

THE MECHANICS OF REFLECTION: METHODS AND OUTCOMES OF  
REFLECTION IN AN AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

By

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To Class VIII

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II Timothy 1:7 NKJV

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALP	Agricultural Leadership Program
AFBF	American Farm Bureau Federation
CR	Critical Reflection
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
EL	Experiential Learning
KFSP	Kellogg Farmers Study Program
R-I-A	Reflection-In-Action
R-O-A	Reflection-On-Action
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WKKF	W. K. Kellogg Foundation

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The purpose of the study was to examine the methods and outcomes of reflection within an agricultural leadership program. Data were collected from participants of a two year leadership development program to examine how participants reflected, what was reflected upon and the level of reflection achieved throughout the two year leadership development program. Findings indicated that participants utilized reflection-on-action more than reflection-in-action in both individual and group reflections. In both individual and group reflections, participants reflected at the levels of introspection, content reflection and process reflection. Group reflections also showed evidence of premise reflection. Finally, themes from experiences were similar among individual and group reflection with personal growth being an additional theme within group reflection. The study provided a grounded theory of reflection within agricultural leadership programs as well as recommendations for practice and research.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In an editorial for the Wall Street Journal, Norman Bourlag, Nobel Peace Prize Recipient and Father of the Green Revolution stated;

Consider that current agricultural productivity took 10,000 years to attain the production of roughly six billion gross tons of food per year. Today, nearly seven billion people consume that stockpile almost in its entirety every year. Factor in growing prosperity and nearly three billion new mouths by 2050, and you quickly see how the crudest calculations suggest that within the next four decades the world's farmers will have to double production (Bourlag, 2009, para. 4).

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the world's population is predicted to grow from a present 6.5 billion to an estimated 9.1 billion people by the year 2050 (Brown, 1998; FAO, 2009). This 34% population increase will require agriculture to feed an additional 80 million more people per year, which in turn, indicates that the grain harvest alone will have to grow by 26 million tons or 71,000 tons per day in that time (Brown, 1998). This challenge calls for an increase in agricultural goods both in developing countries and those countries with established agricultural businesses. According to Nelson, et al. (2010), "increased agricultural production is essential to meeting the growth in food demand resulting from population and income growth, and will, in turn generate growth in rural areas to improve food security" (p. 5).

Feeding the world through increased production is a worldwide issue and according to the FAO, food production will have to come from increased yields and technology rather from farming more land (FAO, 2009). The challenge in the present environment is to build toward an advanced industry that provides a food supply with long term stability (Wedding, 2010). This can be done through the provision of

resources, training and access to markets. United States policy makers have demonstrated an interest in this issue and have directed resources to food sustainability coupled with agricultural development focused on production increases, research and development, and innovations in United States trade policy (Wedding, 2010).

With consideration of meeting the growing dilemmas of the future, today's agriculture production serves as an important industry in the United States and abroad. United States agriculture is a \$297 billion industry and the largest contributor to the nation's economy (USDA, 2007). As an employer of 21 million people (USDA ERS, 2007), the industry is responsible for one in 12 US jobs. In terms of land holdings, 2.3 billion acres of land in the U.S. is used for agricultural production (Osteen, Gottlieb, & Vasavada, 2012). Through changes in technology, efficiency, and market conditions, one farmer now feeds 154 people (American Farm Bureau Federation, 2012). In 2012, U.S. agricultural exports increased to over \$134 billion which was reported to support nearly 7,800 jobs related to the export of agricultural goods in the U.S. (Vilsack, 2012).

Though agriculture remains an important stabilizing force of the economy, its place has changed dramatically in the past century (Dimitri, Effland & Conklin, 2005; Telg & Irani, 2012; USDA, 2012). Through changes, agricultural outputs have grown rapidly, allowing consumers to spend less of their income on food and also allowing a larger portion of the population to become involved in occupations not directly related to agriculture or production (Telg & Irani, 2012). Today, less than 2% of the population is involved in production agriculture (American Farm Bureau Federation, 2012) whereas in the early part of the twentieth century, 50% of the population lived on farms or in rural area whose economy was supported mainly by agricultural production (Dimitri, Effland,

& Conklin, 2005). Farm numbers have decreased from 6.8 million in 1935 to 2.2 million today (USDA, 2012). Additionally, only 1.9% of the U.S. labor force works within agriculture, which is a major shift from the 40% employed in 1900 (Dimitri, Effland, & Conklin, 2005). These changes indicate that agriculture is a smaller player in national and rural economies, is becoming more broadly defined, and employs a smaller percentage of the labor force (Telg & Irani, 2012). As a result of changes in the industry, “many people do not understand agriculture industries and how these industries impact people’s everyday lives” (p. 3).

In addition to the disconnect between producer and consumer, agricultural producers face numerous issues related to “commodity markets, regulatory requirements, changing demographics, agricultural illiteracy, natural resource depletion, and economic survival” (Kaufman, et al., 2010, p. 124). To confront the growing number of concerns, agriculture production and the management of its resources depends upon informed leadership to lead the industry in confronting today’s issues (Wibberley, 2005). Leaders appointed to face these challenges and manage change within these environments should be educated to possess knowledge and skills that center on the needs of the industry and rural communities (Kelsey & Wall, 2003). Businesses and communities alike have committed to facing the challenge of cultivating leadership qualities and skills in individuals to meet this task (Fredricks, 1998). Effective agricultural leaders can be found on state and national levels within the arenas of policy, business, production and community development (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, n. d.) and these leaders can move the industry into the 21st century (Abington-Cooper, 2005). In the 1960s, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation recognized the need for leadership in the

industry, and the agricultural leadership program was cultivated (Miller, 1976). Today, agricultural leadership programs are still addressing the need for industry leadership.

## **Background of the Study**

### **Agricultural Leadership Programs**

Agricultural leadership programs were first established in 1965 in response to a growing need for leadership to bridge the gap between the industry and its consumer (Miller, 1976). The inaugural program established in Michigan encouraged participants to gain understanding in political, social and economic issues and develop leadership skills so they could be effective spokespersons for their respective organizations, communities, and industries. Currently, programs have been established in 39 states, provinces, and countries around the world (Lindquist, 2010) for leaders to develop skills and raise their awareness of current issues (Abington-Cooper, 2005). Through program evaluations conducted on both the state and national level (Strickland, 2011), program outcomes have been assessed and include increased skill development (Howell, et al., 1979), increased networking (Carter & Rudd, 2000), and greater knowledge of current issues (Abington-Cooper, 2005).

According to Van de Valk (2010), “in any given year, nearly one thousand adults are devoting much of their time to participate in these [agricultural leadership] programs, hundreds of speakers share their expertise and millions of dollars are spent on conducting these programs” (p. 11). The curriculum within agricultural leadership programs encourages participants to “become effective and responsible agricultural leaders that are capable of addressing industry issues and becoming active participants in public affairs” (Kaufman & Carter, 2005, p. 68). Each program is influenced by the needs of the community it serves, and therefore, the curriculum material and delivery

are different for each program (Hustedde & Woodward, 1996; Van de Valk, 2010). Program lengths range from 18 to 24 months (Helstowski, 2000) and include seminars at local, state, national and international levels (WKKF, n. d.). Formats for learning include lectures, field visits, panels, and meetings (Hustedde & Woodward, 1996). Program facilitators draw on the knowledge of local leadership, scholars, and policy makers to develop skills or provide information and perspective on issues being examined (Hustedde & Woodward, 1996).

Programs improve “participants’ leadership skills through experiential [and] action learning processes that include instruction, practice, feedback, and reflection” (Van de Valk, 2010, p. 142). Though there is no one program theory that guides agricultural leadership programs, Strickland (2011) identified that agricultural leadership programs can facilitate the learning process within Roberts’ (2006) model of the experiential learning process. Additionally, Van de Valk (2010) advocated for reflection to be incorporated into agricultural leadership programs as recognizing that “leadership styles, personal development, and challenges are all related constructs in that they involve reflection, or thoughtful consideration of lessons to be learned from various program experiences” (p. 133).

### **Experiential Learning and Reflection**

Zaleznik (1993) concluded that the best way to learn about leadership is through experience. In a synthesis of theories and models by Dewey, Joplin and Kolb, Roberts (2006) proposed the Model of the Experiential Learning Process. As participants in the process of experiential learning, learners construct meaning from their experiences (Roberts, 2006) as they move through the three parts of the cycle: initial experience, reflection and generalization. Strickland (2011) indicated the importance of outside

influences and demographic variables on the experiential learning cycle. These are often brought forth in the reflective process of the cycle of learning. Reflection holds as much weight as the experience as reflection allows participants to develop an understanding of themselves and the experience (Roberts, 2006). Schon (1983) claimed that reflection is bound up with action (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Both practices of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action involve processes in making judgments and decisions on how to act or proceed on a problem or thought. Reflection-on-Action occurs when an individual reflection on an action that has already taken place. Reflection-in-Action takes place during the action. In his study of reflection and transformative learning, Mezirow (1991) proposed six different stages of critical reflection (habitual action, thoughtful action, introspection, content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection). In these six stages, differences are presented between reflective and non-reflective action, where non-reflective action seeks out theories, objects or explanations, and critical reflection occurs when one critiques what they perceive, think, judge and feel (Mezirow, 1991).

Reflection is an important component of the leadership program experience (Van de Valk, 2010). Day (2000) proposed that “leadership development is enhanced to the extent that structured opportunities for individual and group reflection are included as part of action learning” (p. 603). In his study of leadership program theory, Van de Valk (2010) recommended program design should incorporate reflection as it allows for participants to learn from their experience and encourages lifelong learning though the practice of ongoing reflection.

## **Research Problem**

The agricultural industry in the United States faces multiple challenges, including providing a safe and secure food supply for a growing population (Brown, 1998), understanding the consumer (Telg & Irani, 2012), and ensuring industry resiliency (AFBF, 2012). According to Kaufman, et al. (2010), “the success of the industry depends upon grassroots leaders who are facing these challenges daily” (p. 124). Given world population projections, society needs leaders who can advance the agricultural industry through scientific discoveries, innovative practices, and comprehensive policy. State-level agricultural leadership development programs are one of the very few comprehensive leadership development programs for agriculturalists, yet the effectiveness of learning processes used in these programs is largely unknown. Agricultural leadership programs were created to train leaders in their areas of social capital, skill development and issue awareness so leaders can address such situations (Kaufman, et al., 2010).

Though agricultural leadership programs have been in existence since 1965, there has been a lack of published research on these programs (Kaufman & Rudd, 2006). Most research conducted on agricultural leadership programs has examined program impacts at participant, community, and industry levels. Through multiple evaluation studies on agricultural leadership programs (Abington-Cooper, 2005; Black, 2006; Carter & Rudd, 2000; Diem & Nikola, 2005; Dhanakumar, Rossing, & Campbell, 1996; Hejny, 2010; Kelsey & Wall, 2003; Strickland, 2011; Whent & Leising, 1992), positive outcomes were indicated through participation, however how programs have achieved these outcomes has not been assessed. Experiential learning and reflection have been used as a model for learning in agricultural leadership programs, but the

processes guiding their use and overall effectiveness have not been examined. By examining evidence of program effectiveness through teaching approaches such as experiential learning and reflection, programs within the field of adult leadership development and agricultural leadership can understand and model successful practices.

### **Purpose and Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how an adult agricultural leadership program utilizes reflection methods and to determine how specific reflection methods, at the group and individual level, influence the development of critical reflection.

The objectives for this study were:

1. Identify how program participants reflect on program experiences.
2. Determine the themes and concepts from program experiences that participants reflect upon.
3. Identify if, or to what extent, reflection methods utilized by the program lead to critical reflection by participants.

### **Significance of the Study**

Kaufman and Rudd (2006) encouraged research within all areas of agricultural leadership programs to “ensure that rural leadership development programs are based on proven methods and principles” (p. 135). These programs require an investment of money and time by administrative authority, donors, participant sponsors and the participants themselves to ensure leadership development for the industry (Abington-Cooper, 2005). This is evidenced by the more than \$111 million that has been spent on agricultural leadership programs (Helstowski, 2000).

In addition to adding to the body of research of agricultural leadership programs, this study also contributed to the field of reflection and experiential learning within

leadership development. Reflection can be a useful tool in ensuring participant learning and understanding of leadership program curriculum. The reason to integrate reflection into an agricultural leadership programs is to “maximize individual potential by allowing students to evaluate the significance of their experiences from a leadership perspective” (Densten & Gray, 2001, p. 119). A study in the core processes that make up reflection, the processes that promote learning from experience, and tools that help facilitators use reflection as a way of learning, can aid in establishing understanding and provide a learning method to aid in achieving the outcomes of agricultural leadership programs. Brungardt (1996) noted that studying leadership development can document learning outcomes of programs and create additional learning models for other programs. Through research, “progressive model and theory building can go forward. And thus provide the practitioner with the tools and knowledge needed to develop and educate a future generation of leaders” (p. 92).

The study of leadership is “a discipline that is learned only through the higher level thinking processes of application and synthesis” (Blackwell & Williams, 2007, p. 8). Van de Valk (2010) advocated for reflection to be incorporated into leadership programming recognizing that leadership styles, personal development, and challenges are related constructs in that they involve reflection and considerations of the lessons found within program experiences. Through incorporating reflection into leadership programming, program facilitators can evaluate participant experiences through a leadership perspective and then be able to apply both the experience and the understanding of leadership to future endeavors. Through these findings it is clear that reflection is a core part of the leadership program curriculum, however, further research

can provide practices for leadership program to implement reflection in formal or strategic ways. In addition to outcomes of reflection this study provided best practices for leadership program facilitators to implement reflection within the curriculum. The practices established through this research can contribute to the broader fields of adult learning, experiential learning and other leadership and educational programs using reflection.

This study addressed two objectives of the National Research Agenda for Agricultural Education 2011-2015 (Doerfert, 2011). This study addressed Priority Area Four, "Meaningful Engaged Learning in All Environments" by increasing understanding of teaching and learning processes adult learning and agricultural leadership programming and by examining the role of reflection processes in the context of adult learning in agricultural leadership programs. Priority Area Six, "Vibrant, Resilient Communities" was also addressed in that this study assessed the effectiveness of adult educational programs and career development opportunities that encourage positive community change and identify factors that influence that change. This study provided valuable data, a description of the needs of adults in agricultural leadership programs, and future directions for research.

### **Overview of Methodology**

This study was qualitative in nature. The study, which was a grounded theory analysis, utilized a constructionism epistemology with constructivism and social constructionism serving as the theoretical perspectives. Participants ( $N= 30$ ) of the purposive sample were members of Class VIII of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources (WLIANR). Eighteen males and 12 females, ranging from 26 to 52 years of age, representing a cross section of the state's agriculture and

natural resource industries, comprised the participant group (WLIANR, 2011). Data were collected over a two-year period and were presented in the written forms of field notes, transcribed participant-guided group reflections, questionnaires, concept maps, and journals. Data analysis was conducted using the grounded theory approach employed by Charmaz (2006).

### **Limitations**

Data for this study were provided through methods of reflecting within group and individual activities. The researcher used one group of participants in one agricultural leadership program; therefore, the results from this study cannot be generalized beyond the study participants. When applying the results to other programs, one should take into consideration that program objectives and population demographics are specific to each program. Additionally, data was collected before the study was designed so meeting the objectives set by the researcher presented several challenges based on the data. For this reason, theoretical sampling was not conducted within the study. To aid in the conceptual and theoretical development, the researcher revisited the data collected over the two years for the study in addition to pieces of information collected not originally used in the study. This helped to identify concepts pertaining to the theoretical codes within participants' experiences within the two year leadership program.

### **Assumptions**

In the first seminar of the two-year program, participants took part in a workshop that guided them through the definition of reflection, its theoretical base, purposes and the benefits and potential outcomes of reflection. Therefore, it was assumed that participants understood the concept and practice of reflection and were willing to

discuss their experiences with others in the program and with the researcher. The researcher also assumed the subjects of the study were truthful in their responses, although bias could have occurred in the responses provided by members of this population. On part of the researcher, it is assumed that critical reflection was measured accurately.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

- AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM. An adult leadership development program “designed to further develop leadership capabilities of participants from the agriculture and natural resources sectors” (Strickland, 2011, p. 21).
- CRITICAL REFLECTION. Includes six stages proposed by Mezirow (habitual action, thoughtful action, introspection, content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection). Critical reflection is “reflecting on the assumptions underlying ours and others’ ideas and actions and contemplating alternative ways of thinking and living” (Brookfield, 1987, p. 2).
- EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING. This approach suggests that learners construct meaning from their experiences (Roberts, 2006). The process takes learners through initial experience, reflection on what happened, and the generalization of information to be used in the future, which all contributes to the entire experience.
- GROUP REFLECTION METHODS. Methods of reflection in which the agricultural leadership program participant engages in conversation with others to analyze and synthesize information.
- INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION METHODS. Methods of reflection in which the agricultural leadership program participant works by themselves without feedback from other individuals. Methods include multiple forms of writing, including journaling, writing letters and responding to questions.
- REFLECTION. The process of the learning from experiences that is under the learner’s control (Roberts, 2006). Reflection involves “a commitment to questioning assumptions that are taken for granted embodied in both theory and professional practice” (Densten & Gray, 2001, p. 119).
- REFLECTION-IN-ACTION. The approach to reflection enables an individual to reshape an experience while in its midst. It is ongoing experimentation that allows the individual to find a viable solution before the end of the problem. As a result, actions are more purposeful (Schon, 1987).

- REFLECTION-ON-ACTION. This approach occurs when individuals evaluate their actions and processes included in completing a task and think back knowledge that contributes to outcomes (Schon, 1983).

## **Chapter Summary**

U.S. agriculture, though thriving, has continued to face multiple challenges and changes. To confront these changes, agricultural leadership programs have been established to train leaders using the experiential learning model. Additionally, reflection can be incorporated into programs to increase learning in participants. A study on the use of reflection within an agricultural leadership program can add to the field of knowledge on agricultural leadership programs, experiential learning and reflection.

