



USE OF ETHNOGRAPHICAL STUDIES IN CASE TEACHING

Usage Note

The essence of the teaching of cases in schools of public policy and management (as well as other professional schools) is to make issues examined by students the most lively, useful, information-rich, and pointed as possible. The teaching of vibrant and compelling cases guides student examination of management and program options in a way that is fundamentally different from more typical class lectures, readings and discussions.

Cases place students into circumstances that they will face in governmental agencies and non-profit organizations. The aim is to demonstrate the best possible practice in sorting out complex situations, applying analytical frameworks, tackling vexing problems, and seizing upon new opportunities.

Properly utilized, ethnographical studies can provide an important additional tool in classroom case evaluation. They do so by providing additional breadth, depth, and contexts which will expand still further the way the student understands a neighborhood, a culture, an organization, a community, or a community of interests. That deeper comprehension will contribute greatly to the student's insights about an appropriate course of action.

The attached summary outlines nine ethnographies prepared by Leadership for a Changing World Research & Documentation Component at the Research Center for Leadership in Action, housed at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. These materials can be utilized by graduate school faculties in numerous professional schools. In graduate programs of public policy and management, they can be used in courses focused on agency or non-profit management, urban planning, community development, program design, and strategic planning.

This usage note was written by Connie Chaplan and David Harrison of the Electronic Hallway at the Evans School of Public Affairs, housed at the University of Washington. This usage note was written under the supervision of Steven Rathgeb Smith, Faculty Director of the Electronic Hallway at the University of Washington, Evans School of Public Affairs. This document is intended solely as a vehicle for classroom discussion, and is not intended to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of the situation described.

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This teaching resource is made available on the Electronic Hallway thanks to a partnership with the Research Center for Leadership in Action at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service (www.wagner.nyu.edu/leadership) and funding from the Ford Foundation's Leadership for a Changing World Research and Documentation Component (www.leadershipforchange.org).

These Ethnographies Can be Integrated into a Teaching Plan Through Three Strategies:

Stand-Alone Case Studies

Under this teaching strategy, one of the nine ethnographies would itself be the case reading for a class session. It would be used as the central tool in the class to illuminate one of the central elements of the syllabus. Even though the ethnographies do not center upon specific points of conflict as do teaching cases, they are a tool that can help students understand and examine alternative courses of action.

For example, **Piecing Together the Fragments: An Ethnography of Leadership for Social Change in North Central Philadelphia 2004-2005**, provides an excellent tool in classes in which students are trying to grasp fundamental approaches to the highest order of strategic planning within an agency or organization, or neighborhood planning in which a government seeks citizen participation in shaping the future.

Often such classes use such work as **John Bryson's Strategic Planning for Governments and Non-Profit Agencies** to understand the multiple approaches that an agency or organization can use to achieve a higher order of intentionality or strategic alignment.

A central issue in such instruction is how governments and non-profits fully and truly engage a community, thus overcoming distrust and suspicions that community planning and engagement processes are pro forma exercises, and not genuine efforts to get community guidance. A class can be asked to explore the conditions under which community planning is meaningful. Similarly, in class discussions focused on strategic planning internal to an agency or non-profit, classes are often asked to understand the best ways in which inputs can be gained by external stakeholders.

In both such instances, **Piecing Together the Fragments: An Ethnography of Leadership for Social Change in North Central Philadelphia 2004-2005** provides all new ways for students to understand strategic community planning approaches that go far beyond ordinary practices. Teachers can use the ethnography to explore the ways through which planning approaches can generate not only community engagement but community "ownerships." A simple compare and contrast exercise reviewing this approach in Philadelphia in relation to common practices outlined in textbook material would generate rich class discussion.

Use in Conjunction with Leadership Stories

The Electronic Hallway provides five separate usage notes detailing teaching approaches to 33 leadership stories prepared by Leadership for a Changing World Research & Documentation Component at the Research Center for Leadership in Action. These leadership stories are compelling chronicles of commitment and inventiveness, in which organizations take on new challenges and thus change the lives of people. Usage notes

are provided which guide the teacher in contrasting how various leadership challenges were met, centering on such issues as how organizations build internal and external capacity and thus extend their impact; how leaders understand the culture and context in which leadership is exercised; and how developing and more mature organizations “repurpose” themselves.

