How Do Indiana Women of Achievement Awardees Support Preskill and Brookfield’s Learning as a Way of Leading Framework?

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Abstract
In 2009, Preskill and Brookfield published Learning as a Way of Leading: Lessons from the Struggle for Social Justice that describes nine learning tasks characterizing organic leaders. These include being open to the contributions of others, critical reflection, supporting the growth of others, collective leadership, analyzing experience, questioning, democracy, sustaining hope in the face of struggle, and creating community. This research study connects the life experiences of selected Indiana Women of Achievement awardees to the leadership model but also shares characteristics that do not align with the model. This study highlights issues of how women’s leadership,
social change, and transformation are manifested throughout their life journeys. We present examples of the model through 18 stories: two women for each of the nine characteristics. Other themes also emerged, including strong connections to their families, determination, perseverance, and achievement of goals.

Keywords
transformative learning, adult development, social change

Overview of the Study


In organic leadership, the leader is less concerned with being the progenitor of the branded vision that is announced and imposed from above, and more with helping members of the organization, movement, or community realize what talents, knowledge, and skills they can contribute to a vision they themselves have generated. (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009, p. ix)

These leaders are often humble community members in service roles, such as teachers, artists, judges, advocates, public service employees, medical workers, program administrators, and scientists. They work quietly to support social justice and may not often be formally recognized for their impact and contribution.

Each year, a midsized university in Indiana recognizes those “who enrich the lives of others through outstanding accomplishments in a variety of fields” (Milbourn, 2014, n.p.). These women are selected through a rigorous nomination process to receive an “Indiana Women of Achievement (IWA) Award.” Each of the awardees is committed to mentoring and empowering other women, while improving society through their service. This award, created in 1999, has honored more than 80 women of achievements. According to the nomination website, “In the past, award categories have included leadership in education or research, leadership in the community or university service, leadership within the business community, leadership in advocacy for women, and leadership in women’s health issues” (Milbourn, 2014, n.p.).

The awardees have many characteristics similar to the leadership model. Throughout the text, Preskill and Brookfield (2009) develop a model drawing on theories including “transformational, symbiotic, developmental, servant, and organic leadership” (p. 6). Like transformational leadership espoused by Burns (1978), this leadership supports others by setting a vision together, inspiring participation, and sharing power, as the project is completed with members of the group.
Transformational leaders are facilitators rather than directors, encouraging others to act for the community. They create an environment for change, learning to lead from previous experiences and from others, and encouraging and modeling learning for others (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009).

Preskill and Brookfield (2009) formalize this model, of “learning as a way of leading” through the chapters in their text. The book poses nine learning tasks that characterize organic leaders. These include (1) learning to be open to the contributions of others, (2) learning critical reflection, (3) learning to support the growth of others, (4) learning collective leadership, (5) learning to analyze experience, (6) learning to question, (7) learning democracy, (8) learning to sustain hope in the face of struggle, and (9) learning to create community.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study highlights issues of leadership and social change through the stories of the IWA awardees. In the Preskill and Brookfield (2009) text, they provide examples of famous leaders who fit the nine learning tasks. The purpose of this study is to show that local leaders are able to achieve the leadership tasks, as well. Their life journeys and contributions, in multiple professional disciplines and contexts, exemplify organic and transformational leadership by working with others to achieve collective goals with compassion and accountability.

This study examines the stories of women recognized as IWA through the lens of *Learning as a Way of Leading*, as defined by the nine leadership tasks in the Preskill and Brookfield (2009) text. We demonstrate how this model is reflected through the stories of the women by providing two exemplars for each learning task. We also discuss other qualities that do not align directly with the model.

**Literature Review**

Women seek to make meaning out of their experiences. Whether from microsphere or macrosphere, women will transform their understanding over periods of time. Espino, Vega, Rendón, Ranero, and Muñiz (2012) suggest that when women self-reflect, change occurs in women’s personas. Adapting to change and shifting actions has been a survival strategy throughout time, particularly in the realm of “social and institutional structures” (p. 456). Therein, women are enabled to improve existing conditions and formulate a clearer sense of one’s own ideas.

Taylor, Cranton, and Associates (2012) explain the importance of women establishing relationships and building the conditions that support their “ways of knowing” (p. 11). Transformational learning in women often occurs in environments or positions that question, examine, and revise perceptions, reexamining their frames of reference to approach situations differently or holistically. They are open, capable of change, and reflective of existing beliefs and opinions of themselves and others. When women critically reflect on and view interconnected relationships, they are
more capable of changing opinions and beliefs to guide social action (Regine, 2010). Bridwell (2012) found that spaces where marginalized adults could access critical discourse and self-reflection were limited. Critical self-reflection is a key component of transformative learning, resulting in increased self-advocacy for others.

