

# Becoming a Manager & Leader in Nonprofit Human Service Organizations:

Different Aspects of Identity Formation

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# Becoming a Manager: Common Challenges

- Managers typically move up through the ranks of human service organizations, and have received little or no management training.
- Ambivalence and tensions associated with being recruited into managerial roles (as opposed to aspiring for advancement - “accidental manager” ):
  - I miss the satisfaction of working with clients and I try to get similar satisfaction from working with staff; but I really identify with our clients.
  - I like the power and authority that comes with my manager role, but I find it difficult to be part of the administrative hierarchy or to actually use my power and authority.
  - One of my biggest challenges is dealing with the negative projections of my staff now that I’m a manager, especially when I’m attempting to set or maintain accountability.

# The culture of human service organizations

- a desire for greater social justice, inclusion, collaboration, democratic decision-making processes (make the world a better place)
- a suspicion of authority and organizational/collective power structures (client groups with whom the prospective leader feels a sense of shared destiny and solidarity)
- a desire to maintain autonomy
- a belief in equality and the desire to reduce role differentiation between different levels of staff (organizational family)
- a preference for facilitation and mentoring rather than for directing
- an assumption and/or fear that the process of leading is, by its nature, directive and authoritarian as modeled by others throughout the participant's career.

# Reviewing the Literature:

## 1. Developing a Sense of Self

- Learning to engage as a self-reflective practitioner (Hill, 2003).
- Acknowledging personal limitations while learning to identify and build on strengths (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2003).
- Accepting loss of former specialist status (Hill, 2003).
- Managing stress and loss of control associated with the transition (Hill, 2003).
- Understanding social and ethical components of management practice (Watson, 2001).

