplace Violence Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize the warning signs of potential violence or threatening behavior</li> <li>• Learn how to investigate, defuse and report threats and/or incidences of violence</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX C

Electives	Intended Outcome
Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Discover the importance of communication</li> <li>b. Understand the impact of non-verbal communication</li> </ul>
Conflict Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identify your primary conflict style</li> <li>b. Learn how to leverage the steps to manage conflict</li> </ul>
Critical Thinking Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Learn about the elements of thinking critically</li> <li>b. Become familiar with problem solving and decision making techniques</li> </ul>
Customer Service for Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Understand how supervisor behaviors shape customer service attitudes of employees</li> <li>b. Determine actions to foster a customer service environment</li> </ul>
Effective Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Understand the concept, skills, and related roles of coaching</li> <li>b. Understand coaching limitations, options and resistance to change</li> </ul>
Employee Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Understand the performance evaluation process</li> <li>b. Master the evaluation preparation and planning process</li> </ul>
Interviewing for the Best Candidate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Develop interview questions based on your understanding of the skills needed to do the job</li> <li>b. Implement the six stages of the interviewing process: from preparation to checking references</li> </ul>
Preventing Communication Breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Improve your interaction with others to reduce conflict and stress</li> <li>b. Enhance your ability to self-manage and to engage in active listening</li> </ul>
Options to Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Understand non-disciplinary options and steps to prevent discipline</li> <li>b. Understand pre-disciplinary action, contract and policy</li> </ul>
Recognizing Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Understand the impact of recognition on individual and organizational performance and success</li> <li>b. Identify what makes recognition effective and meaningful</li> </ul>
Release from Probation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Understand the definition and purpose of probation</li> <li>b. Understand release process best practices</li> </ul>
*Teambuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Explored four stages of team development</li> <li>b. Discussed factors of team conflict</li> <li>c. Reviewed some teambuilding activities and strategies</li> <li>d. Identify participant abilities to operate as team players</li> </ul>

*Leadership and leading The Hiring Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Manage and lead more effectively</li><li>b. Define “leadership”</li><li>c. Describe the different leadership styles</li><li>d. Understand the roles and skills of the leader</li></ul>
*The Effective Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Explore the role of the leader, leadership styles, team building, and motivating employees</li></ul>
The Hiring Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Learn how to develop an effective job duty statement</li><li>b. Identify necessary actions to ensure a compliant recruiting and hiring process</li></ul>

## APPENDIX D

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Written exercises</b>
FMLA/CFRA	Y	Y	Y
Options to Discipline	Y		
Customer Service			Y
Diversity in the Workplace	Y		Y
Effective Coaching			Y
Release From Probation	Y		
The Hiring Process			Y
Performance Evaluation	Y		Y
Recognizing Employees			Y
Unemployment/Risk Management			Y

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