The three objectives guiding this study were: (1) Identify how program participants reflect on program experiences, (2) Determine the themes and concepts from program experiences that participants are reflecting upon and (3) Identify if or to what extent to which reflection methods utilized by the program produces critical reflection by the participants. In addition to providing background to the study, chapter one also provided a description of the significance of the study, limitations, assumptions, and key terms.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore how an adult agricultural leadership program utilized reflection methods and determine how various reflection methods (group and individual level) influenced the development of critical reflection.

The objectives for this study were to:

1. Identify how program participants reflect on program experiences.
2. Determine the themes and concepts from program experiences that participants are reflecting upon.
3. Identify if or to what extent to which each reflection method utilized by the program produces critical reflection by the participants.

The theoretical framework was constructed using the theories of experiential learning, constructivism, reflection, and critical reflection. To carry out the study, literature on agricultural leadership programs; adult leadership development and education; adult learning; experiential education; and reflection methods, outcomes and assessment were utilized to supplement the framework for the study and provide context. The chapter was concluded by exploring relevant literature and empirical studies based on the same models utilized in this study's theoretical framework.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Adult Learning

The complexities of adult learning can relate back to the adult learners experiences, occupation, community or voluntary roles, and personal interests and needs (Newton, 1977). Two main theories have guided the study of adults: constructivism and andragogy (Knowles, 1970; Marsick, 1988; Merriam, Caffarella, &

Baumgartner, 2006; Myers & Roberts, 2004). Knowles (1970) contended that “adults do not learn, think (or even read) in any single or simple way” (p. 7). Research has shown that adults learn differently from younger students (Ota, DiCarlo, Burts, Laird, & Gioe, 2006). Knowles, Swanson and Holton (2005) stated that andragogy focuses on the special needs of the adult learners and focuses on six assumptions; need to know, self-concept, prior experience, readiness to learn, learning orientation, and motivation to learn.

Adults are motivated by different factors than that of younger learners. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005), “adults tend to be more motivated toward learning that helps them solve problems in their lives or results in internal payoffs” (p. 199). Additionally, adults should play a part in planning their own education (Knowles, 1984). This can be done by adult learners moving within the experiential learning process, as experiential learning leads learners through reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation phases, as proposed by Kolb (Myers & Roberts, 2004). Reflective observation and abstract conceptualization allow the learner to interpret and apply information. Also, concrete experience and active experimentation provide material that is available immediately, which aligns with Knowles contention that adults are concerned with material that has immediate and direct relevance to them (Myers & Roberts, 2004).

At its most basic level, “experiential learning means learning by doing” (Lewis & Williams, 1994, p. 5). Within the context of adult learning, lessons gained and reflection on the experience can aid in developing new skills, attitudes and ways of thinking (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Additionally, adult educators have underscored the

importance experience plays in adult learner (Lindeman, 1961; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). According to Sternberg and Horvath (1995), the difference between experienced and novice learners is that experience allows the learner to bring more knowledge to the problem. More experienced learners, or experts, are able to solve problems faster and in a more economical way, have stronger self-monitoring skills, and are able to view and solve problems at a deeper level (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

### **Experiential Learning**

John Dewey (1938) stated, “amid all uncertainties, there is one permanent frame of reference, namely the organic connection between education and personal experience” (p. 25). The approach of experiential learning suggests that learners construct meaning from their experiences (Roberts, 2006). In his work published on Experience and Education, Dewey (1938) believed that the study of experiential education indicated a shift from formal abstract education to the approach of learning from experience. Previous experience combined with present interaction is the basis of learning. When the learner gains new knowledge, it results in the cognitive reconstruction of the knowledge they previously held (Lewis & Williams, 1994). For Dewey, experiential learning meant “a cycle of trying and undergoing by becoming aware of a problem, getting an idea, trying out a response, experience the consequences, and either confirming or modifying previous conceptions” (Lewis & Williams, 1994, p. 6). Individuals learn through experiences by engaging in their environment and internally processing information. Without the internal processing, learning does not occur. Once information is processed, it can be theorized to be

applied in later experiences. Learning by experience has been theorized and in its conceptualization, can be applied as a teaching method.

By learning through experience, a physical transformation takes place in the brain (Zull, 2006). However, changes occur in only parts of the brain that are used in the learning experience. The more stimuli provided, the more change occurs. Therefore, “learning experiences should be designed to use the four major areas of the neo cortex; sensory, back integrative, front integrative and motor” (p. 5). Zull (2006) identified the four areas as the four pillars of learning; gathering, reflecting, creating, and testing.

Gathering data is the initial experiences and plays on the sensory function of the brain. Learning is not achieved through only gathering data, but gathering is essential to the process. Once data is gathered, it moves from the sensory neo-cortex to other areas of the brain. In reflection, information is merged to produce meaning and objects and stimuli are associated with prior experiences stored in memory. Information then moves from the back of the cortex to the front to become conscious thought and planning. Through testing, knowledge is tested and information becomes part of working memory and is assessed for relevance and purpose. Testing becomes a new experience which begins another learning cycle (Zull, 2006).

Experiential learning provides students and environment conducive to learning, an opportunity to test ideas, and an opportunity to question assumptions and understand the experience with the chance to build knowledge (Baker & Robinson, 2011). A person learns by experiences through their interaction with their environment. Beard and Wilson (2006) provide a breakdown of the process. The learning process begins with information comes to the learner in the form of experience from the outside

environment. Learning activities provide stimuli which are received through the five senses. As information is processed, an individual perceives, interprets and emotionally responds to the stimuli through internalization. Following internalization the stimuli becomes catalogued and builds upon one or multiple intelligences. Finally, the experience solidified and theorized into the brain as knowledge that can be understood, operationalized to be applied at a later time. The facilitator can influence what is learned through experience by turning the dial to use specific learning environments and activities and senses of the learner, to address emotions and intelligence types. They can also manipulate how the experience can be theorized at the end of the learning process (Beard & Wilson, 2006).

Experiential learning is a process that is influenced by the interplay between the environment, the learner, and the facilitator (T. G. Roberts, personal communication, January 24, 2012). Facilitators can play on their own knowledge and skills, the prior knowledge and experiences of students and class size, and environment to provide an experience and ensure the success of the learning outcomes (Beard & Wilson, 2006). In focusing on these three factors teachers can take advantage of the skills of the learner and facilitator, the context and environment, and teachable moments that can arise during the experience.

Learning occurs through a negotiation between the learner and their environment and meaning is based on the socially defined nature of knowledge obtained (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). To learn, students in a classroom or the field are connecting what is provided to them with their own personal experiences to gain understanding. Through this understanding, knowledge structures are built and learners continue to move

through the experiential cycle. To encourage movement through the cycle, facilitators should keep in mind the factors that influence learning, including student, teacher and environmental variables.

Experiential learning is a “process of constructing knowledge and is dependent upon past and current knowledge structures of the learner” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 260). The theory of experiential learning suggests that learner construct meaning from their experiences (Roberts, 2006). As the study of experiential education is both a process and a product (Kolb, 1984; Roberts, 2006), the process takes learners through an initial experience, reflection on that experience and the generalization of information to be used in the future. All three steps contribute to an individual’s entire understanding of what is being learned or observed. Once concepts are generalized, learners can move through another experiential learning cycle, to test and retest formed generalizations from previous learning opportunities (Beard & Wilson, 2006).

Kolb (1984) focused on how individuals can reflect and process on a direct experience. Kolb proposed learning as the process where knowledge is gained through experience. His model of experiential learning depicted a four part process through the learning cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Learners first have concrete experiences, in which they reflect on those experiences through a variety of perspectives. Following reflection, learners create abstract conceptualizations of what was seen in order to create generalizations. From these reflections, learners draw conclusions and create new knowledge in the form of generalizations. Generalizations are then applied through active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Though an individual may prefer one learning

process over the other three, the adoption of one style was inadequate in processing knowledge. For meaningful learning to occur all stages of the cycle must be negotiated by the learner (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Kolb (1984) also theorized that as learners move through the cycle, ideas will be built upon and increase in complexity.

Kolb's model of experiential learning (1984) posits that there are two modes of grasping experience; Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) and two modes of transforming experience; Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE). Both of groups are dialectical in nature. Experiential learning "is a process in which the construction of knowledge involves a creative tension among the four learning modes" (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 2). This tension is responsive to contextual demands. Ideally, the learner should experience, reflect, think and act in response to the experience.

Boud and Walker (1993) stated that learning from an experience requires three steps to be taken by the learner. The learner should first recall the experience in an objective manner without any judgment or values attached. Next the learner ought to identify feelings associated with the experience, and finally, should reevaluate the experiences. Reevaluation involves reflecting to associate the experience with past experiences, test the experience against what is already known, and integrate the experience into current knowledge to create new knowledge structures. Learning does not take place if experiences are left unexamined (Herrera, 2010). Learning occurs through reflection, which "consists of those processes in which learners engage to recapture, notice, and re-evaluate their experience, to work with their experience and turn it into learning" (Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 9).

The foundation established by past scholars has given rise to new approaches that continue to evolve in the field of experiential learning (Lewis & Williams, 1994). In the synthesis of theories and models by Dewey, Joplin, and Kolb; Roberts (2006) proposed the Model of the Experiential Learning Process. He posited that “experiential learning begins with the initial focus of the learner” (p. 22). Followed by focusing on the leader; experiential learning follows the process through initial experience, reflection and generalization. Once concepts are generalized, learners then move throughout the cycle to test and retest those generalizations in another learning opportunity. This process continues and builds upon prior experience and knowledge (Beard & Wilson, 2006). According to Roberts (2006), experiential learning can align itself with constructivism, which contents that learners construct meaning from their experiences.

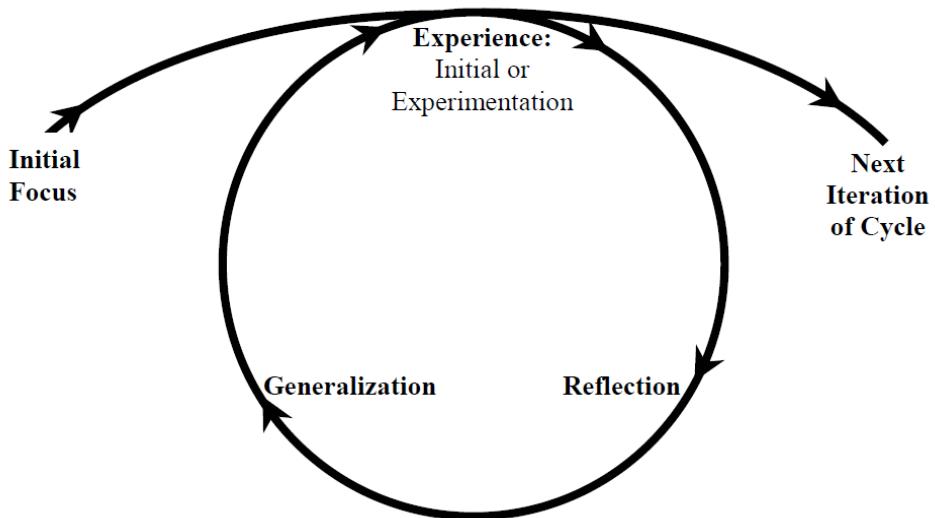


Figure 2-1. Roberts' Proposed Model of Experiential Learning (2006)

## Constructivism

The theory of constructivism draws upon the works of Dewey (1938), Piaget (1966), and Vygotsky (1978). According to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner

(2007), “much of adult learning is constructivist in nature” (p. 293). Learning is a process of constructing knowledge and is dependent upon past and current knowledge structures of the learner (Merriam, et al., 2007; Doolittle & Camp, 1999). Learners construct meaning and their own knowledge through experience (Densten & Gray, 2001; Doolittle & Camp, 1999; Kolb, 1984 & Roberts, 2006) and through the integration of new ideas and previous experiences, cognitive structures can be modified. Therefore, through constructivism, reality is defined by the learner (Doolittle & Camp, 1999).

Constructivism challenges the individual to reflect on concrete experiences and raise inquiries about the nature of the experience (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Learning occurs through a negotiation between the learner and their environment. Through social constructivism, the individual learner constructs meaning based on the socially defined nature of the knowledge they have obtained (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). This knowledge acquired is constantly evolving through reconstruction and transformation. Therefore, under the premise of constructivism, knowledge is created rather than discovered (Kinchin, Hay, & Adams, 2000).

Constructivism is the learning process of constructing meaning and making sense of experiences (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). This ‘meaning making’ is both an individually cognitive and socially interactive activity. Driver, Asoko, Leach, Morimer, and Scott (1994) examined both orientations. Personal constructivism allows learning to be an individual activity “that involves a progressive adaptation of an individual’s cognitive schemes to the physical environment” (p. 6). Meaning making by the individual is influenced by previous and current knowledge. Social constructivism contends that knowledge is constructed when individuals “engage socially in talk and

activity about shared problems or tasks” (p. 7). In this situation, “meaning is made through interaction with people and is seen as a process “by which individuals are introduced to the culture by more skilled members” (Driver, Asoko, Leach, Morimer, & Scott, 1994, p. 7).

In his view of social constructivism, Vygotsky (1978) proposed that learning is a socially mediated activity through interactions with others. Additionally, he contended that learning is an active endeavor, whereas it occurs through meanings being made through collaboration with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the field of adult education, Candy (1991) contended that “becoming knowledgeable involves acquiring the symbolic meaning structures appropriate to one’s society, and since knowledge is socially constructed, individual members of society may be able to add to or change the general pool of knowledge” (p. 275). Learning is a process of negotiation and exchange of socially constructed meanings (Candy, 1991). In the experiential learning process, the construction of meaning and knowledge takes place within the reflection step of the cycle (Roberts, 2006).

## **Reflection**

As learners move through the cycle of experiential learning, they pass through the stages of initial experience, reflection and generalization. In the reflection step, learning takes place as individuals interpret the information that has been presented to them (Boud and Walker, 1993). According to Strickland (2011), reflection holds as much weight as the experience and reflection allows participants to develop an understanding of themselves and the experience (Roberts, 2006). According to Destin and Gray (2001), reflection can also provide learners “insights into how to frame problems differently, to look at situations from multiple perspectives or to better understand

followers” (p. 120). Once information is reflected upon to determine meaning, it can be generalized and applied in a following cycle of learning. Learning is deepened and strengthened when the abstract becomes concrete (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999).

The terms of reflection and reflective thought hold multiple definitions. Dewey (1910) defined reflection as the “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions which it tends” (p. 6). Hatton and Smith (1995) defined reflection as “deliberate thinking about action with a view to its improvement” (p. 40). Reflection is concerned with how individuals make meaning out of experiences that perplex them (Grimmett, Erickson, Mackinnon, & Reicken, 1990). When learners are given an opportunity to reflect on their learning process, they can organize and manage new information and recognize how they can better facilitate their own understanding (Rando, 2001). Reflection can also be defined as the process of the learning experience that is under the learner’s control and involves “a commitment to questioning assumptions are taken for granted embodied in both theory and professional practice” (Densten & Gray, 2001, p. 119).

Dewey (1910) was largely regarded as the foundation for the study of and theories on reflection (Hatton & Smith, 1995). In following the influence of Dewey, several theories have guided research in reflective thinking over the last century (Lambert, 2010). Multiple scholars have contributed to the body of knowledge on reflection. Dewey (1933) considered reflection “to be a special form of problem solving, thinking to resolve an issue which involved active chaining, and careful ordering of ideas linking each with its predecessors” (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 33). Within this deliberate

process, this sequencing or chaining takes into account the learner's underlying beliefs (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

Van Manen (1977) divided reflective thought into three categories: technical reflection, practical reflection and critical reflection. Technical reflection is thought concerned with effective means to the end. Practical reflection seeks to examine means, goals and also the outcomes. Critical reflection includes means, ends, goals, outcomes, assumptions and moral and ethical concerns of the process (Van Manen, 1977).

Griffiths and Tann (1992) identified a hierarchy of five types of reflection: rapid reflection in which reflection occurs immediately; repair reflection, which refers to habitual reflection; review reflection which allows for reassessment done over time; research reflection that allows systematic assessment done over time; and finally, reauthorizing and reformulating, which causes deep, abstract and rigorous thought taking place over a long period of time (Griffiths & Tann, 1992).

King and Kitchener (1994) created the reflective judgment model which had seven levels measuring the quality of reflection and provides approaches for problem solving. Stages one, two, and three focus on pre-reflective assessment in which individuals "do not acknowledge that knowledge is uncertain" (p. 47) and do not utilize the given evidence to form a conclusion. In stage one; a person adopts a concrete belief system where facts and judgments are not different entities. In stage two an individual acknowledges that there is a true reality embraced by authority but is not known by everyone. In stage three, there is a held belief that though absolution is assumed, authority figures may not have the truth. Quasi-Reflective Thinking encompasses stages

four and five where individuals within these stages of thinking recognized “that some problems are ill structured and that knowledge claims about them contain an element of uncertainty” (p. 58). Individuals in stage four believe that evidence aids in making knowledge claims and reality cannot be known with absolute certainty. In stage five, individuals recognize there are different perspectives in looking at evidence. The final stages in the reflective judgment model encompass the reflective thinking category, which recognizes “that knowledge is not given, but must be actively constructed” (p. 66). In stage six, information is subject to interpretation, but those interpretations are subject to critique. In stage seven, judgments are an outcome of inquiry and are based on interpretation and its relation with that judgment (King & Kitchener, 1994).