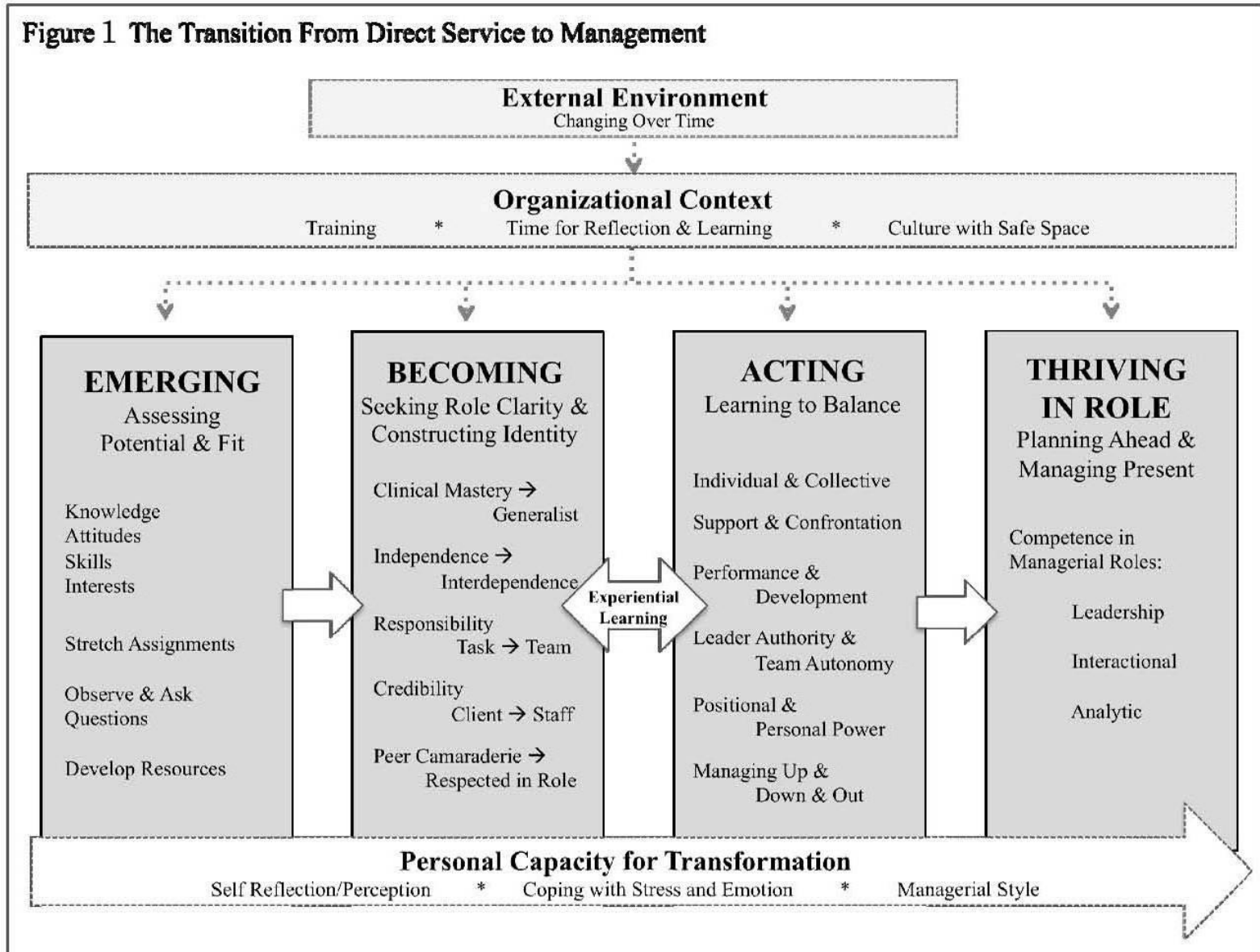
## 2. Role Transition

- Shift from role of specialist to generalist (Hill, 2003).
- Move from independence to organizational interdependence (e.g. reliance on others to get things done (Hill, 2003).
- Assume network building responsibilities (Hill, 2007).
- Develop credibility in managerial role: Differentiate between being *respected* and being *liked* and between *trust* in professional role and fostering *friendship* (Hill, 2003).
- Develop ability to delegate responsibility, authority, and accountability (Fleming, 2008).
- Generate ideas *and* develop the skills to implement those ideas (Watson, 2001).

### 3. Learning How to Learn from Experiences and Training

- On-the-job learning requires active reflection and inquiry: “What did I do?”, “What did I learn?” and “Why did I do it that way?” (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008; Watson, 2001).
- Organizations need to provide prospective managers with (Hill, 2003; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007; Pledger, 2007):
  - An accurate portrayal of management.
  - Resources and support throughout the transition.
  - Opportunities for stretch assignments to develop managerial competence.
  - Opportunities for post-training follow-up that reinforces new learning and allows discussion of challenges that arise from putting training principles into practice.

**Figure 1 The Transition From Direct Service to Management**





# Emerging

- The period in which a specialist is identified as a prospective generalist for a role in management.
- Emerging managers, as well as their supervisors, often use this time to assess the fit between managerial work and the potential manager's knowledge, attitudes, skills, and interests (Gaynor, 2004; Hill, 2003)
- An “emergent manager” is one who is encouraged to:
  - Reflect on past experiences and future goals.
  - Seek stretch assignments.
  - Ask questions and observe to get an accurate picture of managerial work.
  - Actively develop professional and support networks (Watson, 2001; Hill, 2003).



# Becoming

- Moving away from technical or clinical mastery and toward generalist competencies.
- Shifting from the role of specialist or independent practitioner to that of interdependent manager.
- Learning to adjust one's locus of responsibility from individual-level task completion to team-level success.
- Shifting from building credibility primarily with clients to learning how to develop credibility with staff.
- Letting go of the need to be personally liked and moving toward reliance on being respected in role, a shift often associated with the loss of peer camaraderie and a well-defined reference group (Barnes, 1981; Cohen, 2005).

# Acting

- Managing individuals as well as an overall team (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2004; Hill, 2007).
- Offering support while developing an ability to effectively confront problematic behavior.
- Setting high expectations for performance as well as opportunities for growth and development.
- Acknowledging managerial authority while striving to empower team autonomy (Hill, 2003).
- Relying on personal power while recognizing new positional power (Hitt, Black, and Porter, 2005).
- Managing up and down, as well as out (both in the agency and the community) (Hopkins & Austin, 2004).

# Thriving

- Analytic roles:
  - Leveraging and managing resources.
  - Creating and influencing policy.
  - Evaluating outcomes.
- Leadership roles:
  - Boundary spanning.
  - Future planning.
  - Aligning process and structure.
  - Team building and management.
  - Coalition building.
- Interactional roles:
  - Facilitating.
  - Communicating.
  - Advocating.
  - Supervising (Austin & Kruzich, 2004; Menefee & Thompson, 1994).

# Strengthening the Model for Nonprofit Human Services Organizations

- Provide new managers with opportunity to develop a new reference group, providing peer feedback to support learning.
- Recognize situations when specialist capacity remains relevant (e.g. providing clinical supervision).
- Expand training in management skills to include:
  - Strategies for developing leadership styles.
  - Skills needed to assess fit between leadership style and organizational culture and mission.
- Research directions:
  - What managerial leadership experiences are unique to nonprofit human service organizations in contrast to for-profit organizations?
  - What strategies can reduce turnover and burnout at this career stage?
  - Which training models are best suited to address the development of a managerial identity?

# From Managerial Identity Formation to Leadership Identity Formation

# Complexity of leadership identity formation in the nonprofit human service organizations

- the importance of recognizing, and working with, the personal identity characteristics and values that employees bring with them into the organization
- the group/organizational culture that shapes leaders in the human services sector (connections with clients and peers)
- the process of leadership identity formation in human service organizations
- beyond classic skill-sets (managing complexity, managing change, managing human services).

# Challenges faced when assuming leadership roles

- self-concept (how they saw themselves)
- sense of belonging (the stakeholders they identified with, who/what gave them credibility, and how they were seen by others)
- world view (their stories about how the world works, how change is created, and how they want to participate in that process)
- sources of motivation (what made this promotion worthwhile, the job worth doing).