Mezirow and Associates (2000) discussed the stem of his transformative psychocritical method as both, recognizing habits of the mind and identifying points of reference. Transformation occurs when individuals are challenged by situations or dilemmas, question the origin of their assumptions, attempt to make new meanings by incorporating new learning, act on that new learning, and reintegrate the new meanings into one’s assumptions.

Preskill and Brookfield’s (2009) leadership model aligns closely to the transformational discussions of Mezirow (1991) and Taylor et al. (2012). They claim there is an individualistic ways of knowing versus the assimilation of knowing. These authors explain that when given opportunity, individuals need time to examine preconceived perceptions, inquire about these perceptions, make new meaning, negotiate, and act. Learning then occurs when an alternative perspective arises and the individual questions, “previously held, perhaps uncritically assimilated perspective—rational process” (Taylor et al., 2012, p. 8).

Women’s leadership and learning, while recognized as valuable, is still marginalized, as it pertains to their contributions to social movements and change. In Iron Butterflies: Women Transforming Themselves and the World, Regine (2010) describes women in leadership roles worldwide whose feminine power leads to healing and social transformation. “In a complex environment and an interconnected world, skills associated with women will prove more and more effective and keenly pertinent: their holistic view of the world, their ability to see interconnections among things, their relational intelligence, their tendencies” (p. 15).

**Method**

This qualitative research study used data that the instructor collected from over 40 interviews with women who were honored as an Indiana Woman of Achievement. The 60- to 90-min semistructured interviews were collected in person or by phone. Awardees were asked to share stories of their professional and personal journey and their accomplishments, along with personal characteristics, challenges, successes, mentorship, support for other women, and advice for the next generation. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and shared back to the interviewee for member checking. Then they were posted on a secure, private website. The institutional review board approved the research as exempt, and the women agreed that the data, including their identity, could be used in multiple research projects.

This research team included adult education graduate students who completed a capstone course project related to transformative leaders. The instructor and students worked together to select a diverse sample of 20 interviews from the full data set by
matching the leaders professional background with the students’ experience and interest areas. Each student examined and analyzed three interview transcripts.

The research team collectively created a codebook “to systematically map the informational terrain of the text” (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998, p. 33), using the nine learning tasks described by Preskill and Brookfield (2009) as primary structural codes. MacQueen et al. (1998) describe that “the codebook structure has evolved to include six basic components: the code, a brief definition, a full definition, guidelines for when to use the code, guidelines for when not to use the code, and examples” (p. 31). Our codebook contained the code, a brief definition, a full definition, and examples of what the code looked like in the data set. The students summarized and defined the learning tasks from the textbook to clarify and understand how to connect these codes to stories from the transcripts. The code categories were responsive to the purpose of the research, exhaustive, and mutually exclusive (Merriam, 2009).

Each student identified quotes from each transcript that fit into the structural codes. The data for each woman were organized into MS Excel spreadsheets, with columns for each learning task/structural code, the corresponding quote, its location in the transcript, and a rationale for how the quote connects to the code. The number of times that a specific code was present within the transcript was also tallied.

The spreadsheets were then compiled and reviewed by the entire class to affirm selections and categories for the quotes. As described by MacQueen et al. (1998), the codes “link features in the text to the analyst’s constructs” (p. 33). The students compiled a leadership profile for each woman by counting how often each of these tasks was identified and ranking the strength of each quote. The group compared profiles and agreed on the final analysis. After multiple rounds of review and discussion, the findings that follow are the most illustrative and meaningful examples from each woman.

Findings

Women who have been recognized as IWA awardees exemplify many organic and transformative leadership characteristics, contributing to positive changes in their own disciplines, communities, and beyond. Preskill and Brookfield’s (2009) nine characteristics of learning as a way of leading comingle to describe a leader whose mission is to meet community needs, allow participation, and support the growth of others. The findings are organized by the nine learning tasks that were used as structural codes in organizing the data analysis. A short description of the code and from the Preskill and Brookfield text begins each section. The stories of two awardees emphasizing the learning task are shared. Implications of the learning task on the accomplishments of the women are discussed in the conclusions.

Learning to be open to the contributions of others. Preskill and Brookfield (2009) explain that “Leaders who are open have learned to stop talking and
start listening to what others have to say . . . They allow words, ideas, and actions to flow freely” (p. 21), encouraging others to contribute with enthusiasm. Organic and transformative leadership is relational, collective, and facilitative, producing long-lasting change. It raises leaders to higher levels of motivation and morality and encouraging followers to assume leadership roles (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). The leaders see value in all members, setting aside status and personal opinion. They seek to gain new perspectives and develop a sense of belonging among the group members by participating in interactions and creating opportunities for diverse dialogue.

