

Winter 2006

Intersections



Recent Events

["Metro Mixer"](#)

[Exploring Social Change Leadership through Collaborative Ethnography](#)

[Leading Without a Mandate: Strategies for Building Momentum](#)

[Second Terms: Leveraging Victory](#)

[Leadership, Performance, and Social Change](#)

[Leadership Development in the Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina](#)

"Once a constituent becomes a leader with a stake in the organization, it creates a powerful, even life-changing shift."

**- Barbara Lau
LCW Ethnographer**

The Newsletter of the



**Research Center for
Leadership in Action**
NYUWagner

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Welcome

The directors of the Research Center for Leadership in Action introduce the first issue of Intersections and the full range of the Center's work promoting leadership and leadership development.

Voices from the Field

Social change leaders share their experiences about transforming an organization's constituents into dedicated stakeholders.

Try This!

Learn how "stepping back" is a critical step forward towards promoting the leadership of others in your organization.

Methodologies

Learn about collaborative ethnography, one of our cutting-edge research methods.

Recently Published

Read about a recent publication from RCLA on narrative inquiry and the search for connectedness.

New Program!

[NYC Social Justice Fellowship](#)

RCLA Programs

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Resources

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Our Team

RCLA is supported by a [team](#) of full-time and part-time staff, a number of whom are NYU Wagner graduate students:

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Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of *Intersections*. This e-newsletter is designed to inform interested leaders and researchers about the work of the Research Center for Leadership in Action (RCLA), share new ideas, and highlight practical resources that promote high quality leadership and leadership development.

Many of you may know the Center through one of its rich array of [programs and activities](#) carried out by its qualified and diverse [staff](#). Fewer may know about the full range of RCLA's work—its broader focus on translating personally held practitioner experience into shared expertise, and leadership theory into useful instruments. Whether in an RCLA seminar or through a leadership network or formal research project, leaders—supported by forward-thinking researchers—participate in a collegial process that lifts and amplifies their experience into new knowledge and learning. This is then shared more broadly through a variety of [publications](#) (now including this newsletter) and events designed for leaders and researchers alike.

RCLA is committed to creating new and cutting-edge knowledge by solving real leadership problems from the ground up. To learn more about this work and the resources available from the Center, we invite you to visit our Web site at: www.wagner.nyu.edu/leadership.

This first issue of *Intersections* highlights lessons RCLA has culled from our work within the non-profit sector, and particularly through our partnership with the Ford Foundation's Leadership for a Changing World program. These, we believe, are applicable in many contexts, including the public sector. If you have a leadership issue you would like to see addressed or have any other [suggestions](#) for our newsletter, we look forward to hearing from you!

Marian S. Krauskopf, Co-Director

Sonia Ospina, Co-Director

Voices from the Field

Given RCLA's commitment to amplifying the contributions of leaders in the development of new knowledge, each issue of Intersections will feature a brief article highlighting a point of view on a particular leadership issue. Our inaugural "Voices from the Field" looks at cultivating stakeholder leadership.

"They are the co-authors of justice at every level." These are the words of Gustavo Torres, executive director of CASA of Maryland, describing the energizing transformation of the low-wage workers CASA serves into leaders with a stake in CASA. By providing them with the skills and opportunities to advocate for themselves, the workers become true stakeholders.

CASA's work, and the work of many other community organizations encouraging stakeholder leadership, is found in a recent publication from RCLA and the Ford Foundation's [Leadership for a Changing World](#) (LCW) program titled [From Constituents to Stakeholders: Community-Based Approaches to Building Organizational Ownership and Providing Opportunities to Lead](#).

Engaging constituents as stakeholders keeps organizations responsive to community needs, helping to ensure that programs, projects, and policies are relevant and effective. When constituents are invested in an organization's success, they help it to remain vital and successful. As stakeholders, their interests often go beyond what personally affects them. The organization is able to respond to broader community concerns, and there is greater chance for strong program implementation and positive impact.

This constituent to stakeholder transformation is further illustrated by the North

Carolina-based Triangle Residential Options for Substance Abusers (TROSAs), which rebuilds lives while it directly enlists service recipients as stakeholders in the organization's success. "Everyone," says Barbara Lau, an LCW ethnographer who worked with TROSAs, "is responsible and accountable for everyone else in all crucial arenas: work, personal relationships, community relations, and individual healing and growth. Once a constituent becomes a leader with a stake in the organization, it creates a powerful, even life-changing shift."