Hatton and Smith (1995) proposed a developmental hierarchy of reflective thought that included five levels. Technical reflection consists of making decisions and using skills that apply to the problem at hand. Descriptive reflection occurs when one works toward good practice. Dialogic reflection considers different viewpoints to find a solution. Critical reflection consists of finding solutions to align with ethical standards. Finally, the contextualization of multiple viewpoints incorporated all levels of reflection to find solutions and expand options to problems as they arose (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

Schon (1983, 1987) claimed that reflection is bound up with action (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Schon (1987) encouraged the ideas of reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action within professional practice. He advocated for a model in professional education that equipped learners to reflect in order to deal with complex problems and issues (Kember, McKay, Sinclair, & Yuet, 2008). Individuals reflecting-in-action can reflect and analyze issues in the moment in order to broaden knowledge and analyze

issues during the issue or interaction (Kaagan, 1998). Reflection-on-action was defined as “thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in action may have contributed to an expected outcome” (p. 26) and Reflection-in-action was defined as “reflecting in the midst of action without interrupting it” (p. 28). Both practices of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action involve processes in making judgments and decisions on how to act or proceed on a problem or thought. Reflection-on-Action occurs when an individual reflection on an action that has already taken place. Reflection-in-Action takes place during the action. Schon’s framework was able to incorporate multiple levels of reflection and the practices of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action involve “an epistemology of professional practice based on knowledge and knowing in action” (Hatton & Smith, 1995, p. 35).

Mezirow (1991, 1998) examined reflection and made the distinction between critical reflection and reflection through six levels: habitual action, thoughtful action, introspection, content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. Mezirow’s framework was adopted for this particular study.

### **Critical Reflection**

Learners engaging in critical reflection bring “underlying assumptions to consciousness; testing those assumptions to determine if they are appropriate for attaining the desired goal” (Lewis & Williams, 1994, p. 11). Critical reflection aids learners in understanding not only the meaning of their experiences, but also “why we attach the meanings we do to reality” (Mezirow, 1981, p. 11). Mezirow’s (1990) concept of critical reflection regards learning as “a developmental process that inherently entails self-growth in the pursuit of intellectual growth” (Wiezbicki-Stevens, 2009, p. 42). Critical reflection lays the groundwork for Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning,

which is the “process of making a new or revised interpretation of meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1).

In his study of reflection and transformative learning, Mezirow (1991) proposed six different stages of critical reflection (habitual action, thoughtful action, introspection, content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection). In these six stages, he described the differences between reflective and non-reflective action, where non-reflective action seeks out theories, objects or explanations, and critical reflection occurs when one critiques what they perceive, think, judge and feel (Mezirow, 1991). Non-reflective action encompasses the first three types identified by Mezirow; habitual action, thoughtful action, and introspection. Habitual action is defined as the ability to “act while our attention is elsewhere” (p. 106). Kember (1999) described habitual action as something that has been learned and is used automatically requiring little thought. Thoughtful action includes learners making a judgment based on previous learning (Mezirow, 1991). Though previous knowledge is utilized, the knowledge is not appraised, so there is no change to existing schemas (Kember, 1999). Introspection refers to thinking about our thoughts, actions and feelings but does not involve reassessing what is already known (Mezirow, 1991). This stage of reflection refers to the thoughts individuals have of themselves and not the reasoning behind the development of those thoughts (Kember, 1999).

Reflective Action “is the process of internally examining and exploring the issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective” (Kember, 1999). There

are also three stages of reflective action, which include content reflection, process reflection and premise reflection (Mezirow, 1991). Content reflection is reflecting on what one perceives, thinks, feels or acts upon. Process reflection examines the performance of perceiving, thinking, feeling, or acting “and an assessment of our efficacy in performing them” (p. 108). Premise reflection brings an individual to the final stage of reflection in that it requires one to ask why they think, feel or act in a certain way and the reasoning behind the decisions as well as an assessment of the consequences (Mezirow, 1991). In premise reflection, time is taken to redefine the problem or situation so actions can be directed accordingly.

Mezirow (1991) justified the use of reflective action and premise reflection in stating that the “reflection is the dynamic by which our belief systems- meaning perspectives- become transformed. Premise reflection leads to more fully developed meaning perspectives, that is, meaning perspectives that are more inclusive, discriminating, permeable (open), and integrative of experience” (p. 111). Critically reflective learners are those that are sensitive to why things are being done in a certain way, the values reflected in these actions, the discrepancies that exist between what is being said and done, and the way in which all influences of an organization shape outcomes (Marsick, 1988).

Action learning ties critical reflection to the experiential learning process (Battisiti, Passmore, & Sipos, 2008). Action learning “is a process of devoting deliberate attention to the relationship between reflection and action in the cycle of experiential learning” (p. 28). Action learning provides the learner “a means of development, intellectual, emotional or physical, that requires its subject through responsible involvement in some

real, complex and stressful problem, to achieve intended change sufficient to improve his observable behavior, henceforth in the problem field" (Revans, 1981, p. 9). Action learning transforms experiential learning from single loop learning to double loop learning (Battisiti, et al., 2008). The difference between the experiential learning and action learning is that through action learning, the learner is transformed between the stages of reflection and generalization. Through action learning, learners question assumptions and experience a change in patterns and beliefs (Mezirow, 1991). Through traveling throughout the double loop, learners pick up new things from the experiences rather than repeat experiences with the same results (Percy, 2005).

### **Conceptual Model**

A conceptual model was created to show the process that leadership program participants move through to reach critical reflection. Participants move through variables of the conceptual model, which begins with the approach of Experiential Learning (Roberts, 2006). Leadership programming activities and methods of reflection can guide participants in an agricultural leadership program to levels of critical reflection. Experiential learning models agricultural leadership program activities. Leadership program activities are impacted by program objectives, and these in turn influence participants within the agricultural leadership program. Leadership activities also guide reflection methods. These reflection methods are divided into two categories: group and individual reflection methods. Reflection methods provide the opportunity for participants to demonstrate critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991).

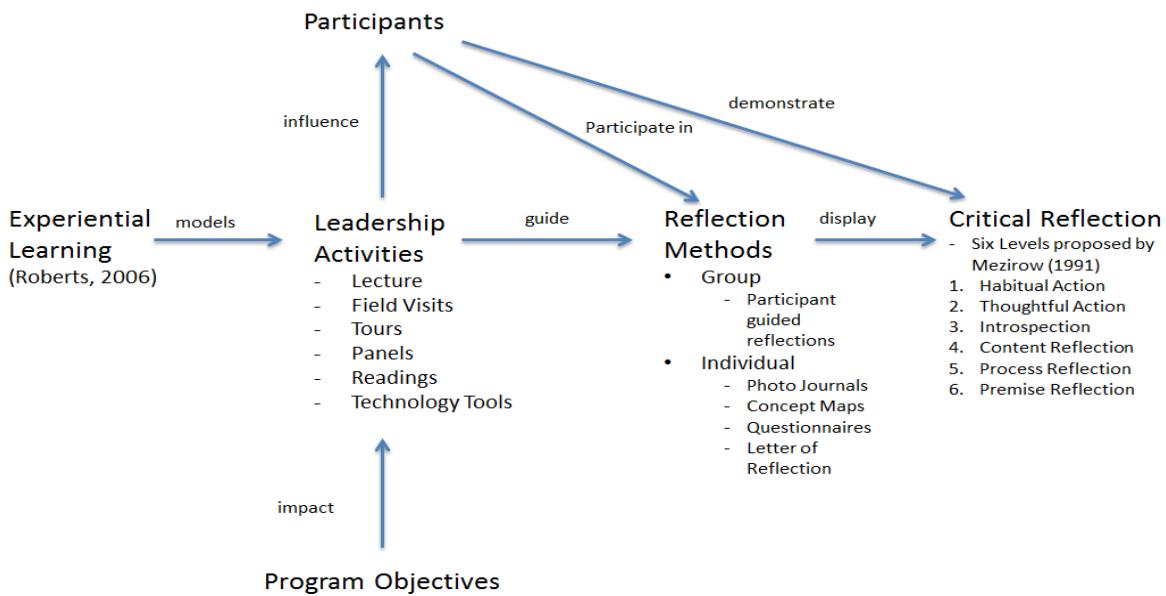


Figure 2-2. Conceptual Model of the methods and outcomes of reflection in an agricultural leadership program

### Related Literature on the Theoretical Framework

#### Experiential Learning

In the synthesis of theories and models by Dewey, Joplin, and Kolb, Roberts (2006) proposed the Model of the Experiential Learning Process. There has been research that has referenced Robert's work within experiential learning utilizing Roberts' model of experiential learning within the research.

Roberts, Harlin, and Ricketts (2006) provided a longitudinal examination of teaching efficacy of agricultural science teachers utilizing experiential research by Kolb (1984) and Roberts' (2006) model of experiential learning. Through combining teaching efficacy theory and experiential learning theory, the researchers produced a model indicating that teacher efficacy was studied throughout the three stages of the experiential learning process (Roberts, et al., 2006). Based on the interactions the student teachers experienced with both students and cooperating teachers, "student

teachers transform their experiences through reflection, develop generalizations and subsequently test those generalizations through further experiences, which in turn, affect their teaching efficacy" (p. 83). The study concluded that student teachers' efficacy in teaching, student engagement, and instructional strategies changed, however, student teacher efficacy in classroom management did not change.

Battisti, Passmore, and Sipos (2008) studied action learning processes for sustainable agriculture practices. Through utilizing both Roberts' (2006) model of experiential learning and guided reflection processes within action learning proposed by McGill and Brockbank (2004), the researchers examined learner transformation through action learning and guided reflection. The researchers concluded that sustainable agricultural education aligns best with action learning, since the reflection process has a more formalized emphasis on "the requirement that the students' interest motivate the experience or on the need for careful reflection" (Battisti, et al., 2008, p. 27).

Torock (2009) acknowledged that programs within the Cooperative Extension Service should include "focus, action, debriefing, support, and feedback to ensure clientele truly learn from the experience" (p. 4). Therefore, the author encouraged extension educators to model their teaching and produce guides in line with experiential learning. Through using Joplin's Model of Experiential Learning (1981) the author contended that support and feedback were two important stages within extension education where "educators would like to see learners disseminate their new knowledge to others in the community" (Torock, 2009, p. 2).

Lamm, Cannon, Roberts, Snyder, Brendemuhl and Rodriguez (2011) investigated how adult learners reflected during a study abroad program based in

experiential learning. Authors used reflective journals and Kolb's learning style inventory to gauge the participants' reflection patterns and the correlations between reflection journaling patterns and learning style. Through content analysis, the researchers examined the journals for evidence of their expressed learning style. The researchers found that themes in the reflection journals indicated correlated types of learning styles of the participants (Lamm, et al., 2011).

## **Reflection**

In her study on the effects of experiential learning with an emphasis on reflective writing on deep level processing of agricultural leadership students, Moore (2008), contended that "learning is not complete without proper reflection" (p. iii). The purpose of this study was to examine college students' perceptions of learning in an agricultural leadership course within the context of experiential learning. The study examined student attitudes regarding experiential learning and students' surface or deep approaches to learning. The findings indicated that teaching strategies utilizing experiential learning and reflection did not have an influence on the way the students approached learning. However, through the analysis of students' reflective writing, it was found that students benefited from receiving instruction using experiential learning, and in turn, fostered a deeper approach to learning as a result of the utilized methods.

Lambert (2010) studied the effects of instructor feedback on the level of reflective thought among students of an agricultural education teaching methods course. The purpose of the study was to describe the levels of reflective thinking of students and compare the effects of feedback on students' reflective thought. Using Hatton and Smith's levels of reflection (1995), the researcher utilized an instrument of three

reflective questions. The study found that students provided responses that were either technical or descriptive, with none of the students being critically reflective.

Wiezbicki-Stevens (2009) studied the effects of guided reflection on metacognition. The purpose of the study was to explore methodology for the development of metacognitive self-knowledge and explore which academic experiences students perceived as influential to their learning. Data were collected through written narratives as part of a guided reflection activity. The study found that guided reflection was effective for developing metacognitive self-knowledge so long as the process of reflection was understood by the learners.

Herrera (2010) conducted a study on how critical reflection and experiential learning are facilitated within a multi-national pharmaceutical company and how the two concepts affected managerial coaching within this context. The purpose of the study was to assess whether managerial coaches utilized both critical reflection and experiential learning with their interactions with employees, even though both terms were not specifically defined within their practices. The study found that many managers are expected to coach without the training preparation needed in order to coach employees. Results also indicated that though participants demonstrated using at least one indicator of critical reflection and/ or experiential learning within their coaching, the majority described reflecting on the impact of perceptions and behaviors as a regular part of their practice, and that they learned how to coach employees by drawing on past experiences informal learning.

Kember (1999) developed and tested a questionnaire to measure reflective thinking. Previous work had been done on reflective thinking in journal writing and small

group discussions, but the authors were interested in forming a coding scheme for reflection. The theoretical framework to measure reflection was based on the work of Mezirow (1991). A four scale instrument was created based on the constructs of habitual action, understanding, reflection and critical reflection. Differences were found between scores of graduate and undergraduate students (Kember, 1999). Lucas and Tan (2006) assessed levels of reflective thinking in college students utilizing the Questionnaire for Reflective Thinking designed by Kember (1999). Through this pilot study, the authors concluded that the Questionnaire for Reflective Thinking was justified of further research and investigation, but future research needed to take into consideration the disciplinary and student context (Lucas & Tan, 2006).

Daudelin (1996) conducted a study to determine the methods of reflection that are most effective in aiding managers in learning. The three methods of reflection proposed were solitary reflection, small group reflection and reflection with the aid of a helper. Participants of the study held managerial positions in multiple corporations. After participants were placed into groups they reflected according to the three types of reflection. Questionnaires were distributed to record insights by participants of the three methods. Results indicated that both individual and helper reflection methods were shown to have greater amounts of learning than the small group reflection method. Findings reinforced the need to guide reflection through the use of reflection questions. Through structured activity, managers can benefit from utilizing reflection within their businesses (Daudelin, 1996).

Phan (2007) examined the relationships between students' learning approaches, self-efficacy, stages of reflective thinking and academic performance. Phan (2007) also

utilized the theoretical framework of Mezirow (1991) and the Reflective Thinking Questionnaire (Kember, 1999) to measure levels of reflection. The study found that self-efficacy is a mediator of reflective thinking and can determine the level of reflective thinking.

### **Methods of Reflection**

At the heart of reflection “is the guiding question ‘what is going on here?’” (Noordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1990, p. 174). However, in answering those questions it’s important to establish criteria in what constitutes reflection as “presenting these criteria to students prior to reflection activities can be helpful in creating expectations about their own development as reflective learners” (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999, p. 114). To facilitate reflection, a problem is necessary to initiate and drive reflection (Hoban, 2000). However, reflection can be stimulated as a result of a problem, or through prearranged stimuli (Kember, 1999).

Multiple activities can be used to facilitate both individual and group reflection (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). The design of the reflection activity “plays an important role in [a participant’s] capacity to yield learning, support personal growth, provide insights, develop skills, and promote civic responsibility” (p. 116). Recommendations have been made by multiple scholars in various fields of adult learning. The range of techniques offered can be applied in both individuals and groups in the contexts of education and field placement (Osmond & Darlington, 2005). Individual reflection methods included concept mapping (McAleese, 1998; Lawless, 1994; Lawless, Smee & O’Shea, 1998), photo journaling (Lawless, Smee & O’Shea, 1998; White, Sasser, Borgren & Morgan, 2009), and journal writing (Osmond & Darlington, 2005; Daudelin, 1996). Group reflection methods include; Think Aloud, Observation and Reflective Recall (Osmond &

Darlington, 2005), brainstorming sessions (Eyler, 2001), team discussions and role playing scenarios (Eyler, 2001; Daudelin, 1996) and presentations and videos (Eyler, 2001), assessing needs and resources (Eyler, 2001), debriefing sessions (Daudelin, 1996; Eyler, 2001). However, Osmond and Darlington (2005) stated that “facilitating reflection in oneself or another should be a flexible process. The danger of rigid adherence to any technique is that the reflective session may be experienced as interrogation rather than a facilitative inquiry of practice” (p. 5).

### **Adult Leadership Programs and Adult Learning**

To carry out the study, literature on agricultural leadership programs, adult leadership development and education, and adult learning was provided to supplement the theoretical framework for the study and provide context.

### **Agricultural Leadership Programs**

Agricultural leadership programs were established through the Kellogg Farmers Study Program (KSFP) and have been in existence since 1965 (Miller, 1976). The purpose in their establishment was to create a stronger tie between the agricultural industry and the public. Following World War II, Michigan State University and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation recognized the continuing need for effective agricultural leadership and set out to establish a program that developed leadership for the agricultural industry. Through the KSFP, participants could improve their “understanding of political, social and economic systems, develop social skills, be effective spokespeople for their industry or community, expand individual networks, and develop future political, civic and organizational leaders” (Howell, Weir, & Cook, 1982, p. 52). Soon after the KSFP, agricultural leadership programs in California and Pennsylvania were established

(Howell, Weir,& Cook, 1979). Over time, other states, provinces, and countries established agricultural leadership programs.

In designing these programs, a format was established for learning. According to Miller (1976), the “broad aim was to give participants a widened perspective on the world around them and to develop their competence in reading, writing, speaking, logical inquiry, and critical thinking. All of these skills were considered essential ingredients for effective leadership” (p. 25). The purpose of these programs was not to train better agriculturalists, but to develop leaders with an increased understanding of the economic, political and social issues confronting the United States and rural society (Miller, 1976).

Programs have been holding true to the original mission of WKKF and have been utilized around the world to develop leaders for service to their communities and industries (Kaufman & Carter, 2005, p. 66). In these programs, adult leaders study issues facing their industries and prepare themselves for leadership roles (Diem & Nikola, 2005). Programs have been established in 39 states, provinces, and countries around the world (Lindquist, 2012). Programs have used a variety of learning processes (Carter & Culbertson, 2012) to develop leadership abilities and raise issue awareness and understanding (Carter & Rudd, 2000; Abington-Cooper, 2005). These programs, though different in some aspects (rural versus agricultural based), are congruent with the goal of establishing effective leadership for the agricultural industries and local communities (Mathews & Carter, 2008). Each program has designed its curriculum and vision to meet the needs of their individual state, community base and agricultural industry.