**Dr. Connie Weaver—Distinction in research and educational leadership.**

Being open to others’ insights, mentoring, and engagement as a team member is essential in the medical and research field. Dr. Weaver recognized and understood the knowledge and power that accrued from an interdisciplinary professional team. She acknowledged, “When working on complex problems, complex solutions are required. I am into big team research building . . . All my research is interdisciplinary and usually inter-institutional.”

She learned to foster collaboration within her research team. When her first National Institutes of Health grant was not funded, she asked a colleague to collaborate.

He said, ‘well let’s just put it in as our project, every experiment, every design question.’ And the score came back 100 points better . . . They had confidence in his name when I was unknown, but it was exactly the same research.

Dr. Weaver then understood that “it is not just the merit of the science, it is about your established credibility as well.” That grant launched her career, and the National Institutes of Health continues to fund her research.

Throughout her career, she realized the value of learning from others. She described, My department head would say, ‘I admire you because you are not afraid to share with people what you don’t know, what you need to learn . . . You learn from others . . . instead of trying to cover what you don’t know. You take risks. You are willing to expose yourself, your weaknesses.’ I am not afraid to show and admit to everyone else my vulnerabilities and weaknesses. I think that makes people feel more comfortable with me as a mentor.

She continues to be a strong leader and researcher. Her department has been the top external grant department per faculty at Purdue University over the past many years.

**Annette Craycraft—Distinction in advocacy for women.** Ms. Craycraft exemplified an open perspective to diverse opinions and new discovery and also new strategies and methods of accomplishing tasks throughout her time in the political arena. She reflected,
I always try to work well, especially with people who didn’t agree with me. I always hear them out, and listen. Sometimes I learn more about issues if I don’t necessarily agree with them, but can understand where they’re coming from.

As the director of the Women’s Commission for the State of Indiana, Ms. Craycraft worked with the general assembly to build a common community with women’s groups because she recognized that “all these people were working in silos. Breast cancer organizations were competing for the same dollars, same recognition, and media time. We were able to bring these groups together monthly to review the project and share resources.” She said, “I think everybody has something to contribute.”

Ms. Craycraft met with women’s groups around the state linking them together. These groups valued her contributions and regularly consulted her on various projects. As she became more autonomous, she was able to maneuver around obstacles, such as budget, status quo expectations, and diverse personalities, and she gained flexibility to move the Women’s Commission forward.

**Learning critical reflection.** Preskill and Brookfield (2009) described critical reflection as a process of reflective practice: judging the strengths and weaknesses of actions to extend democracy and encourage collaboration. Through critical reflection, one examines the status quo along with their own assumptions, encouraging individuals to take risks that may create new opportunities and ideas. Critical reflection provides a tool to recognize the importance of growth for all individuals and to examine their own practice. Preskill and Brookfield explain, “Leaders reflect critically to help build a learning community in which all members feel they are growing as persons and co-creating new knowledge” (p. 42).

**Mary Dollison—Distinction in advocacy for children.** Mrs. Dollison used critical reflection to understand community needs, inviting others to cocreate a shared vision and plan for actions to improve the community through educational programs. Mrs. Dollison recognized that her youth and adult life experiences as an African American served her well as she went on to become a teacher and community builder. Her parents taught her to be respectful and care for others. Through her first job working for a wealthy, single mother, she learned to cook, drive, serve, interact with the well-to-do, and act appropriately in a diverse crowd.

After completing her teaching degree, Mrs. Dollison taught at the only elementary school hiring Black teachers. Supported by her principal, she taught the children thematically through visits to the library and other outings, as she felt learning was directly correlated to experiences. She continually worked with other teachers and parents to discover different ways to reach the children’s learning. She also built community with fellow teachers and parents because to her “it’s about relationships with people.”

From these experiences, she recognized a need for after school and summer programs for African American students in her community and began Motivate our
Minds. Mrs. Dollison developed a curriculum to teach Black history, as she realized that students needed to understand their own history from an African American perspective. “We decided to do Black history because our kids didn’t know [our] history. We would talk about history and do all kinds of activities, then we started doing trips to Black businesses.” She invited local leaders, such as first African American member of the Muncie School Board and the first Black superintendent of Muncie Community Schools, to engage with students during the summer.

Mrs. Dollison explained that in her youth, “We listened and did what we were told. We didn’t question. I don’t think that’s the best way.” As she matured and became a teacher, she used critical reflection to question and change the status quo in her curriculum.

Dr. Angela Barron McBride—Distinction in health education leadership. Dr. McBride chose to pursue academic and leadership opportunities, despite being raised in a time of limited social expectations and traditional gender roles. While she had many opportunities for growth and success in her youth, her graduate degree at Yale was a turning point. She explained:

It was an environment that largely said, “this is Yale, we prepare tomorrow’s leaders. And if you’re here, you’re good.” So the issue isn’t to prove you’re good, really the issue is what are you going to do with your talent? Which is a whole different message, an entirely different message.