# The dynamics of leadership identity formation within the context of evolving leadership concepts

•Evolving leadership concepts (1930-2010): knowledge/experience, leadership/followership as behaviors, and leadership identity formation defined as:

- becoming comfortable in role is one step in crafting an identity
- ability or “core muscle” that enables *belonging* to groups and *differentiating* oneself from groups
- a lengthy process of exploration between already existing personal values and values in the workplace that either support/challenge internalized personal values

# Making the transition between nonprofit organizational sub-cultures

- Service delivery subculture (strong values of equality, connection, democracy and inclusion, and aims at keeping front line staff as close to clients as possible)
- Administration subculture of nonprofits (comply with government funding requirements, fundraising activities, changing client demographics, and changing public policies -- often found to be suspect by front line staff)
- Leaders are called upon to both bridge and champion the differing values reflected in their organizations (funder accountability and responding to the diverse needs of service providers and users).
- Conflicted by the value clashes found in the two subcultures of human service organizations.
- The competing value systems and structures contributes to one of the most challenging leadership environments in our society.

# Acquiring a level of comfort with the use of authority (Hill, 2003)

- When power and authority are exercised in organizations, they generate both positive and negative projections.
- In order to continue being effective in their roles, leaders must be able to tolerate and carry these projections without becoming isolated or stand-offish on the one hand or overly confident on the other hand
- Both positive and negative projections may make a leader feel separate from the group, thus encountering the old adage 'it is lonely at the top'
- Process of integrating and balancing the competing values found in nonprofit organizations takes time to achieve:

# Key elements of leadership identity formation

-- where *belonging* and *differentiation* can be made visible in both personal and organizational settings –

- Encountering the values of the organizational setting
- Renegotiating “belonging” with client or staff groups that one may be leaving and negotiating entry into new managers/directors teams that one may be joining
- Becoming comfortable in an organizational role through the development of a “provisional self” in which power and authority can be comfortably exercised
- Exhibiting leadership behaviors across personal and professional roles.

# Major steps of leadership identity formation

- Step 1: Managing the competition between personal and organizational value systems
- Step 2: Negotiating a sense of belonging and renegotiating organizational rank (moving up the ladder or getting off of the ladder)
- Step 3: Developing a “provisional self” that enables the exercise of power and authority and the exploration of positive and negative projections.
- Step 4: Integrating leadership identity (including the capacity for belonging and differentiation) across both personal and professional roles.

# The development of future leaders for human service organizations

- The value systems embedded in the personal identities of prospective leaders
- Recognition and understanding of the competing value systems within the human service delivery system and the organizational hierarchy
- The loss of a personal identity centered around “doing good” and “making a difference in the world” that occurs when one steps out of the service delivery system and into the organizational hierarchy
- The difficulty in carrying negative projections from staff in the absence of the recognition and appreciation that comes from working with clients
- The difference between the functional skill sets required to be a manager, and the capacity for reflection required to develop a leadership identity.

# Supports for future human service leaders

- Moving beyond developing new skills to engage with a process of leadership identity formation whereby both personal and professional roles impact their leadership behavior.
- Providing newly-promoted managers with coaching support when experiencing: a) value clashes between service delivery and management sub- systems, b) need to identify both personal and professional relationships that support their values and social change efforts
- Attending experiential learning events that allow them to experiment with the use of power, authority, delegation, decision-making and boundary management
- Engaging new managers in change projects in order to engage their “provisional selves” as a way to help them become comfortable in leadership roles
- Supporting mentoring relationships to help new managers navigate the loneliness as they enter management positions



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**Figure 9.1: Comparing Practice Research with Other Research Frameworks**

<b>Frameworks</b>			
<b>Methods</b>	Community-based Participant Action Research (PAR) -- Address social problem	Program Evaluation (PE) & Intervention Research (IR) -- Outcomes, Outputs, & Return on Investment	<b>Organizationally-based Practice Research (PR) to improve practices and service delivery</b>
<b>Framing &amp; negotiating the development of research questions</b>	Community population or geographic area	Decision-oriented Or Objectives-oriented	<b>Organization’s service providers, service users, managers &amp; policy makers</b>
<b>Identifying sources of literature &amp; practice wisdom to inform research questions</b>	Community members & data- bases	Organizational members & “Theory of Change” documents	<b>Organizational members &amp; documents</b>
<b>Specifying data collection processes</b>	Quantitative & qualitative (borrowed/created) -- Multiple study designs (interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc.)	Quantitative & qualitative (borrowed/created) -- Multiple study designs (RCTs, pre/post, longitudinal, cross-sectional)	<b>Quantitative &amp; qualitative (borrowed/created) -- Multiple study designs (interviews, focus groups, surveys, data-mining, etc.)</b>
<b>Defining data analysis &amp; interpretation processes</b>	Shared analysis & interpretation with various stakeholders	Internal and/or external expert data analysis & interpretation	<b>Shared analysis &amp; interpretation with various stakeholders</b>
<b>Implementing research dissemination processes</b>	Community problem-solving & implementation	Decision-making & funder accountability	<b>Service &amp; practice improvements</b>
<b>Articulating knowledge development processes</b>	Socio-political action & community change	Service redesign & organizational planning	<b>Practice-informed theory &amp; theory-informed practice</b>

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