## **Teaching and Learning Strategies in Agricultural Leadership Programs**

Hustedde and Woodward (1996) developed a guide for designing program curriculum to develop leaders through to lead through engaging in “problem-solving and in identifying needs, resources, and opportunities” (p. 1) in order for leaders to make an impact. Each program has been influenced by the needs of the community it serves and therefore, the curriculum material and delivery is different for each program (Hustedde and Woodward, 1996). According to Carter and Culbertson (2012), program curricula are determined by input from administrative authority and industry, and program evaluation. Programs have utilized a number of theories and approaches to guide their curricula including adult learning and social learning theory (Black & Earnest, 2009), servant leadership and transformational leadership theories (Hejny, 2010) and experiential learning theory (Strickland, 2011).

According to the Carter and Culbertson (2012), the knowledge gained from the board, industry input, and evaluations have been disseminated into a structured curriculum program for participants. Through these programs, participants have had direct experience and interaction with a variety of businesses, social settings, and political environments, both domestically and internationally. Curriculums within leadership programs cover a range of topics and area mix of lecture and field-based learning, panel discussions, tours, readings, and technology tools (Carter & Culbertson, 2012).

Research literature has been published on agricultural leadership programs in the areas of outcomes and evaluations (Abington-Cooper, 2005; Black, 2006; Black, Metzler, & Waldrum, 2006; Carter and Rudd, 2000; Dhanakumar, Rossing, & Campbell, 1996; Diem and Nikola, 2005; Hejny, 2010; Howell, Weir, & Cook, 1979; Kelsey & Wall,

2003; Strickland, 2011; Whent & Leising, 1992). Studies have also been conducted on the theoretical underpinnings of these programs (Black, 2006; Black & Earnest, 2009; Hejny, 2010; Van de Valk, 2010). A synthesis of research has been conducted with the recommendation that further research is needed in the field of agricultural leadership programs (Kaufman & Rudd, 2006).

### **Program Outcomes**

To assess program outcomes, evaluations have been conducted of several programs on the state level (Abington-Cooper, 2005; Black, 2006; Carter and Rudd, 2000; Diem and Nikola, 2005; Dhanakumar, Rossing, & Campbell, 1996; Hejny, 2010; Kelsey & Wall, 2003; Whent & Leising, 1992). In addition to evaluations on the state or program level, Howell, Weir, and Cook (1979), Black, Metzler, and Waldrum (2006), and Strickland (2011) conducted evaluations of multiple state programs. Program outcomes have been classified as having impacts on both the individual and the community levels. Program impacts on the individual level included increased skill development (Howell, et al., 1979), increased communication skills (Diem & Nikola, 2005), increased confidence to become involved in leadership roles (Diem & Nikola, 2005; Howell, et al., 1979), increased networking and team building skills (Carter & Rudd, 2000; Diem & Nikola, 2005; Earnest, 1996; Whent & Leising, 1992), broadened perspectives on current issues (Abington-Cooper, 2005), and greater knowledge of others (Diem & Nikola, 2005). Program impacts on the community level included participants educating others about agriculture and natural resource issues (Strickland, 2011), participants' increased involvement in community affairs (Howell, et al., 1979), increased awareness of political issues by participants (Carter & Rudd, 2000; Earnest, 1996); and encouraging others to become more involved in community issues (Earnest, 1996).

## **Theoretical Underpinnings of Programs**

As a means for evaluation, Black and Earnest (2009) provided a theoretical framework and conceptual model to guide a state leadership program. The theoretical framework included elements of social learning theory, adult learning theory and the EvaluLEAD framework (Black, 2006). This framework encompassed context of leadership programming, the experiences of participants, and the self-reported transformation of the participant, organization and community (Black, 2006).

Hejny (2010) conducted a qualitative case study to assess outcomes of a specific agricultural leadership program. The purpose of the study was to identify leadership experiences of past participants of the program. Research found that participants' leadership styles aligned with both servant leadership and transformational leadership approaches (Hejny, 2010).

Van de Valk (2010) researched the disconnect between the practice of agricultural leadership programs and theoretical underpinnings of programs. Through the identification of outcomes, the study organized three leadership constructs within the development of the LEAD New York program: communication skills, developing leadership skills, and networking, relationships and teams. Through the analysis of the relationships between the three constructs, a theoretical framework was constructed for that specific leadership program. Findings indicated that the program focused on skill development, and these skills were "highly social, complex, and interrelated" (p. iv).

## **Additional Literature on Agricultural Leadership Programs**

Kaufman and Rudd (2006) conducted a synthesis of research on rural leadership programs. In their study they categorized subject matter on adult rural leadership development and identified areas lacking in research related to rural leadership

programs. Findings indicated that there have been very few publications in the areas. The publications in the study covered the topics of continuing education, gender equity, safety and health, partnerships, political shifts, and statewide program impact. This study suggested the need for research as a means to share results and improve the overall quality of research.

Sheffert (2007) conducted a study of a rural leadership program to determine impacts of program duration on participant outcomes. Findings included that programs of the longest duration had the most impact on participant skill development and knowledge. Additional findings included that participants are more committed to leadership positions upon completion of the program. Recommendations included programs using tested theories to guide leadership program development.

Kaufman, et al. (2010) conducted a needs assessment within a state's agricultural community to determine the leadership needs in order to assemble an agricultural leadership program. Findings from this study helped determine the areas of focus of an agricultural leadership program, which included knowledge of a changing industry, relationship building, and skill development. Researchers concluded that the Kellogg Farmers Study Program model still has a place in designing and implementing agricultural leadership programs today (Kaufman, et al., 2010).

Research has also been conducted on behaviors and cognitive development (preferences) of participants within agricultural leadership programs. This has been mainly conducted within the field of opinion leadership as agricultural leadership program participants have been identified within the industry as opinion leaders (Windham, 2009). Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1970) stated that "an individual's

acceptance of information and ideas is based in part on who said it" (p. 563).

Individuals can influence others frequent attitudes or behaviors through opinion leadership to achieve desired objectives (Rogers, 2003). When making decisions, opinion leaders influence important determinants of an individual's behavior, thereby influencing opinion formation (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). Characteristics of opinion leaders include knowledge and involvement in activities related to their area or industry and willingness to stay informed about new issues (Corey, 1971). Through social capital, opinion leaders can shape individuals reactions to social issues (Scheufele & Shah, 2000, p. 109). This type of leadership is not found in positional power but is earned through competence, social accessibility and understanding of the system (Rogers, 2003).

Windham (2009) examined the source credibility of agricultural organizations as perceived by opinion leaders within the agricultural industry. The study identified participants of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources (WLIANR) as opinion leaders as they were considered opinion leaders within their community, organization and industry. The study gauged the amount of information received from opinion leaders in addition to the tendency for an opinion leader to pass on an organization's message. The study found that opinions leaders receive information from organizations they view as trustworthy and are most willing to present considered being credible. The study hypothesized that opinion leaders in the agricultural industry have unique opinions as a result of their unique experience and by working on issues on community, organizational and industry levels (Windham, 2009).

## **Adult Leadership Development and Education**

Workplace training and development has moved toward an identity and distinctiveness apart from other human resource activities (Marsick, 1988). Within corporations and communities a significant monetary commitment was made for leadership training which offers the cultivation of leadership qualities and skills through structured activity (Brungardt, 1996; Lewis & Williams, 1994). These adult training programs have covered a variety of topics, formats and purposes. Some of these programs have focused on skill development with particular contexts, while others have the goal of creating more informed citizens which leads to advocacy on the local level (Fredricks, 1998). According to Fredricks (1998), “the idea that people can be educated, especially in leadership skills, to accomplish anything is the driving force behind these programs” (p. 133). Changes in environments, technology, policy, and availability of resources indicated the need for individuals to change and adapt. In order to do so, training programs have been made available. Fredricks (1998) stated that “developing this new generation of leaders to cope and to win the world may appear to be a difficult task, however, businesses and communities throughout the United States are dedicated to that end” (p. 130).

Both corporations and communities have provided leadership education for stakeholders (Brungardt & Seibel, 1995). Corporations have offered training in order to strengthen skills within its employee base (Stephan, Mills, Pace, & Ralphs, 1988) while community leadership programs have created programs “intended to develop leadership for the public good” (Brungardt & Seibel, 1995, p. 2) through leaders addressing current issues and concerns. According to Fredricks (1998), corporations that invest in leadership training have spent over \$50 billion in the development of

leaders. Additionally, 60% of the largest corporations in the world have provided leadership training for their employee base (Stephan, Mills, Pace, & Ralphs, 1988).

While some training modules follow a paradigm based in behaviorism, other training programs are moving toward the frameworks including experiential learning (Marsick, 1988). According to Lewis and Williams (1994), “experiential models are being applied more widely than ever before in business and industry, because experiential learning legitimizes acquiring self-knowledge. Learners now have a mandate to see, learn about and examine their own unique situations in action, as they interact with others at work” (p. 10). In this context, experiential learning focused on differences in learning styles and the experience of the learner versus behaviorism that focuses on the design of the activity (Marsick, 1988).

### **Related Literature to Adult Leadership Programs**

Marsick (1988) proposed a new paradigm for understanding workplace learning that focuses on reflection and critical reflection. In this framework, learning is viewed through the lens of experiential learning and reflection where “learning is seen as a process of interaction leading to a better understanding of the meaning of experiences” (p. 190). Additionally, development within an organization was seen as a combination of personal growth and organizational productivity. In sum, workplace learning can be facilitated through aiding employees in understanding their experiences. Since workers needed more than a set of technical skills for the workplace, employee development programs were viewed as helpful because of the focus on teaching employees to analyze situations, determine needs, and derive their own solutions to solving the problem. This new paradigm of employee training focused on learning of the worker,

integration of personal and job-related development, and an emphasis on both formal and non-formal learning (Marsick, 1988).

Earnest (1996) conducted a research study assessing the impact of various community leadership programs within a state. Through a pre-test post-test assessment, participants of the programs reported increased leadership skills, personal networking within communities, greater awareness of issues, increased self-confidence, and broadened perspectives. Researchers recommended that community leadership programs should incorporate “curriculum application of leadership skills” (p. 4), leadership awareness and more hands-on practical learning experiences.

Fredricks (1998) examined current literature on leadership development and training programs and conducted a review of the literature on statewide community leadership programs around at the time. The researcher found that similarities and differences exist among different state program goals, outcomes and participants. The commonality among programs was the specific objective in meeting the needs of the community and providing leadership for the changes in which the community might face. Following the assessment of programs, Fredricks (1998) also provided description of the elements of a successful program. These included headquarters, goals, curriculum designed to insight critical thinking about issues within its participants, and communication with past participants. The literature review and description provided suggestions for future leadership training programs (Fredricks, 1998).

Myers and Roberts (2004) offered a format for faculty to design and deliver professional workshops to the clientele which they serve. The purpose of the article was to provide a guide for using experiential learning as the methodology in delivering

professional development workshops to adult audiences. Experiential learning was presented as the format with justification for the teaching methods by meeting the needs of adults as indicated by the study of andragogy. Professional development workshops can be presented using “student centered approaches that allow students to become actively involved in their education... and actively interact with the phenomenon being studied” (Myers & Roberts, 2004, p. 27). Within this approach, instructors adopted a facilitator role as students learn the content. Student centered approaches worked well to deliver professional workshops with learning processes that include problem solving, cooperative learning and experiential learning.

### **Chapter Summary**

The purpose of the current study was to explore how an adult agricultural leadership program utilized reflection methods and determine how various reflection methods, at the group and individual level, influenced the development of critical reflection. Chapter Two began with a review of the theoretical framework for the studies. Theories guiding the study were adult learning theory, experiential learning (Roberts, 2006), reflection, and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991). A conceptual model was presented to display the connections between experiential learning, agricultural leadership program activities, reflection methods utilized by the participants and critical reflection. Following the conceptual model, current empirical research that related to the theoretical components of the study was presented. Finally, literature on agricultural leadership programs and adult leadership programs was presented.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore how an adult agricultural leadership program utilized reflection methods and to determine how various reflection methods influenced the development of critical reflection. The objectives for this study were to identify how program participants reflect on program experiences, determine the themes and concepts from program experiences that participants are reflecting upon, and identify if or to what extent to which each reflection method utilized by the program produces critical reflection by the participants. Chapter Two proposed a conceptual framework to guide the study that utilized the theories of constructivism and adult learning, and the approach of experiential learning. Studies on adult leadership development, agricultural leadership programs, and other adult leadership programs were reported to supplement the study. Chapter Three discusses the methodology and research design of this study. Qualitative research was described justifying its use in the design. The ontology, epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology, researcher subjectivity, research design, population, data collection and data analysis procedures were also described. Finally, qualitative measures of reliability and validity were outlined.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative research is the best strategy for discovery and exploration. Qualitative research defined by Creswell (1998) as:

an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p. 15).

Dooley (2007) studied the approach within the context of agricultural education and reasoned that interpretive approaches emphasized the study of how individuals construct meaning and understand their actions and surroundings. She stated that “life does not come to us like a math problem, but more like a story. There is a setting or context, there are characters or respondents, and there is conflict or a problem to address” (Dooley, 2007, pp. 33-34). Herrera (2010) suggested that qualitative research is well suited for understanding experiences and the meaning that individuals create from those experiences.

### **Context of the Study**

This qualitative study examined the use of reflection within an agricultural leadership program, the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources (WLIANR). The program was established to aid in the development of agricultural leadership in the state of Florida. The Florida Leadership Program for Agriculture and Natural Resources was established in 1991 (Carter & Rudd, 2000) and was later renamed as the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources (Strickland, 2011). Its mission is to provide training and development to potential leaders within Florida’s agriculture and natural resource industries and local communities. Issues discussed in the program fall into social, political, cultural, economic, and agriculture contexts and are examined and discussed on local, state, national and international levels (WLIANR, 2011). Program objectives include; preparing potential leaders to assume leadership roles in their organizations, industries and communities; establishing networks among class members and alumni to develop the industry; through those networks aid in creating strategic alliances across Florida’s agriculture and natural resource businesses; analyzing complex issues facing

individuals in agriculture and natural resources; developing interpersonal skills in order to foster better understanding; and creating understanding of social, economic and political systems and how to work within these systems to bring about change (WLIANR, 2011).

Upon class selection, participants attend eleven seminars over a two year period to examine issues on the local, state, national and international levels (WLIANR, 2011). Class VIII was established in November 2010 and concluded their experience in August 2012. Seminars were held on state, national and international levels. Table 3-1 provides a description of curriculum topics and locations of the two year experience. As part of the structured curriculum in WLIANR, participants take part in reflection activities during each seminar. These activities are done both at the individual and group levels.

**Table 3-1. Class VIII Schedule**

Seminar	Location	Date	Focus
Seminar I	Gainesville, FL	November 8-12, 2010	Orientation and Community Issues
Seminar II	Miami and Palm Beach County, FL	January 24-28, 2011	Metropolitan and South Florida Issues
Seminar III	Tallahassee, FL	March 21-24, 2011	State Government and State Issues
Seminar IV	Florida Panhandle	May 16-19, 2011	Issues in the Panhandle
Seminar V	Gainesville, FL	July 18-21, 2011	State and National Issues
Seminar VI	Washington DC, New Mexico, Arizona	September 19-29, 2011	Federal Government and National Issues
Seminar VII	Howey-In-the- Hills, FL	December 1-3, 2011	Interpersonal Development
Seminar VIII	Polk County, FL	February 20-23, 2012	Media Training and Current Agriculture and Natural Resource Issues
Seminar IX	Gainesville, FL	April 16-19, 2012	International Issues
Seminar X	France, Luxembourg, Belgium, The Netherlands	June 1-17, 2012	International Travel
Seminar XI	Orlando, FL	August 9-12	Graduation and Alumni Meeting

For this particular study, an examination of how individuals construct meaning was conducted using data from both individual and group reflection activities. These included transcripts of group reflection activities guided by participants, and individual reflections in the forms of questionnaires, photo journals and letters. Field notes were also used to supplement the data. The researcher adopted a relativist ontology and the epistemology of constructionism to view and understand the data. Data were comprised of reflection activities done on both the individual and group level; therefore two units of analysis were examined. With two units of analysis, both constructivism and social constructionism were employed as the theoretical perspectives for the study.

### **Ontology and Epistemology**

#### **Relativism**

In designing a study, researchers should select a research paradigm that is “congruent with their beliefs about the nature of reality” (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, p. 2). Relativism consists of constructed and co-constructed realities and asserts that there are multiple realities and knowledge is subject to interpretation by individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Those employing a relativist ontology believe in multiple realities and deny the existence of one truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Relativism recognizes that different individuals occupy different realities and these realities constitute diversity in ways of knowing and meaning (Crotty, 2010). Truth is understood as “relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture... there is a non-reducible plurality of such conceptual schemes” (Bernstein, 1983, p. 8). These multiple realities mean “that description can no longer be seen as straightforwardly representing reality” (Crotty, 2010, p. 64). Individuals report events by how they see and react to them; therefore reality is constructed within a

specific context. The world then, consists of multiple realities that are influenced by context (Crotty, 2010). A relativist approach to this research study assumes that multiple perspectives exist and these realities are voiced through reflection. Additionally the acknowledgement of multiple realities permits the researcher to attempt to understand participants' perspectives on different issues that are discussed and reflected upon.