Dr. McBride understood that women often ask themselves if they are up for the task. She could now ask her students, “so what are you going to do with your life?” She thrived in the higher education environment, and Yale asked her to stay and teach.

During that time, she reflected on her role as a professional woman with a family. She began reading feminist books by Betty Friedan and Simone Beauvoir, which showed her a more critical perspective. After her second child, she decided to respond to the feminist literature and wrote, The Growth and Development of Mothers. Published in 1973, it was “the first critically well-regarded book about motherhood in light of the women’s movement and received rave reviews in the New York Times.”

In 1974, she moved to Indiana for her husband to take a new position, and she began a doctorate in developmental psychology. She explained, “And that was the dark night of the soul.” She realized she had to reinvent herself. Throughout her career, Dr. McBride sought out new leadership opportunities and academic positions: professor, department chair, dean, author, consultant, and board member. She reflected, “I don’t know that I thought I was a leader but I always had energy and engagement in my environment.”

Learning to support the growth of others. Supporting the growth of others encourages others to contribute as both leaders and followers, strengthening the
community through fostering unseen potential in its citizens. Listening, questioning, and learning the stories of others are critical to its development as well as encouraging goal setting and mentorship. Preskill and Brookfield (2009) believe that “all members of the community [should] become family with everyone else’s story and play an active role in supporting each person’s learning journey” (p. 68).

Bibi Bahrami—Distinction in International humanitarianism. Growing up middle class in Afghanistan, prior to the Soviet invasion, she learned the value of supporting others, as her family provided shelter for nomads and other travelers. When her family was forced to leave their home and flee to a refugee camp, they brought an elderly neighbor with them, who thought of packing food for the trip. Mrs. Bahrami remembered, “Even though it was just dried corn bread, it was so good, it was such a treat during those travels.”

At the camp where they lived for six years, she assisted her father as he attended to the basic medical needs of other refugees. She explained that,

My father was busy. So we had to learn, my sister and I, . . . how to give them shots. We started an IV for them or read the medication labels . . . I had such a thirst because education was rare especially for girls.

This training, along with learning to cook, clean, sew, knit, crochet, and draw for others in the camp, was part of her informal education. While there, she became engaged to a man who came to Indiana to become a doctor. When she joined him in the United States, she sought to complete her education. She explained,

I had a husband who was 24 busy. He didn’t even take a day off for all of these six children I delivered. He was in residency before, and then he started his [medical] practice. He was very busy. Anyway I was studying in the evening, whenever I could. That’s why it took me eight years to even complete my GED.

On September 11, 2001, Mrs. Bahrami gave birth to her sixth child and to her dream of being able to help those in Afghanistan. That year she formed Afghan Women’s And Kids’ Education and Necessities (AWAKEN), providing services to women and girls in Afghanistan through a school and health-care clinic. Creating reciprocal relationships of support and trust, Mrs. Bahrami actively sought support to fund her organization both in the United States and abroad. In the face of generations of war and unspeakable challenges, Mrs. Bahrami insisted, “I’m not going to give up. Whatever it takes.”

Ann Johnson—Distinction in the arts and business. Mrs. Johnson supported others in the United States and abroad, traveling to Third World countries to teach women her paper craft. The American Craft Council described her as a “natural teacher,” as immersing in cultures and taking interest in their crafts. She brought their art to the United States to display in museums or to sell for the women. Locally and globally, she mentored women by demonstrating how their craft was valuable and to be proud.
of their native skills by teaching them to negotiate prices for their craft thereby removing the hierarchy of middlemen.

Early in her career, Mrs. Johnson taught art for Muncie Community Schools, and while there, she developed her craft and began her own business at the trendy F. B. Fogg. She hired and taught local artisans to complete her local and global orders. Now, in her 70s, she teaches at a local university. She enjoys her role of mentorship to young women and artisans, as she once did in Third World countries, fostering growth within values and culture.

Learning collective leadership. Collective leadership challenges traditional roles of leadership and hierarchy by sharing power with others rather than having power over others. Collective leadership recognizes interdependent relationships that function most effectively when all group members are committed to creating and implementing shared visions by subordinating to the group’s goals and interests. Efforts of all members are included, appreciated, and felt, through encouraging innovation and moving the group forward without permission or fear of a watchful authority figure. The key is to learn more than teach, listen more than speak, support more than profess, and focus on the common good rather than on personal agendas (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009).