Through the experience and stories shared by leaders and researchers like Torres and Lau, *Constituents to Stakeholders* highlights 10 strategies for increasing constituent involvement and transforming them into active stakeholders. These include:

- **Start strong.** As you form an organization or begin a new program, engage constituents in the planning, development, and direction of the new effort. This establishes them as stakeholders from the beginning and creates a sustainable base of support.
- **Amplify their voice.** Constituents understand the problems they experience in direct and concrete ways. This experience has significant credibility when addressing outside audiences, particularly policymakers or government officials. Work with constituents so they can provide their own expertise, tell their stories in compelling ways, and frame needed solutions.
- **Make it real.** Stuffing envelopes or making signs may be necessary to make an effort successful, but ensure that constituents have opportunities to do something meaningful within the organization and/or as its representatives.

To learn about the other strategies, please download the publication [here](#).

Try This!

Stepping Back: When One Decides to Open Space

Through a process of cooperative inquiry, a group of Leadership for a Changing World (LCW) and RCLA participants focused on the question, "How can we create the space/opportunities for individuals to recognize themselves as leaders and develop leadership?" The starting point, they discovered, is "stepping back."

The concept is this: leadership is created by moving back from a place where one provides direction to others to a place where one holds back so that others can do the work or hold the public spotlight. It is, however, not about granting space. It is about opening space so that others can claim it. It is also about broadening space, so that others can join in doing the work. Finally, in stepping back, a person can gain perspective on his or her own work.

For example, Lateefah Simon, director of the Center for Young Women's Development in San Francisco and one of the LCW participants, stepped back by taking a sabbatical away from the office. This enabled her staff to "step up" and take on more responsibility for the administration of the Center. It also helped her reframe her leadership as "cultivating" the organization, developing its values and ethics so that staff feel safe and included.

Stepping back is a deliberate process that requires planning, preparation, and support for those who are willing to step up. While risky, it has the potential for enormous positive effects. Done responsibly, it can help build power. To learn more about this exciting aspect of leadership development read the LCW publication, *A Dance That Creates Equals: Unpacking Leadership Development*, available [here](#).

Methodologies

RCLA develops new understanding about leadership practice by facilitating an equal

exchange between practitioners and researchers. Our research methods create frameworks that invite practitioners into deep conversation, "even the playing field" with social scientists, and generate new and useful knowledge.

One of these methodologies is **collaborative ethnography**. Traditional ethnography enables researchers to examine groups—in our case, organizations—through a series of sustained interactions. These produce in-depth and nuanced descriptions of the group's work, norms, and culture. In collaborative ethnography, there is an up-front negotiation about the researcher's role and the organization's expectations. This places the researcher even further "inside" the group, where he or she can not only observe and describe, but invite others into the development of new insights.

On December 9, 2005, more than 40 nonprofit practitioners, students, and scholars gathered with community-based social change leaders and ethnographers from across the nation for "**Exploring Social Change Leadership**," which discussed three dynamic ethnographic collaborations. The Leadership for a Changing World (LCW) Research and Documentation component hosted the event. Professor Sonia Ospina, RCLA co-director, and Amparo Hofmann, RCLA associate director, moderated.

To read about this event and other ethnographies please visit: <http://leadershipforchange.org/insights/research/ethnography.php>.

Recently Published

"Narrative Inquiry and the Search for Connectedness" by Sonia Ospina, RCLA co-director and professor and Jennifer Dodge, research associate.

"Narrative Inquiry and the Search for Connectedness" argues that research itself—traditionally pursued by academics—represents a promising mechanism for linking the worlds of academic researchers and practitioners. Using research to promote connectedness means rethinking the roles that practitioners and academics play in generating knowledge in the field. This article reports on the Leadership for a Changing World (LCW) project on social change leadership, and discusses how insights from the assumptions and practices of narrative inquiry lead to the creation of three different research roles for practitioners: sources of knowledge, producers of knowledge, and active consumers who informed the research process. For a full list of publications, click [here](#).

Ospina, Sonia and Jennifer Dodge. "[Narrative Inquiry and the Search for Connectedness: Practitioners and Academics Developing Public Administration Scholarship](#)," *Public Administration Review*, July/August 2005, Vol 65, No. 4, p. 409.

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The Research Center for Leadership in Action at NYU's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service translates personally held practitioner experience into shared expertise, and leadership theory into useful instruments. Through a variety of programs, seminars, and research, RCLA is committed to creating new and cutting-edge knowledge by addressing real leadership problems...from the ground up.