The leadership stories enable the student to place themselves into a situation where change is demanded, and where the means to secure that change is uncertain. The ethnographies can be assigned in conjunction with one or more leadership stories to allow the teacher and student to go much further in understanding the human societies in which leadership is being exercised. One approach for using a combination of ethnography and leadership story would be to combine two that are unrelated in topic but which would share similar concepts. A different approach would be to use an ethnography that has a corresponding leadership story. The three ethnographies that have corresponding leadership stories are:

1. **Until All of Us Are Home: The Process of Leadership at Project H.O.M.E.,**
2. **Waging Democracy in the Kingdom of Coal: OVEC and the Movement for Social and Environmental Justice in Central Appalachia 2002-2003,**
3. **Each One Teach One: Learning Leadership at TROSA.**

The ethnography provides a more complete context for the decision-making the leadership story anticipates. In the classroom, that context means much more than the likelihood that the involved citizens will support an action that is under consideration. It means helping the student to see how the nature of the society must shape the design of a program or strategy or policy from the outset.

Virtually any of the ethnographies can be used in conjunction with the leadership stories to accomplish these purposes. For classroom discussions of how community change can connect majority and minority communities, a useful ethnography would be **Building Alliances: An Ethnography of Collaboration between Rural Organizing Project (ROP) and CAUSA in Oregon**

Use in Connection with Electronic Hallway Cases

There are many instances where teachers can use these ethnographies as important supplemental materials relating to cases that already are playing a key role in advancing the key learning objectives in their graduate classes.

For instances, classes in public administration, intergovernmental relations, and program design often using **Integrating Housing and Social Services**, a case from Snohomish County, Washington, in which nonprofit and governmental leaders try to figure out how to better connect recipients of housing subsidies to a fuller range of governmental

services. These integrative strategies are associated with better long term outcomes for each of the services provided, including employment and training.

However, this excellent case focuses so much on the dilemma facing the nonprofit and agency manager that it gives less attention to specific characteristics, conditions and needs of the low income community being served. Thus, its utility in the classroom will be increased if it is tied to an ethnography that gives students a better understanding of the community of interest. This can be provided by multiple ethnographies of the nine. A useful ethnography to be read in conjunction with the Electronic Hallway case would be **Until All of Us Are Home: The Process of Leadership at Project H.O.M.E.**

Summaries of the Ethnographies

Aid to Children of Imprisoned Mothers: An Ethnographic Study

Aid to Children of Imprisoned Mothers (AIM)

By Akinyele Umoja, Ethnographer for Leadership for a Changing World , Research Center for Leadership in Action, New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

In the context of the developing generational divide in contemporary African-American social life, this study examines the program Aid to Children of Imprisoned Mothers (AIM) and its successes and challenges in transitioning youth to leadership. This ethnography examines AIM's organizational culture and its ability to transition youth, its staff, volunteers and clients into leadership in partnership with the adult leadership of the program. Other issues, particularly negative social forces that reinforce a cycle of incarceration and poverty and the educational and social economic gap between service providers and clients are also challenges AIM faces.

Building Alliances: An Ethnography of Collaboration between Rural Organizing Project (ROP) and CAUSA in Oregon

By Lynn Stephen, University of Oregon, in collaboration with Jan Lanier Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN); and Ramón Ramírez and Marcy Westerling, Leadership for a Changing World Award Recipients

This ethnography examines the components that allow quality solidarity work to happen between organizations with leadership and constituencies that are primarily people of color and primarily white, respectively. PCUN and ROP of Oregon have developed a working relationship over ten years that has contributed to numerous victories for immigrant and farm worker rights, as well as greater consciousness among white, rural activists around what it means to provide support as anti-racist allies. Because Oregon has a relatively small population (3 million), and progressive organizations tend to know each other, the relationship provides an opportunity to study how such organizations manage power and historic inequalities in a manner suited for success. Key findings include the importance of in-depth and sustained dialogue around the key values of work,

and staff training around the issues involved with connecting to the other organization. The organizations use these techniques build common ground. Hence, collaborative capacity can be mobilized quickly to support each other's actions as needed.