Sandra Worthen—Distinction in community and university service. Mrs. Worthen came to Muncie as the wife of the university president, using this platform to promote collective leadership through working on boards and serving in organizations such as American Association of University Women (AAUW) and Christian Ministries. She pursued a master’s degree in gerontology so she could “get to know the university on my own terms and enable me to pursue an interest that had blossomed for me.” The connections she made through the Institute of Gerontology helped her to work with others in creating a daycare center for memory-impaired older adults. She also headed a support group for the families involved because her own mother suffered from Alzheimer’s. She looked for program models to fit her goals, since she did not want to “reinvent the wheel.”

Mrs. Worthen approached changes with openness and a positive attitude. “I’m going to love these people and love this place.” She chose work where she could provide the most support and collective leadership for the community. She explained that as “the president’s spouse, you have to be kind and gracious and think, number one, do I really want to do this and, number two, does this really make a difference in the community?”

Dr. Joan Kessner Austin—Distinction in behavioral nursing research. Dr. Austin supported collective leadership as a scientist and medical researcher at Indiana University; collaborating with colleagues to prepare grants, design research protocols, write articles for publication, and lead the Center for Enhancing Quality of Life in Chronic Illness. She explained the sense of “healthy competition” with her colleagues, as they worked together to bring in team members from multiple disciplines, such as
Dr. Austin took on multiple roles as a collective leader. She led her research team and “tried very hard to not be a selfish leader. I felt like I helped them develop international reputations.” She led a community support group for families and realized what she was studying was important to the people in the group. She also worked with the Epilepsy Foundation to interact with other families. “I think that helped me keep my passion by remembering what it was like when I was so lost and had nobody to talk to. A lot of people feel that way when their child is diagnosed with epilepsy.”

**Learning to analyze experience.** Transformative leaders reflect on and analyze their own experiences by asking questions, valuing, and examining experiences in an open, judgment-free environment, which leads to better understanding of self and encourages a productive and satisfying life. Skills to practice for deeper analysis include journaling, self-dialogue, and interrogation of purpose, actions, and achievements (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009).

All of the women analyzed their experiences to better understand and continue their leadership journeys. Many recognized discrimination, institutional and cultural barriers, unspoken social rules, and overt challenges to their success.

**Jean Amman—Distinction in educational leadership and advocacy for women.** Mrs. Amman reflected on and analyzed her own challenges as a teacher and higher education instructor. Words and meanings have always been important to Mrs. Amman as a way to interpret the world.

I will say to a student, ‘What do you mean by that? What do you mean by that word?’ I think that finding the right word is so important. . . . If my students don’t remember me for anything else, I hope they remember that I demanded that they think clearly about the words they are using.

As the assistant to the Provost, she was able to interact with key figures, such as President Jimmy Carter, Maya Angelou, and Betty Friedan. She shared and analyzed these experiences with students, hoping to impact their gender awareness. She explained,

Many young women have no idea what the hidden messages are in society such as women can’t do finance, or can’t make decisions about buildings and property. I am eager to see young women get involved in boards and committees outside their careers. They can bring change, but they have to identify the hidden agendas.

**Michealle Wilson—Distinction in law.** Ms. Wilson was a curious child, seeking to make things fair. She explained, “‘That’s not fair’ . . . always drives me. And it’s dangerous to fight for ‘that’s not fair.’ But it’s the way of it.” Leading the Indiana
Trial Lawyers Association, Ms. Wilson analyzed experiences of the courts, legislature, and coworking attorneys.

Early on, Ms. Wilson developed an attitude of “don’t break the law, change it. And it’s hard. Not everyone knows how to do that.” She has a knack for analyzing situations to accomplish her goals. She realized that being a leader involves risks. “You gotta be willing to fail . . . If you don’t want to take the risk, that’s fine but don’t whine about it.”

With savvy analytical skills, she is very aware that the truth is not found in facts, “We all walk around in the illusion that we deal with facts. When in fact we are all colored by the manner in which we think about things.” By looking from more than one perspective, the underlying opportunities and challenges imbedded in social structures and systems can be discovered and explored.

**Learning to question.** The questions asked by transformative leaders are not those that invite a simple, rote response; rather they are, “more complex how and why questions for which leaders themselves lack ready answers” (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009, p. 127). Questions should evoke reflective thinking, deeper understanding, and lead toward new possibilities. Transformative leaders ask questions, such as “Why are we doing things this way?” “Who benefits?” “How can we do things differently?” and “How can we get there?” Questioning is learning to think differently in order to continue dialogue in regard to values, goals, and actions.

**Lois Rockhill—Distinction in caring for the hungry.** Mrs. Rockhill embraced opportunities to explore her religious beliefs and define her purpose. While searching for purpose in the seminary, she made a decision to pursue feminist studies. “What sparked all that, I don’t know, but my brain and my heart got working. I left my religion, as I had known it, behind.”