## **Constructionism**

Crotty (2003) contended that constructionism is removed from the objectivism or the positivistic view of research, but is also separated from the view of subjectivism. Constructionism in epistemology is compatible with relativism in ontology in that when a concept is socially constructed it is seen as reality in an individual's world. Therefore, social constructionism is also relativist. Constructionism is defined as "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 2003, p. 42). Meaning in this context is not discovered but rather created and constructed through interaction between the object and the subject engaged within that setting (Crotty, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Constructionism allows the researcher to understand and explain how they know about the research, however, constructionism is separate from subjectivism because meanings emerge from the interaction and how the subject relates to something and not just the meaning they impose on it (Crotty, 2003). In research, meaning is co-constructed by the researcher and participants through their interaction. In this grounded theory study, this interaction and engagement between the

two parties allows the researcher to explore different ways of looking at a single concept.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

This study utilized the theoretical frameworks of constructivism and social constructionism. A theoretical perspective is “a way of looking at the world and making sense of it. It involves knowledge and embodies a certain understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that is, how we know what we know” (Crotty, 2003, p. 8). Constructivism is defined as “meaning making and constructing of social and psychological worlds within the individual through cognitive processes” (Young & Collin, 2004, p. 375). The world becomes understood and meaningful in the mind which indicates relativist ontology and an epistemology of subjectivism. Constructivists are “oriented to the production of reconstructed understandings of the social world” (p. 158). Constructivism is a “research paradigm that denies the existence of an objective reality, asserting instead that realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exist as many such constructions as there are individuals” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 43). In learning and the construction of knowledge, reality is an individual experience (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The use of constructivism as a theoretical perspective acknowledges that each individual makes their own sense of the world (Crotty, 2010). Constructivism is primarily an individualistic activity and the theory “points out the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one’s way of making sense of the world is valid and worth of respect as any other, thereby tending to scotch any hind of critical spirit” (Crotty, 2010, p. 58). Constructivism aligns itself with social constructionism in that it “means that we do not find or discover knowledge so much as we construct or make it” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In learning and the construction of

knowledge, reality is an individual experience (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). The use of constructivism as a theoretical perspective acknowledges that each individual makes their own sense of the world (Crotty, 2003).

Though the definitions describing constructivism utilize the social world, it is important to note, that meanings made in the mind as opposed to social constructionism in which meaning is a product of social consensus. Social constructionism “emphasizes meaning making and knowledge production processes that are guided by conventions of language and different forms of socialization” (Puig, Koro-Ljungberg, & Echevarria-Doan, 2008, p. 140). Social constructionism contrasts with constructivism in having a more focus on the social aspect as opposed to individual cognitive processes. Social constructionism aims to draw on constructionism but adds to it the dimensions of historical or sociocultural dynamics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Knowledge is a product of social actions and culture as opposed to interpretivism (Young & Collin, 2004). Social constructionism is interested in interactions and rhetorical processes. Individuals do not make sense of the world as single beings, but by engaging in a world of meaning (Crotty, 2003). The lenses used to view the world are influenced by the culture of a given group. Therefore, social constructionism “is all encompassing and it is not just our thoughts that are constructed for us. We have to reckon also with the social construction of emotions and meaningful reality. All reality, as meaningful reality is socially constructed” (Crotty, 2010, p. 54). In its epistemology, knowledge is historically and culturally specific and with that “language constitutes rather than reflects reality” (Young & Collin, 2004, p. 377). In this approach, knowledge is “not disinterested, apolitical, and exclusive of affective and embodied aspects of human experience, but in some sense

ideological, political and permeated with values" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 308). In social constructionism, when an object is described, it is not a straightforward representation as individuals report how they relate to the object which can be influenced by our culture. Individuals do not construct knowledge just on "their own interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, languages and so forth" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 197). Individuals do not make sense of the world as single beings but by engaging in a world of meaning (Crotty, 2003). The lenses used to view the world are influenced by the culture of a given group.

### **Researcher Subjectivity**

Subjectivity is not "composed of lenses that you can put on or take off, but rather that each of us live at the complex and shifting intersections of identity" (Glesne, 2011, p. 154). As a researcher designing a grounded theory of reflection within an agricultural leadership program context, I included a researcher subjectivity statement to display experiences from my life that have influenced the lens in which I view the agricultural industry and agricultural leadership programs. Creswell (1994) stated that "the researcher is to "report faithfully these realities and to rely on voices and interpretations of informants" (p. 6).

Agriculture and rural life have always been a part of my life experience and will continually play a role in my aspirations as a leadership specialist and teacher. Overtime, my focus has changed, but the desire to serve the agricultural industry has not wavered. Throughout my college career, I realized I wanted to focus on the people involved in the industry. As I advanced in my studies and career, I realized I wanted to work with adult groups in non-formal settings.

While working for the New Mexico Department of Agriculture I helped establish the New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program. The program's purpose was to provide leadership training and issue awareness to individuals in the food, agriculture and natural resource industries of the state. I familiarized myself with different agricultural leadership programs. I also learned how industry functions and how its challenges and opportunities demand strong leadership to ensure success. This was confirmed by learning about the success of different agricultural leadership programs and the impacts program participants were making across the country.

Through my experience, I saw success in class participants as a result of the developed skills, understanding of issues, and the networks established. I understood the processes of developing leaders through training. Upon this realization, I wanted to do more than just facilitate a program, but also focus on teaching and learning methods within these programs. This led me to pursue a doctoral degree at the University of Florida.

I am currently completing my doctoral degree in Agricultural Education and Communication with an emphasis in Agricultural Leadership. For the first two years of my program, I worked with the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources (WLIANR). The program built upon my previous experience by placing an emphasis on research to develop leaders for the industry. Duties included assisting in program administration, alumni operations, recruitment and promotion. For the majority of my assistantship, I worked with Class VIII. Working with the program gave me the opportunity to design a research program with the main focus being on experiential learning processes and reflection within an agricultural leadership program.

I believe that a focus on developing leaders is essential to the survival of the agricultural industry. Agriculture and natural resource industries continue to face multiple challenges that affect the viability and economic strength of its businesses. To address these challenges, leaders need to understand the world in terms of social, economic, cultural and political realties among not only the industry, but also its consumer. I believe that as agriculture continues to be a major driving force in our nation's economy, effective leaders are an important commodity. In addition to producing food and agricultural products, the industry has the responsibility of ensuring long term sustainability in changing times. This is even more so now as the industry prepares to feed a growing population. The question arises, how do we successfully prepare agricultural leadership program participants to lead the industry through these changing/ turbulent times and take care of the needs of its consumer? Research has shown that agricultural leadership programs are effective in developing the leaders for the industry, but how leadership programs are developing these leaders through teaching and learning methods has not been examined. One of the more common approaches to learning in these programs is experiential learning with emphasis placed on the activity of reflection.

Working in two different programs, I observed participants learning from their own experiences and the experiences of others. This contributes to my philosophy on experiential learning, reflection and constructivism/ social constructionism. Understanding of complex issues can be achieved through times of introspection and/ or discussion with others. These activities take place during times of personal or group reflection. During reflection activities, I believe participants were given opportunity to

understand and interpret information, build existing information, and examine their own beliefs. As a qualitative researcher, it was important to me to listen to the voices of the participants and be faithful in reporting their observations during reflection activities.

The lens in which I view the agricultural industry and agricultural leadership programming has been influenced by my experiences. The need for leadership within the industry has been guided by a motivation to see successful leadership within the industry which has grown through interaction with current and future industry leaders. Through establishing an agricultural leadership program, working for the WLIANR and participating in leadership programs such as LEAD 21, an understanding of the needs met by leadership programs and how these programs operate has led me to pursue this research.

While I realize full objectivity is impossible and my perspectives play an influence on the data collection and analysis, I also do not want to distort what participants shared. Charmaz (2006) indicated that both researcher reflexivity and prior knowledge of the field influence the researcher. These two aspects combine under the interpretivist research principle of the researcher as the instrument of data collection. The literature was used to develop “sensitivity toward concepts that guide the initial and theoretical choices regarding where to find data and what data to observe as meaningful” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 16). This process took place during memo writing and analysis. My knowledge stems from research and classwork on experiential learning, reflection, leadership development and agricultural leadership programs. Additionally though the literature did not directly guide how I chose my specific theoretical codes, which were chosen through the memo-ing process, I was able to return to the data and

the research to confirm how findings fit within the context of agricultural leadership programs.

Data collection concluded in August 2012. Though data collection concluded, I stayed involved in the program and kept in contact with participants through my assistantship and alumni activities. I did not revisit the data for this study and attempted to pull myself away from the data for several months to increase my objectivity and decrease my familiarity with the data and the participants in order to see it with fresh eyes in an attempt to supplement my data collection field notes with new insights.

I acknowledge that I was a participant in the process. I experienced the leadership development program alongside the participants. I did not participate in reflection activities, but listened to participant observations and transcribed field notes documenting my impressions and instincts. Though I did not know what the objective of the reflection would be, I did not try to drive the conversation by participating. However, in my field notes I attempted to make connections to program objectives. In this, I experienced each speaker and field visit. I was given the opportunity to experience the leadership program and in doing so, as much as I tried to separate myself, I must acknowledge that the leadership program experience played an influence on the data analysis, as I was able to recall my own construction of the experience. With that, it cannot be negated that my experiences played a role in the analysis. Though I took several months off between data collection and data transcription and analysis, my experiences played a role in how the data was categorized and analyzed.

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this study is to explore how an adult agricultural leadership program utilized reflection methods and to determine how various reflection methods

influenced the development of critical reflection. The primary method of investigation was grounded theory.

**Participants.** Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants for this study. Participants were members of Class VIII of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources (WLIANR). Participants ( $N = 30$ ) of the study were members of the WLIANR Class VIII. Eighteen males and 12 females, ranging from 26 to 52 years of age, representing a cross section of the state's agriculture and natural resource industries made up the census of this study (WLIANR, 2011). Participants represented the citrus, fruit and vegetable production, horticulture, energy, natural resources, chemical and fertilizer, forestry, agribusiness and industry support, and diversified production industries of Florida. The industry breakdown of participants is provided in Table 3-2. Participants came from the north, central, southwest, southeast, and central regions of the state. Four participants represented the northern region of Florida which included the panhandle and the counties of Gilchrist and Alachua. The central region had the largest number of participants in the class at 19. The central region included Seminole, Orange, Polk, Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, Highlands, Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties. Three participants came from the southwest region of Florida which was made up of Lee and Hendry Counties. Finally, the four participants from the southeast region of Florida represented Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade Counties. Individuals were able to participate in the program through nomination and selection. Selection criteria included:

1. Nomination by a recognized leaders in Florida agriculture or natural resources
2. United States citizenship

3. Private sector employment whereas a significant part of their income comes from Florida's agriculture or natural resource industries, or public sector employment whereas the job interacts with Florida's agriculture or natural resource industries.
4. Demonstrated ability to be away from the participants' occupation for the required time of the program.
5. Demonstrated leadership qualities and community involvement.
6. Potential leadership contribution to the states' agriculture and natural resources industries.
7. Evidence of concern for issues outside of their own perspective.
8. Evidence of the likelihood of personal growth as a result of the program
9. Good character and reputation as evidenced by references
10. Full commitment to participation in the two year program

**Table 3-2. Industry Breakdown of Participants**

Industry	Number of Participants
Citrus	5
Fruit and Vegetable Production	4
Environmental Horticulture	4
Energy	2
Natural Resources	3
Forestry	3
Agribusiness and Industry Support	3
Diversified Production	3

### **Data Collection**

Data collection was collected over two years, beginning at the first seminar of Class VIII's experience in 2010 following Institutional Review Board Approval for the study (UFIRB # 2010-U-1058). For the purposes of this study, data included participant guided group reflections which were transcribed by the researcher, questionnaires on topics from specific seminars, letters, and photo journals. The data were also

supplemented by field notes. Each instrument was designed by the researcher and panel of experts at the University of Florida.

For the purpose of design and analysis, data collection was grouped into the categories of group reflection and individual reflection to correspond with the two theoretical perspectives of constructivism (individual) and social constructionism (group). Both types of data were collected throughout the 11 seminars of the Class VIII curriculum. To preface the study, during Seminar One, the researcher presented to the class the objectives of the research and asked consent to collect data for the study from each participant. Table 3-3 provides a description of the data collected over the two years on both the individual level and the group level. As stated earlier, data is supplemented by researcher field notes from each seminar. Data were collected through group and individual reflection activities, including recording and transcribing group reflection activities, participant questionnaires, letters and photo journals. Individual reflection activities and group reflection prompts are provided in Appendix A and Appendix B. Appendix C provides several examples of photos used in the photo journaling activity.

Table 3-3. Data Collection

Seminar	Individual Reflection	Group Reflection
Seminar I		Group reflection
Seminar II	Personal letter describing WLIANR experiences	
Seminar III	Questionnaire on the legislative process at the state level	
Seminar IV		Group reflection activity field notes
Seminar V		Group reflection
Seminar VI	Photo journal	Group reflection
Seminar VII Seminar VIII	Questionnaire on experience in media relations	Group reflection
Seminar IX		Group reflection
Seminar X		Group reflection
Seminar XI	Questionnaire on the use of reflection	Group reflection

### Data Analysis

The study's methodology utilized Charmaz's (2006) perspective on constructivist grounded theory. Grounded theory is designed to build a theory of a practice that is bound within a specific context of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998, Creswell, 1998). According to Greckhamer and Koro-Ljungberg (2005), grounded theory "may best be understood as a method- a set of techniques or procedures designed to produce a certain kind of knowledge- that has evolved and continues maturing during the years to come" (p. 730). The method seeks to develop theory

about everyday issues (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and these theories produced are bound to the context in which they are studied (Creswell, 2007). The theory generated is ‘grounded’ in data that displays the conditions of a given situation and displays how individuals involved in the changing conditions react as a result of those actions (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). The theory emerged from symbolic interactionism, which examines an individual in society and the relationship between the individual and their perceptions and actions (Annells, 1996). The individual and their perceptions do not exist until they interact with the world.

Over time, several transformations of grounded theory have occurred including the traditional approaches of Glaser & Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1990; 1998) and Charmaz (2005; 2006). Approaches are the same in that the theory requires the researcher to address the same characteristics: theoretical sensitivity on part of the researcher, theoretical sampling, treatment of the literature, constant comparative methods, coding, the meaning of verification, identifying the core category, memo-ing and diagramming, and the measures of trustworthiness (McCann & Clark, 2003). These approaches can be distinguished by their ontological, epistemological approaches and their methodology (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). In the evolution of the theory, the relationship between the researcher and participant has changed in that the researcher’s epistemology plays a role in the meaning of the research reported (Mills, et al., 2006). Constructivist grounded theory is the most contemporary approach in that as the researcher collects data and reconstructs experience, meaning, and how reality is defined in the study. In her approach, constructivist grounded theory; Charmaz (2005) proposes a contemporary approach to grounded theory analysis. Past methods in

grounded theory have relied on objectivism, whereas Charmaz recommends using a constructionist epistemology to study and interpret data and build a theory.

A constructivist approach to grounded theory is appropriate for this study because “data do not provide a window on reality. Rather the discovered reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural contexts” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 524). In this type of analysis, researchers seek meanings for not only what is said or written through reflection activities, but also question the values and beliefs that underlie the participants’ statements. The interaction between the researcher and participants “produces the data, and therefore the meanings that the researcher observes and defines” (Charmaz, 1995, p. 35). In the analysis, the researcher is the co-creator of knowledge and in that the description of the situation and interaction effect how reflection activities will be reported.

In conducting data analysis using constructivist grounded theory, guidelines are provided as tools for analysis, but the emphasis is more on studying the phenomenon rather than just the methods of study (Charmaz, 2006). The theory takes a ‘reflexive stance’ on knowledge and the representation of the phenomenon. In that, close attention is paid to “empirical realities and our collected renderings of them- and locating oneself in these realities” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 509). Charmaz points out that data is not waiting to be discovered, but is created through interaction between the participants and researcher. In that, the researcher brings with them their frame of reference (Charmaz, 2005).

Constructivist grounded theory is used in this study to render information from group and individual reflection activities. Once data were collected, the process of

coding and analyzing the data began. Charmaz (2006) recommends a temporal sequence of benchmarks in the research and analysis process. The steps include gathering data, coding, memo writing, theoretical sampling, sorting, and assessment. Similar to Charmaz (2006), Pidgeon and Henwood (2006) provided a guided framework through the series of analysis that starts with an initial topic and moves through composing research questions, data collection, building theoretical categories, interpretations, models and written accounts of theory through indexing and memo writing. Through the initial questions, data preparation, and analysis, the researcher develops concepts, definitions and theoretical accounts to form the grounded theory. Figure 3-1 displays the steps in the grounded theory process as proposed by Pidgeon and Henwood (2006).

Data were collected from November 2010 to August 2012. To separate herself from the data, the researcher did not transcribe or analyze for nine months following the last data collection point. Nine months following collection, the researcher prepared the data by transcribing the group reflection activities along with each of the individual reflection questionnaires, letters, and photo journals. Following collection and data storage, open coding began, coding each reflection activity individually. Open coding commenced chronologically, with the researcher analyzing each reflection activity separately in the order in which they were collected. For example, the group reflection activity in Seminar One was analyzed for initial codes followed by Seminar Four, Seminar Five and so on. This played a role on how codes were formed as reflection activities at the beginning of the two year experience started the coding process and

initial codes. Through a constant comparative analysis, codes grew and evolved as each reflection transcription was added to the analysis.

Individual and group reflection activities were coded independently. All individual reflections were carried through to the focused coding stage before group reflections were coded with the intention of keeping individual and group reflection activities separate and in accordance with the theoretical perspectives of constructivism (individual reflections) and social constructionism (group reflections) within the epistemology of constructionism.

Throughout the process of transcription and coding, the researcher added to field notes recording observations about the data as was conducted in the field notes for the collection process. Following coding, the researcher worked with her dissertation committee to review index systems and models created through the core analysis. As outcomes from the data were assessed, the researcher reviewed the data in conjunction with all field notes to determine if data needs to be revisited or more data should be added to the categories to achieve saturation.