**Each One Teach One: Learning Leadership at TROSA
Triangle Residential Option for Substance Abusers (TROSA)**

By Barbara Lau, Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University

Co-Researchers: Kevin McDonald, Leadership for a Changing World Award Recipients;
Barbara Lau, Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University

Kevin McDonald knows that it will not be possible to replicate TROSA, which uses a social entrepreneurial model to provide services for substance abusers. But he wants to enable others to learn from both his successes and missteps. This ethnography outlines TROSA's unique vision and methods. It explores how the organization practices leadership development as part of everyday life. Kevin believes that this project allowed him to reflect on his organization's growth and maturity and hopes it will be a useful tool for teaching others.

**Leadership Development for Community Action: An Ethnographic Inquiry
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations (NWFCO)**

By Lisa Weinberg, Organizational Consultant Addendum by Meredith Herr and Erica Gabrielle Foldy of Leadership for a Changing World, Research Center for Leadership in Action, New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

Co-researchers: LeeAnn Hall, Leadership for a Changing World Award Recipient, Lisa Weinberg, Organizational Consultant

LeeAnn Hall directs the NWFCO, a collaboration of four state-based community organizations engaged in the fight for social and economic justice. Leadership development is at the heart of the NWFCO mission and central to LeeAnn's own leadership style. Through training and issue-specific campaigns, NWFCO and its affiliated organizations build grassroots capacity to effect social change. The ethnography focuses on the very personal process by which people begin to self-identify and act as leaders. It explores what enables people to envision a different future, both in terms of what they can do and to what ends. The results of this research illuminate what it takes to foster and sustain a sense of efficacy and a commitment to action.

**Líderes Campesinas: Grassroots Gendered Leadership, Community Organizing, and Pedagogies of Empowerment
Organización en California de Líderes Campesinas (OLC)**

By Maylei Blackwell, Professor of Chicana and Chicano Studies, University of California, Los Angeles

Co-Researchers: Mily Treviño Saucedo, Executive Director, Líderes Campesinas; Devra Weber, Professor of History, University of California, Riverside; and Carol Stack, Ph.D., Advisory Committee

The roots of Organización en California de Líderes Campesinas (Líderes Campesinas) are grounded in farm worker women who create a better future themselves and their communities. The organization is based on the idea that farm worker women are leaders that can be empowered to solve the problems of injustice in their own lives and communities. This ethnography addresses three areas of research, including Líderes Campesinas's history; changes in terms of leadership, empowerment and community organization; and documenting the organization's pedagogical model. The ethnography chronicles Latina farm workers in California who have developed programs recognizing campesina expertise, nurturing leadership among campesinas who organize their families, communities, and workplaces.

**Piecing Together the Fragments: An Ethnography of Leadership for Social Change in North Central Philadelphia 2004-2005
The Village of Arts & Humanities (VAH)**

By Mary Hufford, Director of Center for Folklore and Ethnography, University of Pennsylvania

The Village of Arts and Humanities has initiated a collaborative community planning process entitled Shared Prosperity in North Philadelphia. This initiative engages neighborhood residents, business owners, community groups, and other organizations in revitalizing North Central Philadelphia by recognizing and strengthening the communities existing assets and leadership. The Shared Prosperity model radically refigures the expert/client relationship. Professional planners drawn from the University placed their students in the position of having to learn from members of a steering committee drawn from the neighborhood. This ethnography explores the ways in which the resident-driven steering committee built community around the work of mentoring student planners and volunteers, reclaiming and beautifying neighborhood spaces, utilizing volunteers to survey the community, retrieving memories of community elders, and reinhabiting the public space of the streets. In this model, economic revitalization grows out of the revitalized life of the community, which leverages recognition and support from the larger polities of metropolis and state.

Until All of Us Are Home: The Process of Leadership at Project H.O.M.E.