Although she stayed passionate and spiritual, she no longer needed the religious conformity of formative years. Mrs. Rockhill explained, “That period of my life that had the most impact [was when] . . . I was involved with a national movement” against nuclear weapons testing. She protested and was arrested and imprisoned for trespassing. After questioning her decisions, she discovered the transformative actions had positive impact on her and her children, who became humanitarian activists.

Her activism continued as the director of Second Harvest Food Bank in East Central Indiana. She educated people about the needs of the community through questioning recipients and policy makers. For example, “We had people write a statement on paper plates, ‘why are you here? What would you like people who are making laws to know about your situation?’” She knew that raising questions and telling stories are ways to make economic and social changes possible.

**Marianne Glick—Distinction in entrepreneurial support for women.** Ms. Glick actively questioned systems of power and examined why men often held more power than women. During her work, she encountered a panel of entrepreneurial women at the
Women’s Business Initiative, which inspired her to question why she was not on this panel. She inquired with the organization, joined, and became the president within 2 years.

In the late 1970s, she joined the board of the United Way as the first female board member. She recognized that her “primary values were helping other women,” and she actively recruited other women to the board. Mrs. Glick modeled leadership and surpassed fundraising expectations for the organization. Her actions of questioning the status quo and creating spaces for women encouraged other women in their pursuits.

**Learning democracy.** Preskill and Brookfield (2009) claim that the democratic system consists of three core elements: engaging in a continuous, widening conversation; organizing social and diverse interpersonal affairs; and arranging economics to remove wealth disparities. Democratic leaders understand dialogue as an important component in transformative leadership. Democracy requires ordinary people to make decisions in the best interest of the majority as opposed to elitists. Learning democracy supports human potential by fostering community well-being. In a democratic society, everyone has a “responsibility to lead and everyone has a right to lead, participate fully, and have an equal opportunity to influence the outcome of deliberations regarding how we are to share resources and ensure all have equal life chances” (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009, p. 150).

**Roni Johnson—Distinction in community leadership.** As the director of the local community foundation, Mrs. Johnson actively redistributed community wealth. She shared the joy of others, working together to build libraries, establishing scholarships, and distributing personal estate funds to provide income to youth agencies, and providing grants to service organizations in the community. Trained as an elementary school teacher, she volunteered at the hospital, soup kitchens, and the symphony, while her children grew up. Through her community building efforts, she assisted in the creation of the local community foundation; in 1992, she became the first executive director. During the first few years, they raised close to a million dollars; today, they have about 45 million in the foundation and make more than 300 awards each year.

**Vi Simpson—Distinction in public advocacy.** Mrs. Simpson served on campaigns, advocated for civil and women’s rights, and actively served in government. In the 1960s, she campaigned for Kennedy and learned that,

> We all owe something back to society. Through politics you have the opportunity to pay back whatever gifts you have been given . . . I knew that everybody still had that responsibility to make society better, to make life better for people. That was a very important part of my life experiences.

As the country debated Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the 1970s, she worked as the media director for the Commission on the Status of Women in California.
Moving to Indiana, she gained a role in the Mayor’s office of Bloomington that led her to elected positions as the county auditor and State Legislature. In 2012, she ran as the democratic candidate for Lieutenant Governor and lost. She established and currently works with “the Democrat Woman’s Political Action Committee in Bloomington” to educate women and foster future leaders for government roles. She explained that research shows a difference between male and female political candidates.

One of the things that has become very obvious is that when a vacancy becomes apparent, an open seat for county council or county commissioner, men assume that they not only can do the job but they assume they are called to do it. Women on the other hand have to be asked.

Learning to sustain hope in the face of struggle. Sustaining critical hope is a distinctive characteristic of transformative leaders. Preskill and Brookfield (2009) distinguish between optimism and hope as well as critical hope from naive hope. Optimism is positive thinking, attitude, or outlook. Critical hope is thoughtfully considered. Naive hope counts on change but does not attend to the challenges, difficulties, or path for change. Critical hope has a foundation in experience, acknowledges the struggle, and moves forward in the face of difficulties. Transformative leaders find evidence of accomplishments and motivation in discovering learning to benefit the community. Critical hope refuses to place limitations on expectations. Naive hope believes change will come without action; transformative leaders understand that without hope change is impossible.

Jane Hardisty—Distinction in natural resources conservation. With a farming background, Ms. Hardisty pursued natural resources in college. It was “a perfect fit because it gave me a good basic foundation for a broad variety of natural resources issues.” In 1974, the field was male dominated and the “personnel guy at the agency in Indianapolis told [her that] they do not hire women in agriculture.” She applied anyway and since the government was expanding diversity of their workforce, four states called to inquire about her. “So he called me and I came down and interviewed with him and told him what I was told. He felt so bad, oh my gosh, he apologized . . . and he hired me on the spot.” She worked in many state positions, before becoming the State Conservationist in Michigan. In 2000, she returned to Indiana as its State Conservationist.