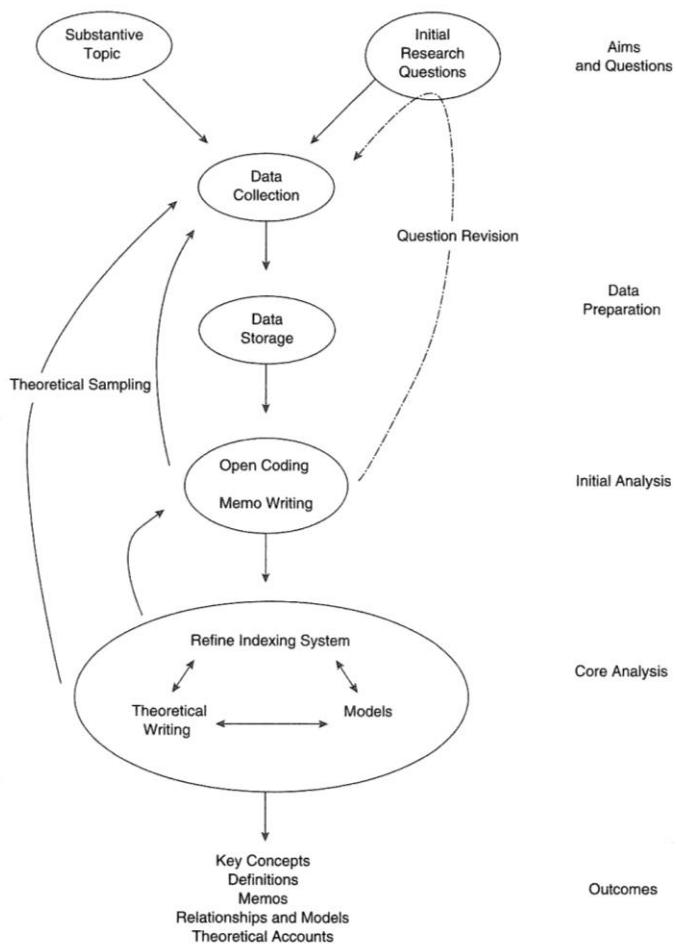


Figure 3-1. Steps in the grounded theory process. Adapted from “Grounded Theory,” by N. Pidgeon and K. Henwood, 2006, *Handbook of Data Analysis*, p. 631.

**Field Notes.** Following each seminar, the researcher compiled observations, questions, and impressions into field notes. Field notes provided a context for reflections used in the data analysis. The researcher attempted to provide rich descriptions for each piece of data. Field notes included participant's names to coincide with their contributions to the group reflection, impressions of their dialogue and context to the statements provided. For example, if a significant event took place over the course of the seminar, it was recorded in the field notes. The field notes also provided participants' impressions of speakers, observations that were not recorded in the reflections, and any challenges that may have confronted the class during the seminar.

In addition to field notes, the researcher utilized other program materials to supplement the data analysis. This included recruitment materials and program information as well as newsletters written by participants following each seminar.

**Coding.** Interpretation of the data were completed through coding and analysis. Codes were separated, sorted and synthesized using qualitative coding procedures outlined by Charmaz (2006). Each data source was coded using initial focused and theoretical coding procedures. In-vivo codes were used to represent the statements of the participants. In initial coding, line-by-line coding was utilized. In focused coding, the researcher determined the most useful initial codes to review all data and assure that data fit within the given codes. Data were first broken down by individual and group activity, then by objective. The categories that formed as a result of the focused codes were either classified as themes of reflection (objective two) or processes of reflection (objectives one and three). After initial coding, all data were reviewed in each objective to confirm saturation. Following focused coding; theoretical coding was conducted to specify the relationships between the categories selected in the focused coding process (Charmaz, 2006). Appendix D provides an example of the coding process indicating initial codes drawn from text and the focused codes that emerged from the data.

**Theoretical Sampling.** As stated in the limitations of the study, theoretical sampling of the purposive sample was not conducted as the study was designed after data was collected. Theoretical sampling consists of the researcher gathering “more data that focuses on the category and its properties” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). The process allows for the conceptual and theoretical development as opposed to description and depth of the sample. Charmaz (2006) wrote that “when your categories

are full, they reflect qualities of your respondents' experiences and provide a useful, analytic handle for understanding them" (p. 100). A modified theoretical sampling was conducted in the study by the researcher sifting through the data and revisiting each reflection activity after theoretical codes began to develop. As data was collected, the researcher was concerned with collecting data to inform the study of the use of reflection within an agricultural leadership program. Participants yielded rich information as they were taught early in the program how to reflect and throughout the two years were given multiple opportunities to reflect at both individual and group levels. Participants in the program, and therefore the study, were selected based on common criteria, however, their experience, personal interpretations of experiences (constructivism), and demographics varied widely. This aided in the adequacy of the theoretical sample as it "is judged on the basis of how widely and diversely the analyst chose [her] groups from saturating categories according to the type of theory [she] wished to develop" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 63).

The development of the theoretical categories carried the weight of the analysis (Charmaz, 2006). As the theoretical categories emerged from the data, neither data nor theories were discovered, but were instead "constructed through past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (p. 10). As with beginning grounded theory studies, a weakness may lie in that additionally collected data could influence the applicability and thoroughness of the theory (Charmaz, 2006). Future theoretical sampling to check and distill the theoretical categories developed in this study can continue as data from multiple populations and contexts are collected for future studies.

## **Qualitative Measures of Validity and Reliability**

In order to achieve quality in the study, the researcher utilized Tracy's (2010) eight criteria for a quality study: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical procedure, and meaningful coherence. These "big tent" criteria incorporate multiple paradigms of qualitative research. Topics can be influenced by previous literature and concepts or by societal events. As agricultural programs have been examined for individual and community level outcomes, a study in learning methods and particularly reflection is a worthy topic that is relevant and timely and significant in the research field of agricultural leadership programs. The study can build on prior outcome studies and provide knowledge on how these outcomes can be achieved through learning methods.

According to Tracy (2010), "when research merely confirms existing assumptions, people will deny its worthwhile acknowledging its truth" (p. 841). Rigor was established by using multiple theoretical constructs: experiential learning, adult learning, reflection, critical reflection, constructivism and social constructionism. Additionally rigor was established through extensive time spent in the field and within the extensive data analysis. Sincerity was achieved through researcher reflexivity and the researcher being honest and transparent throughout the collection and data analysis. Resonance was achieved through increasing reaction and understanding in the reader by using naturalistic generalizations and transferability of the study's findings. The study made a significant contribution to the field by contributing to the theory, method, practice and future research of experiential learning, adult learning, reflection, agricultural leadership programs and adult leadership programming. The researcher followed ethical procedures throughout data collection and time in the field as well as

during data analysis by staying true to participants observations. Research that is gauged on its meaningful coherence is examined to determine if it has achieved its intended purpose and if this research design, data collection and analysis ties into the problem and theoretical framework. This was established through the researcher tying the proposed grounded theory to the data and to previous literature. This indicated that the grounded theory supplemented the bodies of literature in agricultural leadership programs and reflection. In this step, the researcher was also able to indicate the role she played in the entire research process (Tracy, 2010).

The final measure for quality proposed by Tracy (2010) is credibility. Credibility is established through the trustworthiness of the study and dependability of its findings which was provided by thick description of the findings by the researcher providing context to each reported findings. Crystallization was chose as a measure of credibility as it fits within the interpretive paradigm and social constructionism (Aguinaldo, 2004; Tracy, 2010). Crystallization was utilized by the researcher gathering data through various methods and frameworks to bring about truth of a larger picture. As data came together and surrounded a central theme, the quality of the research increased (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Through the use of field notes, data sources, and past research, multiple accounts of the same story were given.

### **Chapter Summary**

A thorough qualitative study is established by extensive field time, exhaustive and meticulous data analysis, and the ability to show multiple viewpoints in the data (Creswell, 1998). Chapter three discussed the methodology utilized in this study and includes descriptions of the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, researcher subjectivity, research design, population, data collection and data analysis

procedures. The study adopted a constructionism epistemology with constructivism serving as the theoretical perspective. The study was a grounded theory analysis that employed participants of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources to provide data. Data were presented in the written forms of field notes, transcribed participant guided group reflections; questionnaires, letters and journals. Data analysis was conducted using the approach employed by Charmaz (2006).

## CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore how an adult agricultural leadership program utilized reflection methods and to determine how various reflection methods influenced the development of critical reflection. The objectives for this study were;

1. To identify how program participants reflect on program experiences
2. To determine the themes and concepts from program experiences that participants are reflecting upon
3. To identify if or to what extent to which each reflection method utilized by the program produces critical reflection by the participants.

Chapter Two proposed a conceptual framework to guide the study that utilized the theories of constructivism and adult learning, and the approach of experiential learning. Studies on adult leadership development, agricultural leadership programs, and other adult leadership programs were reported to supplement the study. Chapter Three outlined the study's research design and methodology. Qualitative data were collected using participants group and individual reflections within an agricultural leadership program over the course of two years. Chapter Four describes the findings.

Data were collected through group and individual reflection activities, including recording and transcribing group reflection activities, participant questionnaires, letters and photo journals. Individual reflection activities and group reflection prompts are provided in Appendix A and Appendix B. Appendix C provides several examples of photos used in the photo journaling activity. Upon completion of data collection, data were divided into the three objectives of the study for analysis. Data in each objective was coded separately as Objectives One and Three sought to find categories in processes in reflection and Objective Two sought to find themes from participants'

reflections. Throughout the research categories are referred to as codes for Objectives One and Three and themes within Objective Two.

Interpretation of the data was completed through coding and analysis. A sample of coded text is provided in Appendix D. Within Objectives One and Three, 225 initial codes within individual reflection and 206 initial codes within group reflections emerged from the data. Within Objective Two, 332 initial codes within individual reflection and 351 initial codes within the group reflection emerged from the data. Each data source was coded using initial and focused coding procedures as outlined by Charmaz (2006). In initial coding, line-by-line coding was utilized. In focused coding, the researcher determined the most useful initial codes to review all data to assure that all data fit within the codes. This allowed the researcher to review and study data for themes and processes of reflection. Following initial and focused coding, theoretical coding was conducted to specify the possible relationships between the categories selected in the focused coding process (Charmaz, 2006).

Field notes were used to provide context to each reflection described in the findings. Following each seminar, the researcher compiled observations, questions, and impressions into field notes. The researcher attempted to provide rich descriptions for each piece of data. Field notes also supplemented the memo-ing process as field notes also provided participants' impressions of speakers, observations that were not recorded in the reflections and any challenges that may have confronted the class during the seminar. In addition to field notes, the researcher utilized other program materials to supplement the data analysis. This included recruitment materials and program information as well as newsletters written by participants following each

seminar. Findings offer a comparison between individual and group reflection as well as offer a comparison between different codes found within individual reflection and codes found within group reflection.

As provided in Chapter Three, Table 4-1 provides a description of the data collected over the two years on both the individual level and the group level.

**Table 4-1. Data Collection**

Seminar	Individual Reflection	Group Reflection
Seminar I		Group reflection
Seminar II	Personal letter describing WLIANR experiences	
Seminar III	Questionnaire on the legislative process at the state level	
Seminar IV		Group reflection activity field notes
Seminar V		Group reflection
Seminar VI	Photo journal	Group reflection
Seminar VII		
Seminar VIII	Questionnaire on experience in media relations	Group reflection
Seminar IX		Group reflection
Seminar X		Group reflection
Seminar XI	Questionnaire on the use of reflection	Group reflection

## **Objective One- How Participants Reflect on Program Experiences**

Data were first grouped into individual reflections and group reflections. Individual reflections were made up of questionnaires and journaling activities. Group reflections took place during seminars and were led by a program facilitator or class participant. Reflections would either take place at the midpoint or at the end of the seminar. The reflections were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. For the first objective, to determine how program participants reflect, data were categorized using Schon's (1983) Reflection-In-Action and Reflection-On-Action. Once data were grouped into individual and group reflections, data were grouped into the categories of Reflection-In-Action and Reflection-On-Action. Following the initial coding, processes participants were using to reflect were used to separate the data further into the subcategories which described processes of reflection. Codes found in individual and group activities are displayed in Table 4-2 and Table 4-3.

**Table 4-2. Reflection-In-Action Codes**

Reflection-In-Action- Individual Reflection	Reflection-In-Action- Group Reflection
Using Other's Experiences	Using Personal Experiences
Disclosing Goals and Wants	Learning through Shared Experiences
Conveying an Opinion	Connecting Multiple Class Experiences
Personal Responsibility and Obligation	

**Table 4-3. Reflection-On-Action Codes**

Reflection-On-Action- Individual Reflection	Reflection-On-Action- Group Reflection
Disclosing Goals and Wants	Using Personal Experiences
Observations of Self	Learning through Shared Experiences
Lessons Learned through Experience	Direct Observations
Reflection on Change and Transformation	Conveying Future Action

## **Reflection-In-Action- Individual Reflection**

For individual reflections coded for Reflection-In-Action, data were divided into the following categories; using other's experiences to convey an observation, using observations to disclose goals or wants, conveying an opinion, and conveying personal obligation or responsibility.

**Using other's experiences.** The first code to emerge within individual reflection-in-action was using other's experiences to convey an observation. Participants referred to colleagues, family members, past and present leaders, and speakers that had addressed the program. In doing so, reflect on what they thought and observed in that moment. Photo journals aided participants in reflecting-in-action as the photo provided a way for them to go back to the situation within their description. In the spirit of referring to past leaders experiences, one participant tied past leadership to today's challenges. The photo journaling activity was assigned the national issues seminar in Washington, DC, New Mexico and Arizona. Participants were asked to submit a photo and journal entry or write up to describe the experience and the reflection the photo evoked. To stimulate writing, they were asked why they chose the photo, how the photo described what they learned, and what the photo might suggest about their thoughts, values and assumptions. During the tour, one of Florida's Congressional leaders and his staff led the class through the capital stopping in various places to point out monuments and events in history that had taken place where the class was walking. One participant chose to take a photo and write on the experience that took place within the National Capitol and his thoughts while the class toured the Rotunda. In writing the journal, he shared his thoughts of those who had walked before him and stated what he was thinking at the time of the activity;

As I stood there, I thought about great individuals like George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Ronald Reagan. I thought about the men and women that had served and died in our military to give us the freedoms that we enjoy today. I thought about the sacrifice of those that had served as ambassadors in other countries separated from their families for years at a time. I thought even with the challenges we face today, our country is still one of the greatest and stands for good (Photo Journal, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

**Disclosing goals and wants.** The second code within individual reflection-in-action to emerge was using observations to disclose goals or wants. These codes were found solely in the reflection letter activity from Seminar Two. In this activity, participants were asked to write a letter to a family member, friend or colleague to detailing their experiences in the program. Letters were then submitted to the researcher for analysis. In the letters, participants showed desire to share what they had learned with others as well as referred to what they felt and how it might apply to a shared experience with the reader.

As part of Seminar Two, participants visited a homeless shelter in Miami. Following a meeting with the facility's administrators and tour, the class was charged with serving dinner as a team that evening to the population coming in from the streets. During the time class participants reported changes in their perspectives and how they were personally changed by the experience. At the end of the week one participant provided a letter that did not go into a description of the event, but disclosed how much he wanted his family, who was addressed in the letter, to experience what he had experienced. By the language used, it indicates he was thinking this as he was taking part in serving dinner that night at the shelter.

I wish our family could have witnessed that together. They would have seen life from a different perspective and realized how much they have, when they see families like the ones with nothing at all but the clothes on their backs (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Shared experiences were also indicated in another letter which addressed the experience at the shelter as well. Within this code, the participant referred to what they felt and how that might apply to a shared experience with the letter's reader. He also indicated how he realized what he could do at the given time and hoped to change as a result of the experience.

I know that you think that I am already a positive person with a good attitude, but when talking to the staff of this shelter, I knew I could bring myself up to an whole new level of positive attitude, that would in turn make everyone happier, and more motivated toward the success of the business we run (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

**Conveying an opinion.** The third code to emerge was participants conveying an opinion. Through the photo journaling exercise, opinions were conveyed referring to the knowledge of others. Two observations emerged out the photo journals in which participants were examining the behaviors of others, be it past leadership or present day colleagues. In one photo journal, a participant referred to what she saw and reflected upon during the Capitol Rotunda tour. The photo was of a painting of a particular point in history. In a previous reflection, this participant had indicated her political views and how they potentially differed from the rest of her classmates. In this reflection, the individual's background in law was also apparent. In this entry she discussed the thought the emotion provoked and what she was thinking at the time of the photo.

When I took this photo in the Capitol, it reminded me of all the history and conflict the United States has gone through since its inception. Many people today like to invoke the "Founding Fathers". But I believe most of them have absolutely no understanding of the thoughts of those leaders that actually make the basis of our government so great (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

For the same activity, another participant provided her opinion in relation to her own industry and occupation. The photo she submitted was taken outside of the American Farm Bureau office. The photo was of a quote which stated; “I know of no pursuit in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country than by improving its agriculture- George Washington.” At this point in the seminar, participants had been briefed on trade, world hunger, and agricultural policy. In the photo journal, the participant discussed agriculture’s important roles and need for improvement. In tying in the quote, the photo journal also included observations from past leadership in which the participant stated; “When I saw the quote, I thought even George Washington understood the role agriculture plays, not just then, but the important role it would play in the future” (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

**Personal Responsibility and Obligation.** The fourth and final code to emerge from the data for individual reflection-in-action was the sense of personal responsibility and obligation. Observations made in the photo journals used past leadership and the sacrifices of others to convey a personal sense of duty and addressed the skills participants need to work on to become better leaders.

Once again, the tour of the Capitol Rotunda was addressed. In the photo that corresponded with the following quote, the participant noted the importance of personal responsibility as a result of acknowledging what others had contributed to the nation’s history. In addition to not only thinking about what leaders had done in the past, the participant went on to discuss how he felt because of their actions. The participant stated that;

As the Congressman led us on this tour and into the Rotunda, I felt a sense of awe to think about the people that had been there and the history that occurred here in the past times. I was humbled and inspired to think about the faith, sacrifice and service of our founding fathers. I was reminded of the dedication of those currently serving, and my own responsibility to do what I can where I am to serve others (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Within the same activity, another participant addressed personal responsibility as a result of reflecting on what she had observed and learned as a result of the program. During the national trip, participants were given the opportunity to meet with officials and tour the National War College. As part of the tour, participants were led into a classroom in which an example from their curriculum was written on the whiteboard. The example (and subsequent photo for the photo journaling activity) was of a conflict resolution model. Conflict resolution had also been addressed in a previous seminar. The photo journal provided indication of personal constructivism, experiential learning in tying experiences together to create new knowledge, and reflection-in-action as the participant came to realization of those personal responsibilities bestowed upon leadership while she observed the diagram.