By Kathleen Hall, Associate Professor, University of Pennsylvania

Project H.O.M.E.'s co-founders, S. Mary Scullion and Joan Dawson McConnon together with members of the Project H.O.M.E. community explores the emergence of leadership through struggle in the fight to end homelessness in Philadelphia. It has been within struggles for recovery and family unification, fair housing and equality, human dignity and cohesion in diversity that leaders have arisen and flourished at every level of the organization. This ethnographic study documents the organization's history of leadership through struggle.

**Waging Democracy in the Kingdom of Coal: OVEC and the Movement for Social and Environmental Justice in Central Appalachia
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC)**

By Mary Hufford, Director of Center for Folklore and Ethnography, University of Pennsylvania

Co-Researchers: Janet Fout and Dianne Bady, Leadership for a Changing World Award Recipients

This ethnography explores how Janet Fout, Dianne Bady and their original co-founder Laura Foreman built the OVEC. This grassroots effort in the coalfields of West Virginia focuses on stopping mountaintop removal, a practice in which mine companies literally blow the tops off mountains as a way of getting to the coal inside. This destroys mountains, forests, streams, wildlife habitat and communities. The ethnography also explores how OVEC builds political relationships that are spiritual, communitarian and democratic.

Use of Ethnographical Studies in Case Teaching: Usage Note

About the Research Center for Leadership in Action

As the leadership research and development hub for the field of public service, the Research Center for Leadership in Action fosters leadership that transforms society.

Founded in 2003 at New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, a top-ranked school for public service, the Center's unique approach integrates research with practice, bridges individual pursuits and collective endeavors, and connects local efforts with global trends. RCLA scholars use innovative social science methodologies to address ambitious questions that advance big ideas in leadership.

Public service leaders rely on RCLA to create customized leadership development and capacity-building programs that facilitate critical reflection, peer-to-peer learning and transformation at the individual, organizational and systems levels.

RCLA collaborates with the spectrum of public service organizations, from government agencies to nonprofits and community-based groups across the country and around the world. Partners include more than 700 social change organizations, universities and leadership centers in the United States and abroad, local and state government leaders, and major foundations and corporations including the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, AVINA Foundation, and Accenture. Learn more at <http://www.wagner.nyu.edu/leadership>.

About the Leadership for a Changing World Program

Leadership for a Changing World (LCW) is a signature program of the Ford Foundation designed to recognize, strengthen and support social change leaders and to highlight the importance of community leadership in improving people's lives.

The LCW Research and Documentation Component is housed at the Research Center for Leadership in Action at NYU's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. LCW uses three parallel lines of inquiry ethnography, cooperative inquiry and narrative inquiry – to explore questions related to the work of leadership. RCLA is committed to developing participatory approaches to research and uses dialogue with LCW participants as a core of the research process. While the award portion of the program has concluded, RCLA continues to partner with nonprofit organizations to develop together new understandings of how social change leadership emerges and is sustained.

Learn more about Leadership for a Changing World at <http://www.leadershipforchange.org>, and learn more about the RCLA Social Change Leadership Network at http://wagner.nyu.edu/leadership/our_work/social_change_network.php.

About the Electronic Hallway

The Electronic Hallway at the University of Washington Evans School of Public Affairs is an unparalleled online resource for quality teaching cases and other curriculum materials. University-level faculty and instructors throughout the United States and in many foreign countries use Electronic Hallway materials to create a dynamic and interactive learning environment in courses related to public administration and a variety of policy topics. Learn more at <http://www.hallway.org>.

About the Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington

The Evans School of Public Affairs is the preeminent school of public policy and management in the Northwest, ranked 14th nationally among schools of public affairs by US News & World Report. Our approach draws on the school's many dynamic partnerships with public, nonprofit, and private organizations and our graduates go on to challenging positions as public officials, agency directors, policy analysts and advocates, researchers, and nonprofit leaders and managers.

The Evans School's degree programs include the Master of Public Administration (MPA), Executive MPA, and Ph.D. in Public Policy and Management. Learn more at <http://evans.washington.edu>.