Gaining the trust and respect from both contractors and farmers was a challenge. “It was quite a culture change for farmers, it was a change for society in general to see women jumping out of the government pickup truck and coming to the farm.” When she visited a farm, she made a point to meet the wife. She explained, “Because can you imagine a wife standing at the kitchen window and looking out and her husband is going with some young ‘chick’ getting in a truck and going to the back forty?”

Ms. Hardisty encouraged women to pursue careers and leadership in agriculture and created opportunities for professional networking. She shared, “March is federal women’s history month . . . and I always try to do a luncheon . . . and invite all the
female leaders in agriculture or related jobs.” She believes that “Women have a tremendous amount to offer in professional careers.” She explains that “It is challenging with budget cuts. You have got to be creative, be a change agent no matter what, you have to be able to multi-task.”

Dr. June Payne—Distinction in counseling and health services leadership. Dr. Payne sustained hope in the face of struggle, as one of the first African American students to integrate her local high school in 1961, as an eighth grader. Her teacher in seventh grade emphasized, “if you can do algebra here, you can do algebra in Lane. You can do it wherever you are.” When she was placed in low-level math in the eighth grade at the new school, the teacher recognized her talent and moved her into the appropriate level. She realized she could be a positive representation of African Americans. She explained:

I am expected to go to this school and that is to prove that black people can do these things; to prove we are not educationally inferior ... That is the burden I carried on my back well into my adult years; that somehow I have got to prove my worth ... It transferred to almost everything in my life.

She experienced both racial and socioeconomic discrimination from teachers and students. However, she found hope in a teacher who recognized her ability and strength of her family. She reflected, “We were, I think, set up, or believe to be, educated inferiorly.”

She found her identity at the African American college, where “I got involved in doing things I loved ... But slowly I came out of that shell, got involved in the sorority, just friends in general.” Stokely Carmichael and the Civil Rights Movement also greatly influenced her. “We started talking about black power, we started talking about being adults; not being oppressed.”

She earned degrees in sociology and a PhD in counseling psychology. Dr. Payne spent time in counseling to make sense of her discriminatory experiences and used her personal story to better understand the struggles of the college students.

Learning to create community. Community is a place where individuals can form a group identity and work toward a common goal (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). Building community is the result of dialogue and communication, which are the key components in transformative leadership. The women practiced transformative leadership using intrapersonal and interpersonal communication skills.

Betty Cockrum—Awarded for distinction in public policy leadership. Mrs. Cockrum exemplified community building in government and nonprofit roles. She discovered her “political awakening” in 1968 while in Chicago. She began her career in Bloomington, IN, as an outreach worker for the federally funded Neighborhood Development Program. She was hired by the City Hall Redevelopment Department where she established professional relationships and brought people together to complete projects. In that environment, “I could walk in and say I want something else to do.
I’ve learned this stuff. Let me have something else to do.” When the deputy mayor needed a deputy controller, she was called. These experiences taught her how to create community within political settings.

Mrs. Cockrum soon landed in state government, spending several years with the economic development team connecting state resources and local governments. She had learned to “speak the language” of state, county, and city governments, earning her an appointment as the Commissioner of the Department of Administration. Mrs. Cockrum said that it “was not about accounting, this is business acumen and political savvy and big picture.”

After three decades of serving the state, she received notice that Planned Parenthood of Indiana was seeking a new Chief Executive Officer (CEO). She transferred her skills to advocating for low-income patients. Her lessons of community building are (1) “You need to be in charge of your own life”; (2) “It is more important to be effective than to be right”; and (3) remember, “we’re advocates and are a part of a coalition.”

**Dr. Terry Whitt Bailey—Distinction in community leadership.** Dr. Whitt Bailey understood the need to take risks for community building. At one point, she was involved in a project predominantly with White men and, as an African American woman, asked, “Why was I there?” Her strength was creating community and building bridges between people groups. She was the voice that connected “technology language with normal language.”

Dr. Whitt Bailey practiced community building while working for the mayor in Muncie. She was responsible for coordinating contractors and connecting individuals and groups for projects, such as allocating funds for organizations that benefit low- to moderate-income levels. She connected with people, emotionally and spiritually. She believes strongly in creative expression: the use of words, art, and dance. She realizes that it is not always what you say but how you express yourself.

**Additional findings.** Beyond the Preskill and Brookfield’s nine components, other themes were noted in the women’s interviews. For example, each woman identified strong family connections and values. For example, Roni Johnson’s childhood taught the value of giving back to community. As an adult, she assisted in developing and eventually became the director of the Community Foundation.