Reflecting on this classroom coincidence in the context of its location- the War College- reminded me that the freedoms I cherish have been won, and are defended by, those willing to give their lives to preserve what makes this country great. I was reminded anew of the debt I own and the obligation I have to give back some measure of what's been given to me (Photo Journals, Personal communication, September 29, 2011).

Individuals also addressed the skills they need to work on to become better leaders and obtain responsibility in previous seminars as well. In reflecting on the experience at the Community Partnership for the Homeless, one participant noted; "Once we toured the facility, talked to the main leaders of the facility and listened to his

story, I realized what I need to improve on. I need to become more of a motivator” (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

### **Reflection-In-Action Group Reflection**

Similar to the individual reflection activities, group reflections were broken up use of Reflection-In-Action and Reflection-On-Action. Categories under Reflection-In-Action included using a story or personal experience to reflection on observation outside the program, learning through shared class experiences, and connecting multiple class experiences.

**Using personal experiences.** The first code to emerge within group reflection-in-action was the use of personal stories to reflect on observations outside the program. Stories were used to explain interactions with others, opportunity for personal application, shared class experiences, and personal transformation.

During the Seminar Five, participants were asked to reflect on what they had learned as a result of the program so far. The first participant used a personal story about her interactions with others to describe what she had learned. To address the question stated;

I never understood the impact I was having on others. And the color sorting made me find out how true blue I was because if you got a 24, I was a 23 and three quarters for blue. Meant that I was doing for others in my association what I should have been leading them to do for themselves. And that if I truly wanted to be a leader, I needed to do less for them, but enable them to do it instead (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

This individual is an executive director of a state organization who manages staff and a board of directors. As a result of program experiences, she realized the importance of delegating work not only as a means to accomplish tasks but also teach others. In her reflection, she addressed her personality as ‘Blue.’ This refers back to

the “True Colors” assessment participants took early in the program in order to understand their own and others personalities. In this reflection statement, this individual stated how program experiences had been tied together and how she realized while working with her staff what she needed to do differently.

During this same reflection, personal stories were also used to share the application of what has been learned. This particular statement was part of a larger reflection. This participant had indicated the importance of passion and how it had been noticed in other individuals that had presented within the program seminars. After providing examples of other individuals’ passion, she talked about her own passion and how that passion had been recognized in her own work and how what she had learned through programming was being applied at a given time.

I actually presented this weekend at the small farms conference which is not always the friends of the [State Agricultural Organization] and I had a small farmer come up to me afterward’s and say to me “You can really tell you’re really passionate about what you do.” And that just hit home. I was just like, you know what, I’m really getting a lot out of Wedgworth because that’s one of the things I’ve really taken away (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 2011).

**Learning through shared experiences.** Another code to emerge under the use of personal stories and observations was learning through shared experiences. During the international seminar, participants addressed their observations and thoughts of what they had seen that week. The conversation during the reflection had geared toward what was learned and comparing it to what had been seen before or more familiar practices within processing and packaging of food and agricultural products; regulations on agricultural operations; and the use, sale and consumption of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in food and agriculture. As part of the international trip, participants were able to visit a seed company and plant in France. Before the

international seminar, participants had been briefed on international trade and the use of GMO's and their perception in Europe. As participant met with the seed company, the discussion of GMO's took place. In the reflection, one participant revisited the subject and noted;

Speaking of [Seed Company], I guess it was Monday we went to [Seed Plant]. France and the US are probably a lot more alike than we think. When GMO's came up, Michael and I were talking about it and that it's a contentious issue here. Because of the food safety programs and the fresh fruit, I was surprised that they were interested in potentially using that as a tool in orange production (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

Some participants went a step further in conveying not only what was learned, but how their thinking had been transformed by the experience. During the Seminar Five reflection a participant discussed a change in his thinking as a result of visiting a family owned oyster processing operation in Apalachicola, Florida during Seminar Four. The company's owner discussed with the class the challenges the oyster industry faced as a result of the economy and a large environmental disaster in April 2010. The owner of the processing operation discussed the economic impact of the spill (though it never breached Florida shores) and he discussed the loyalty or disloyalty of fishermen and oystermen in the area and how his business had taken a hit at a result. These boatmen had taken the opportunity to collect [Company] funds in order to work for [Company] to help clean up the spill. For the first time for many participants, it was the first time they had heard this side of the story. This emotional meeting influenced conversations that occurred for the remainder of Seminar Four and continued throughout the rest of the two years. The interaction with the oyster processing operation owner impacted one individual in particular and in the group discussion he observed that gained a greater understanding of the issue and not only the issue but also how one needs to examine

various sides of every issue before a decision is made. In the reflection, the participant stated;

The a-ha moment came to me in the last trip in Apalachicola. It was when we were going to [Oyster Processing Operation]. And the owner was there talking about what happened with [Company] and he started breaking down and got really, really personal and how it really affected his family and how it is affected its potentially affected his businesses. And it was like, "I get it now." ... this really allowed me to get a better understanding of sitting back and saying okay, now what is the issue? Why do I need to think this way or why can't you accept my way? It's no longer that way, you've really got to open a box and make a better decision. And I think that's really ingrained with Wedgworth (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 2011).

**Connecting Multiple Class Experiences.** Finally, the third code to emerge was connecting multiple class experiences. Reflections could explain lessons learned from two separate events. This occurred mainly within the national and international trip seminars.

During the national trip, participants had the opportunity to visit with their congressmen (or staff) and discuss three issues impacting Florida agriculture and natural resources. The issues of water, immigration, and government regulation were discussed at length within Seminar Five, which was the seminar to prepare participants for the national trip experience. In addition to discussions of the three issues, participants also participated in an agenda setting workshop which prepared them to present on these three topics to their congressmen on Capitol Hill. Participants had a variety of different experiences with their congressional offices. During the national trip reflection, one participant offered his insight on the meeting but also tied it an interaction that took place later in the national seminar. After leaving Washington DC, participants traveled to the southwest United States. In New Mexico, one of the program speakers

addressed the importance of being ‘viable, valuable and visible’. This particular participant tied being visible to what he had learned in the meeting.

It kind of hit home for me in Washington, even before [Program Speaker] made his comments last night. Because [class participant] and I at our meeting with [Congressman].... We knew what to say, we had ahead of time. We met with a lower assistant and it really hit me there that we need to be more vocal, viable, visible, valuable... we need to have a greater impact than we have now and it just made me realize again last night when we heard those words from [Program Speaker] (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, September 27, 2011).

During the international seminar, participants also tied what was learned to a previous seminar. As part of the program, participants were able to visit a seed company and plant, where they met up with a leadership program alumni member who also worked for the seed company in France. The alumni member offered insight on the seed industry, company and plant; and on the importance of the program participants as leaders to be vocal for the industry. During the international trip reflection one participant stated;

I think yesterday, the a-ha moment or the feeling that we are all connected and that this is connected to our other trips was when [Alumni Member] said, “You’ve got to make sure that we are heard” not just in Florida, but across the world. And that took me right back to New Mexico when [State Representative] said “Farmers raise everything but their voices.” And so, it was one the a-ha’s because it shows that it’s connected and connected all this together. This is why we are in this program. This is why we are here (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

### **Reflection-On-Action- Individual Reflections**

For individual reflections coded for Reflection-on-Action, data were divided into the following categories; conveying goals or wants, observation of self, observation of others, lessons learned through experiences or examples, and reflection on change or transformation.

**Conveying Goals and Wants.** The first code to emerge within individual reflection-on-action was conveying goals or wants. As mentioned before, passion was a dominant theme within discussions and individual reflections. During Seminar Two, participants were asked to write a letter to discuss what was learned and to describe experiences. In this activity, some participants disclosed they were influenced by individuals which in turn influenced their own goals. At the beginning of Seminar Two, the first speaker addressed the importance of doing one's job with passion. Agriculture's importance had also been discussed during the seminar during discussion about Miami-Dade County and its agricultural industry as well as discussions about the importance of being an agricultural leader within urban areas. In the following reflection, the participant joined both the passion he had for his industry and the importance of agriculture to the state.

Next, I have been impressed with the common theme of people's passion both from other classmates, and from program speakers. This passion is encouraging and inspirational. I hope to have the same level of passion for my job in striving to help Florida agriculture while helping to make Florida better (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

During the same reflection activity, another participant conveyed the influence of program and industry leaders on his own aspirations within agriculture.

I have only had a small sampling of what this program has in store for me. If it's anything like what I have experienced so far, not only will I be exposed to the different industries in Florida, the leaders that help to make this industry great, but I also hope to become more engaged, open-minded, leader myself (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Communication of goals and wants were also included throughout other seminars and their activities. For example, during Seminar Three, one participant noted appreciation for what they had learned and explained how the experience will be

applied: “I now feel more confident in my abilities to help promote or stop legislation.

The process does work and I will continue to be more active” (Individual Reflection,

Seminar Three Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

**Observations of Self.** The second code to emerge within individual reflection-on-action was observations of self. Participants focused mainly on what they learned or learning practices. This theme resonated throughout the two years.

The media training, which took place during Seminar Eight, gave participants the opportunity to learn about the media and how to better present themselves on camera.

Through this learning exercise, participants were given an issue to prepare to present in a mock interview in front of the camera. The individual conducting the workshop and mock interviews was a former program participant and had extensive experience with industry communications. At the end of the media training, participants were asked a series of questions about the training and what was learned. One of the questions asked was; once finished with the exercise, did the feelings you had in anticipation of the exercise change? On being asked about the media training, one participant replied:

“I liked that it was not real. But it gave me the opportunity to experience it and learn some of the ways I can improve without having to make a fool of myself in public”

(Media Training Reflection, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012). Most reflections were based on how they would change their behavior if they could do the exercise over again or what they could apply from the exercise in the future. In other observations of personal growth, one participant noted that “I focus more during my reflection. I evaluate decisions- could something have been improved?” (Individual Reflection, Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2013).

Participants also used Reflection-In-Action to provide observations of themselves throughout other reflections within the two year program. In the beginning of the program and the first few individual reflection activities participants also conveyed how they felt. One participant noted: “Although I’m still processing how I feel about some of the Miami experiences, I can tell you that going to the homeless shelter was quite humbling. It choked me up a little bit and I can tell you I feel so fortunate for who I am and what I have” (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011). Though one participant admitted they did not learn anything to change how they felt about a situation, they did admit how they see themselves differently, “Can’t say I learned anything new about the process that’s changed my impressions. Rather I feel I’ve learned how to be a more effective piece of the process” (Seminar Three Reflection, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

Finally in making observations of themselves, participants also compared themselves to others they had met during the program. During Seminar Two, participants were able to visit an FFA chapter program in Miami. During the meeting, the chapter officers presented on agri-science projects and their Supervised Agriculture Experience Programs. At the conclusion of the seminar, one participant noted; “The FFA kids at Coral Reef were inspiring and I was amazed that they so freely got up to do a presentation. I don’t think I was that poised at their age” (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

**Lessons Learned through Shared Experiences.** The third code to emerge within individual reflection-on-action was lessons learned through experiences. These in

depth reflections referred to fellow class participants, locations visited and applied lessons.

When participants reflected on their fellow classmates they discussed some of the important events that defined them as a team. At the beginning of Seminar One, participants met at a local challenge ropes course to participate in team building activities. One of the more challenging activities consisted of a participant climbing to the top of a 30 foot pole supported by ropes that were guarded and maneuvered by their class mates, who at the time were still unfamiliar as relationships had not developed. The lesson of strong relationships was learned at that time and was reflected on during Seminar Two in the individual reflection activity.

From there, our adventures took us to conquering a high ropes challenge course, where we climbed over 30 feet up a pole, jumped off a platform and rang a bell. I am still amazed that not only did I climb that high, but I was able to count on and trust these 30 new friends that I had just met only hours ago (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Participants also reflected on learning from fellow classmates during the national seminar. The national seminar presented several challenges as an emergency caused the program director to fly home leaving the class short one program staff member. Though there were two other staff present, the class seemed to come together for the last leg of the national trip. At one point in the program, the class came together to pray for the program director's father as well as the fathers of two of the participants. One participant noted the journey they had taken together in his photo journal.

With a positive step in the right direction we cannot create ourselves what has been created for us an important lesson that many times we can forget. This concept was evident through the ability of our class to really come together on this trip. I am blessed to be a part of a group that comes together and will always look to help others. Whether it be to gather to pray together send out well wishes to those in need or just to listen to what others have to say, we have a great group of individuals that have become

a family this past year. We understand that in order to lead and to enact change in our daily lives and for our industry, we will not be able to do so by ourselves (Photo Journal, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

During the national trip, participants also reflected on specific experiences to detail what they had learned. As part of seminar programming in Arizona, participants met with Cooperative Extension Service officials and visited a controlled environment facility. Presenters discussed the ability to raise crops in the facility in times of drought or when water was not readily available for consumption. Producers within the class observed the benefits to the controlled environment and also applied it to their own challenges in production. One participant noted;

I thoroughly enjoyed this tour and visit to the CEA, taking in all aspects of crop production and how through research, they are producing crops for maximum productivity. I think that the aspect of this tour that intrigued me the most was the controlled environmental realm of crop production. As a fifth generation Florida farmer, I know firsthand how valuable an asset the resource of agriculture is to not only my family, community, and state, but to our country and furthermore the world. One of our biggest enemies in the agricultural business is managing our environment. To the Florida farmer, our environment can help our industry grow, prosper, and thrive, or destroy and devastate. How wonderful it would be to take this uncertainty away, to be able to grow our crops and/or livestock in a certain, efficient, and environmentally friendly way, resulting in high value crop production. This photo to me evokes the resolution of the scientist, engineer, student, and farmer. In the ever changing world of agriculture, where challenges are the one aspect that has remained throughout time, in this photo, I see hope. Hope for today's farmer, and thankfully, hope for tomorrow's farmer too (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

**Reflection on Change and Transformation.** The fourth code to emerge for individual's reflection-on-action was reflection on change and transformation. Participants addressed what had aided them with the change or growth through reflection as well as mentioned actual changes as a result of the program. One participant observed how the program had aided her own personal growth and on focusing more on changes being made with daily tasks.

Lastly, I'm seeing a need to move a few things a mile, rather than a whole lot of things a little bit. Focus, focus, focus; and then execute. I'm seeing ways to step up and be more effective. I'm learning! (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

During the last seminar, participants were asked to reflect on how they would use the practice of reflection in the future. Participants offered responses ranging from daily practice to how they had personally changed as a result of reflection. One participant expressed that participating in the program helped him with his job change (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Another participant noted that "Reflection has personally helped me grow. I have left every seminar reflecting on how I can be a better person" (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). As a result of learning and reflection another participant noted: "I will make a greater effort to set aside preconceived notions of people and locations until I can experience them first hand. As well, I will try to make real connections to these folks with whom I have interactions" (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

### **Reflection-On-Action Group Reflection**

Categories in group reflection under Reflection-On-Action included; using personal experiences to convey understanding, referring to shared experiences, direct observation, and conveying future action.

**Using Personal Experiences.** The first code to emerge was using personal experiences to convey understanding. In discussing personal experiences, participants would address areas of improvement or identification. One participant addressed how the program and the skills learned in the program have provided them with new experiences. This participant also elaborated on the use of the network. He also

explained how a fellow classmate had set up meetings that then brought along opportunity for him to become more involved in his community.

Talk about networking. About a month and a half ago, [name] called me and asked if he could have some people over to our place for a dinner... His aunt, I believe, serves on the economic council of Okeechobee, who had not been to our place. She was impressed with what she saw and I got to talking with her a little bit and she said, "Well we would really like to have you at our next board meeting." So that turned into fill out the application to be a board member. So I am now meeting with them on the economic council thanks to our friend [name] who left me holding the bag. I wanted to tell you that little story because I thought it might be kind of neat to share based on how networking works (Group Reflection, Seminar Nine, Personal Communication, April 18, 2011).

Other participants referred back to personal experiences to convey how and why they got involved in the program. Separate from the first example of personal experiences to become involved in industry and community, participants conveyed importance in becoming involved in the program. Participants reflected on how being engaged would aid them in their personal aspirations and the personal growth that took place as a result of enrollment in the program. In discussing why she got involved in the program and the benefits it reaped, one participant stated:

I was blessed to be hired at [organization] by [organization leader] and he passed away this past year. But he always used to tell me, and it's true, "it's all about relationships and that is what this is about. The relationships we have with our friends and family. But we are a family. Not only within the class have we built relationships but with our speakers or whoever, but also outside of this class." And what we've done with the [Foundation] or whatever the case may be we have a great network that does make us stronger (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

**Using Shared Experiences.** The second code to emerge from reflection-on-action within the group was the use of shared experiences among the participants. In this, participants tended to group multiple experiences into one statement without providing detail on each experience as they were a shared construction and there was a

shared understanding of what was learned. For example, one participant referred to the week of experiences during the reflection at the end of the week. During this particular seminar, participants focused on issue awareness and learning processes. He observed that;

For me the word would be experiences. Just thinking back on this week. We went from a feed mill today. We were talking with orange growers and in the strawberry fields, and in front of the camera on media day. I mean, the amount of things we have done. Not just this week but the whole program.(Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 23, 2012).

This same reflective process was apparent earlier on in the program when a participant addressed what had impacted them the most in the program so far.

If we were to have all these speakers come into a classroom, this course wouldn't have anywhere near the effect as it would have of the effect to be all of you all and serve those homeless people that was hands on. To tong oysters in Apalachicola, in the bay, that's hands on. ...Because as we go into each of these communities, it opens us up, it makes us take something in and you know if an expert came from 50 miles away to make this presentation, it wouldn't be the same as if we were being there (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Participants also talked about learning from each other within the program, not only about program topics but on things to improve upon. As part of the program, participants are asked to moderate different seminar sessions throughout the two years. In the following statement, one participant noted how much she learned from watching other classmates do the same job she did, but also how she could improve herself in that capacity.