Determination and perseverance was evident among each woman. Their hard work and commitment helped them accomplish their goals. At age 15, Terry Whitt Bailey was the only African American in a ballet school. She experienced racial discrimination and did not have the same privileges as the other girls. Betty Cockrum grew up in a small rural community with an alcoholic father who died young, leaving the family with no support and a disabled sister who absorbed their mother’s attention. Instead of paralyzing her, she learned to overcome these obstacles.

Also, each woman was goal oriented. Dr. Joan Kessner Austin used worry as a motivator, understanding that life is a “long distance run. You’ve got to think about
the future and where you are going . . . If you are unhappy, build your [curriculum vitae] (CV).”

They each had a desire to learn and sought to apply that learning beyond what their initial circumstances allowed. Bibi Barahmi spent six years in a refugee camp when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. In her culture, girls were not expected or encouraged to attend school but Bibi decided to study her brothers’ lessons in the evening. When she came to the United States, she completed her General Educational Development (GED) four days after her fourth child was born.

These women portrayed humility toward their work and achievements. The women intentionally provided mentoring and professional opportunities for others, a value in their own development. Intentionally or not, these women paved new pathways for other women to follow. The actions of these revolutionary women aligned with Preskill and Brookfield (2009) by self-reflecting on existing leadership structures or routines, changing or adapting them in order to better service the greater population.

Conclusions and Implications

In this article, we aimed to connect the life experiences of selected Indiana Women of Achievement (IWA) awardees and the Preskill and Brookfield (2009) leadership model. We used leadership stories from the awardees to demonstrate how the nine leadership tasks took shape in their lives and contexts. We also acknowledged other qualities within the awardees that did not align directly with the model. While no model is complete or perfect, we find that much of this model holds true for the women whom we studied. Not every woman exhibits each of the learning tasks posed by Preskill and Brookfield, but they all share some of the characteristics posed.

The awardees exemplified many transformative and leadership skills discussed in Preskill and Brookfield (2009). They placed the needs of others above their own and led alongside as equals. Without diminishing themselves, they fostered growth within others using their skills collectively for community benefit. They found value in everyone’s experiences, advocating for the voice of others.

The women leaders exemplified the ideas of organic intellectuals posited by Gramsci et al. (1971) and transformative learning by Mezirow (1991). Each experienced cultural, social, or political transformations. Through formal and informal educational experiences, these women become agents of change in their communities.

Each [wo]man, finally, outside [her] his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is [s]he is a ‘philosopher,’ an artist, a [wo]man of taste [s]he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is to bring into being a new mode of thought. (Gramsci, Hoare, & Smith, 1971, p. 9)
These findings demonstrate the value of Preskill and Brookfield’s model. Individuals led by these women discovered their own value and affected greater changes in social practices. The examination of stories and lives of the awardees gives insight into qualities that ought to be encouraged in the next generation of leaders to continue the momentum of change.

Transformative learning can occur for women through the support from community, family, and others. These women learned from life experiences and grew through critical self-reflection and self-advocacy by acknowledging socially constructed obstacles. These obstacles changed their behaviors, transforming these marginalized women into passionate leaders. We questioned whether their behaviors were developmental or transformative and we feel that possibly that both instances occurred for many of these women.

We concluded that these women saw role opportunities and a desire to be a part of community change, impacting others by modeling and providing growth opportunities. The Indiana Women of Achievement desired different outcomes and changed perspectives and the status quo in their communities. These women displayed immense motivation, even when sustaining hope in the face of struggle. As positive results accrued from their actions, they continued to act, gravitating toward more humanitarian opportunities and improving the status of marginalized populations.

By connecting the stories of these women to the Preskill and Brookfield model, we have shown that even women from our own communities are leaders who can inspire and promote change and growth in others. As researchers, we have become more self-aware of our own role and how we lead. We see optimism or hope in the face of our own struggles through these stories. These women have pushed the next generation to endure the next challenge, persisting to completion. Jean Amman taught us to endure the struggle and face the challenges in front of you. Lois Rockhill shared advice from her second-grade teacher to complete what you start. We are grateful that these women narrowed the gender gap for generations to follow. It is our duty to be self-aware and hopeful, as we continue to persist and impact social change through learning as a way of leading.

Lessons from these women and learning tasks from the model can be incorporated into education about women’s achievements and acknowledgment of the strength of local leadership. This research and model can be further explored in community building and leadership within a university classroom experience, including immersive learning projects and for self-reflective projects. The Preskill and Brookfield model can also be used in many types of communities: business, corporate, education, and community settings. It is a means for communities to reflect on their leadership model and how they are making decisions and valuing all involved stakeholders. The Preskill and Brookfield model can transform individuals, as they reflect upon their own leadership skills and how they are impacting others in their surrounding communities.
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