I understood that [class mate] shared this speech or the speaker introductions within his group, so his vice chair knew what he was going to say, Gee that would have really helped [class mate], the one time it didn't work in my favor to be there with all the information. So I much more aware of how I am being perceived and what I need to be doing so that others are perceived as well if not better (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

**Direct observations.** The third code to emerge within reflection-on-action in group settings was the use of direct observations. These statements were made, often in the form of an opinion or observation with little background or qualifier. One participant used a direct observation when talking about his own personal growth. He stated;

The thing that I have learned the most about so far this year, over the last year, is really about me. Especially when I get outside of my specific business or expertise. I really like to sit back and listen. I don't say a whole lot. I am not a very good public speaker. I am going to get better at it (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

This participant did not always offer a lot of insight during reflections as he was naturally quieter than other participants. However, later in the program, this individual offered more insight and provided longer reflections as indicated in the following statement;

Obviously the relationships and the networking are good. I don't know of any place better..... One of the most important things [the program] taught me is that if you are not willing to be involved yourself you can't expect other people to change it for you (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Direct observations were also used in Seminar reflections that were more structured or timed. For example, the group reflection during Seminar Eight took place at the end of a seminar before individuals headed home. In that, the reflection moderator asked as they went around the room, participants offered one succinct statement to describe the program. Statements were structured in a succinct manner such as; "For me the word would be transformative. It's changed a lot of the way I view things. That's about it" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 23, 2012).

This practice was also used during the Seminar Six reflection where reflection activity moderators asked individuals to elaborate on one of three quotes from the seminar programming. They were given a time of 45 seconds to present. So as opposed to discussion, reflection was presented as quick presentations from each individual. One concise statement offered during this group reflection activity was;

We raise everything but our voices. That's my quote. But we raise the bar. We raise the expectations. We raise the profits. And we rise to the challenge (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

**Conveying Future Action.** The final code to emerge within reflection-on-action in group settings was the tendency to convey future action within reflections. This type of reflection occurred mainly within the last reflection during Seminar Eleven. During this seminar reflection, participants were asked why they would stay involved in the program after graduation, as an alumni member and as a member of the class. Responses could be cataloged into the categories of relationships and networking, personal obligation, and the desire to continue on something that was started. One participant noted all three reasons within her response.

Why I plan on being involved, I kind of do it as others have said. Its personal, it's the people in the room, it's the people who we have met along the way, it's the networking. But I also see it as you look as a parent, when we have a child we have a responsibility to teach that child and bring them into society and give them the ability to live on their own. I feel like that's kind of where we are now. We are now given the responsibility now of taking the knowledge we've gotten and pushing it forward to those that don't. And kind of continuing that process. Looking at some of those along the way, both in Tallahassee and DC and even at the cemeteries, it really hit me hard that a lot of folks have done lots of things in their lives to let us, let me, be where I am today. And so it is my duty to do the same (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Conveying future action was also apparent in previous seminars as well. During Seminar Five, one participant explained a behavior change in that she would be

meeting with her elected officials. This was a result of contacts she had made in an earlier seminar and the personal obligation to work at the local level on issues.

As a follow-up, I've actually already, for the first time ever, never thought this was possible; I've actually made an appointment with my local representative to actually meet with them. And I am meeting with them two or three weeks from now when I come home. They called me from the Tallahassee trip. It took this long to actually schedule an appointment but we have one scheduled. And I understand that it is so outside of my comfort zone. That is so not what I am. In fact I am thinking 'Oh my God, what am I going to talk about? I just tried to go in there and make an appointment. So I am going to do my homework, but my point is that it is not what I would have ever considered doing if it had not been for this. (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

During the Seminar Eight group reflection, one participant reflected on the impacts of the program. This participant had impacted her in terms of amount of information learned, but also in terms of changes in her own life. She used the group reflection as an opportunity to announce she was running for public office.

If I had to use one word, I would use impact. But that encompasses a lot of things. The impact like what this program has had on me as an individual. But also the impact of the network of all of you, and the impact of all of our programs, tours, and speakers. [The program director's] impact upon us. It's just made a tremendous difference to me. And while I am speaking, those of you who don't know, my position is being phased out at [Company] and tomorrow morning I'm probably going to file to run for supervisor of elections (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 23, 2011).

### **Objective Two- Themes from Program Experiences**

From the initial, focused and theoretical coding processes, multiple themes emerged in both the individual and group reflection activities. Results from the analysis of themes are displayed in Table 4.4.

**Table 4-4. Themes**

Individual Themes	Group Themes
Increasing Understanding	Personal Growth
Relationships and Networking	Leader Characteristics
Application of what has been Learned	Application of what has been Learned
Responsibility of Leadership	Value in Understanding Relationships and Networking

### **Individual Reflection**

The themes drawn from individual reflection data were increasing understanding, relationships and networking, application of what has been learned, and the responsibility of leadership. Each category is broken up into subcategories and supplemented by relevant excerpts from the data.

**Increasing Understanding.** The first theme to emerge from the data were increasing understanding. This category included the learning from environments, understanding and appreciating others, seeing the larger picture, points of learning (avenues of learning), and moving beyond assumptions.

Participants learned multiple lessons from their environments and took environment into consideration in addition to material presented. Participants also observed the importance to the environment to being a leader. One participant noted: “the second thing was really looking at my environment whether it is LaBelle or any other city seeing what is available or going on, or the strengths and weaknesses of the community” (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

The first seminar took place in Gainesville, Florida. In addition to skill development workshops the class also met with university and city officials as well as participated in a workshop reviewing the “essentials of a community or region.” In this

part of the program, participants explored the city and were briefed on characteristics of the city and importance of these characteristics in determining the perception of value.

The second seminar took place in Miami and West Palm Beach County. During the five days, seminar programming included discussions on the “Changing Landscape of Miami and South Florida”, briefings by the US Coast Guard, Port of Miami, USDA, and leaders from the different ethnic communities in Florida. The seminar began with an introduction by a program speaker who talked about the different cultures of Miami and encouraged the class to embrace the differences they observe throughout the city. Following briefings in Miami, programming continued in West Palm Beach where the program discussed different agricultural operations and issues.

Following the first two seminars, participants began to make comparisons between seminar locations. In their observations they pointed out differences and commonalities. Another participant stated,

After being in both Gainesville and Miami and learning about both cities, it's amazing how much there is in common even though the population is so different. Both have ethnic diversity in people. Gainesville's diversity is caused mostly by the University of Florida, while Miami's is more from being an international type of city. Both are dealing with the poorer areas and how to get those areas to take pride in their communities. Both have homeless, yet no one wants to have services provided in their neighborhood. Yet we did visit a homeless shelter in Miami that the area around it is now being supportive and even holding community meetings in its chapel. Both cities are dealing with the economic downturn and how to provide services to the public with fewer tax dollars while trying to lure new businesses to relocate and provide new jobs (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

This sentiment remained constant throughout the two years as during the national trip a participant expressed that: “One thing that this trip made me realize that the issues in agriculture are basically the same anywhere in the country, whether it is

located in the swamps of the Everglades or in the desert of New Mexico" (Photo Journal, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

In addition to differences in communities, participants also pointed out how others can view environments. One participant noted:

There are so many stereotypes associated with Miami and the exposure WLIANR gave me really opened my eyes to the diversity and how they all mesh together to make for a very interesting city. We all tend to get wrapped up in our own little worlds of work, personal life and interests. This trip to Miami made me realize how important it is to continually expose myself to new people, interests and places near and far, never passing judgment, but rather to appreciate the differences and the impact they have in the bigger picture (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Another participant noted that "It seemed different from most other big cities I have been to in which the different cultures seem to segregate themselves to certain areas of the city. From what I saw, everyone seemed to be mixed together" (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Participants also made observations about how they can fit into an environment, with the emphasis of the reflection still being on their surroundings. After observing the state legislative process a participant acknowledged that;

I have a much better understanding of my role in the process and the impact that I can have on the process. I see the dedication of the staff/ elected officials have and I have a much different view of the lobbyist scene after having met and shadowed them (Seminar Three Reflection Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 2011).

The second sub category to emerge regarding increasing understanding was understanding and appreciating others. Observations about understanding others were made throughout the two year program, with the majority being made in the final evaluation at the end of the two year experience. Understanding others included understanding classmates and other individuals within communities that were visited.

A reoccurring theme as a result of the seminar in Miami was an increased understanding and open mind toward other individuals. This came as a result of visiting different communities, cultures and being immersed into environments which may have been unfamiliar. When visiting the Community Partnership for the Homeless, participants recognized the differences between themselves and the population as well as the unfamiliarity, but also how they may have held stereotypes of individuals different from themselves. In reflecting participants would recognize those previously held stereotypes but also how and why they had changed. After serving dinner at the community partnership for the Homeless, one participant noted:

It was very rewarding and humbling for someone like myself who comes from a great family and helps us run a well-established business to be put in these peoples shoes and to serve them. Other than serving the homeless dinner and taking a tour of the facility, I completely rescinded the negative connotations in my head that I have always had toward the level of people enrolled in the facility (Reflection Letter, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

The third sub category to emerge regarding increasing understanding was seeing the larger picture. The reflection letter asked participants to think about what they had seen in addition to articulate what they had learned from the experience, how they felt about what they saw and how the information would be applied. The letter could be addressed to a friend or family member or someone who had an interest in their participation in the program. Each of the 30 letters were approached differently as some reported in the forms of stories and others succinctly provided thanks and descriptions of what had been learned in the program. In conveying what had been learned, participants eluded to what was being learned was part of the larger picture and the participants joined the lessons from both seminars to find common themes. One participant made the observation that;

I've learned a great deal from everything we've done thus far. It's made me realize that our world is bigger than Southwest Florida.... I hope that in the future, I become a bigger part of our community and our world because I realize that each of us can make an impact in some way (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

The fourth sub category to emerge regarding increasing understanding was moving beyond assumptions. Participants observed stereotypes they formerly held when examining individuals, organizations, cities and processes. One participant stated; "It has helped me realize you can't judge a book by its cover. Some of the reflections we had helped me understand and see more about my classmates than any other times during the program" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Participants also made the following observations about the contexts of organizations and communities. A participant observed that in terms of personal stances and politics, the program "has made me reflect on issues within an organization that are typically accepted by me. And now I have a personal view versus accepting the norm- change from within" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). In describing a community, a participant made the following observation:

As for the initial programming in Miami, I learned not to succumb to media stereotypes. I had visited Miami a few times as a child, but my real impression of the city was driven by television and Hollywood. I learned that, for a large metropolitan area, there are pockets of really great people doing wonderful things. As well, a deeply engrained sense of community pride irrespective of one's ethnic heritage or station in society was present. I would expect that in a small town, but not in a large metropolitan area (Reflection Letter, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

The last subcategory to emerge within increasing understanding is avenues of learning. Participants noted that they had learned and come to a greater understanding

from the past and from others in addition to the seminar material. In learning from the past one participant reported; "My impressions have not changed. From previous involvement, I think the statement from our speaker is very true: The game you are watching is not the game being played" (Seminar Three Reflection Questionnaire, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). Another participant also appreciated learning from past lessons. However, this participant referred to past program experiences leading up to the current experience.

Seeing this lesson and hearing how the National War College aims to prepare military personnel for strategic leadership reinforced in my mind how thoughtfully and rigorously the WLIANR curriculum has been developed. I felt as if all previous seminars had been leading up to our national seminar experience. Like fledglings, we've been nurtured, taught and tested. When the time is right, we're pushed out of the nest (aka our comfort zone) and cheered on as we soar (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Participants also reported learning from other individuals. One participant noted "I personally took way much from being around Florida's greatest leaders. Through informational sessions, we learned valuable techniques and knowledge or interrelating with various personality types as well as much needed insight into our own" (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Through shadowing other lobbyists, greater understanding could be achieved. One participant observed:

I came in knowing only the basics, shadowing [lobbyist] was a great experience teaching my group about the inside game. The process is much more involved and interesting than I may have assumed. I did find it difficult to develop trust between people involved in the process (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

Another participant noted that though they were familiar with the processes being taught in the seminar, further understanding was achieved by watching others. This participant stated;

Having been to Tallahassee in the past and seeing the different legislators, the process I have observed this time has not changed a whole lot. The side I had not seen a lot of was the seeing and talking to the Florida Ag Coalition. I didn't realize how many I knew or how they broke up the amount of work and varied topics they have to deal with. They are impressive with how well they do their job and how connected to the inside game they are (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

Other observations came toward the end of the two year experiences as a result of the practice of reflection. A participant observed that "As we reflected during session, it was nice to hear what others gleaned from an experience and that what they got out of it was totally different than what I got. It was nice to hear different perspectives" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Participants also reported that reflection has shown that "we as humans are diverse and interpret things differently and uniquely in our own individual ways" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

**Relationships and Networking.** Relationships and Networking was the second theme that emerged from the data. Participants reported the value found in relationships including those with the class, the organization, industry and other contexts. This category included the properties of; the importance of relationships, types of relationships, building consensus and the network, and working together.

The importance of relationships included participants discussing building relationships, the resources of relationships and the importance of relationships. One participant observed that "The most effective [leaders] are those who have built good

relationships with peers, legislators, and staff. They are deal makers that work with all interested parties and strive to reach consensus" (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). Another participant noted that as a result of relationships built through the program they learned that they are "not alone in delivering a message by interview. It is important to form a team in an effort to understand the interview, understanding the issue and understand the correct message to be conveyed to the public" (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

The majority of reflections could be categorized described relationships within the class. Participants discussed when how relationships emerged in statements such as "I feel as though the National Trip really brought our class fully together" (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011). In the same reflection activity during the national trip, a participant noted:

It continues to amaze me how 30 people from all walks of life, from all over Florida can be forced into cohabitating and still get along. we are leaders with strong personalities that presumably would clash and yet we respect our differences, and I would even say embrace them (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

That same sentiment had been stated earlier in the program as well, as indicated by a participant's observation of growing relationships:

One of the greatest things about this week was not a place we went or something we learned, it was just being able to continue building on the friendships we started in the first week. I am tired and glad to be home, but I can't wait for week three to start and see what they have in store for us (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Participants also pointed out the value of the relationships among the class. One participant observed how the class has come together;

Now as I become more familiar with the other classmates, their interests, likes and dislikes, personalities, industries, and responsibilities, I realize we all have a lot more in common than I originally thought. And now the group is really beginning to gel. By that I mean we are getting to know and understand each other. In fact, we did an exercise this past week at the end of seminar II about character where we had to write down a single word that we felt could best describe the character of another classmate. On about 60% of the classmates a word immediately came to mind and the other 40% took a little more thought because I'm still getting to know them (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Another participant pointed out the importance and resiliency of relationships in stating;

To forecast, I will likely not remember the view of the hotel in DC, or a speakers name from a tour. But I promise you that each and every one of my classmates, our coordinators and collective shared feelings in this experience will forever be engrained in my mind and hard. In other words, water is important, but we will likely resolve our issues. Immigration is equally important, but again, we will likely come to a sensible solution if we do our job well. But, the relationships we foster along the way addressing these issues and all the new issues not yet on the radar screen are not interim. My feelings about my classmates and the privilege to share this experience will forever live with me. The issues may change, but the relationships hopefully will not (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Participants also addressed the value of the organization or leadership program and the individual who had participated in previous classes.

Participants also addressed the value of the leadership program and industry networks. In addressing the program, one participant stated; "we have met several members of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute that have provided a plethora of great inspiration as to all we can expect to learn and experience throughout the rest of our journey. All in all, it has been a complete honor and privilege to be part of this program" (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011)

In address the value of industry networks, participants pointed out for the industry to be in harmony in their messages and the importance of the industry to work

together on a national level, one participant stated, "I also felt we were effective because we were in harmony with our message. It is so important that all of us in the agriculture industry bond together and have a consistent message" (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Another participant noted that there is an "importance to work with ag associations and associate industries on a consistent and concise message. I assumed our messaging was consistent, however, data presented by the PIE Center showed we have room for improvement (Seminar Three Reflection, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). When observing commonalities as a reason to work together, one participant synthesized the national trip in stating "the one constant throughout the entire trip seemed to be that regardless of the business or state we have a deep federal governmental involvement that has the potential to change the way we do business if not put us out of business and we need to work together on these issues as an ag industry without state borders (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Finally, one participant also recognized the value of those in policy to the industry. Participants recognized the value of policy makers in statements such as,

She was current on our issues and extremely open for discussion as I realized that Connie Mack is very aligned with agriculture in my area. it gave me great confidence to know that we actually do have this resource in Washington that is open to hear our concerns and problems (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

The third sub category to emerge under the themes of relationships and networking was building consensus and the network. Participants pointed out the need to build consensus and strong networks. Programming "reinforce(d) that a strong network of friends and colleagues was invaluable (Seminar Three Questionnaire,

Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). When discussing consensus, the most common context for the theme was the state legislative process. Participants observed that "a consensus builder would be effective moving issues through the process" (Seminar Three Reflection, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). Additionally, "in the legislative process, it is critical to build consensus. Therefore the more effective leaders have a broad number of relationships and are able to effectively communicate their ideas to these contacts" (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

In measuring effective leadership participants pointed out that "the most effective [leaders] are those who have built good relationships with peers, legislators, and staff. They are deal makers that work with all interested parties and strive to reach consensus (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). It was also stated that leaders "all have a large network pool. No matter what business they are in, these people reach out to propel outside their industry and are opinion leaders for interests important to them" (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). Additionally, participants also observed that effective leadership focused on relationships in that "relationships get you in office and get things done in office. There are different ways of motivating the workforce, but developing the relationship and building trust is key" (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). On the participant's role in the process, a leader "can lobby [their] representative more and build a stronger relationship. [They can] build a better relationship with staff [and] build relationships with other industries other than

agriculture that have common interests to see an objective to completion" (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

The final subtheme under relationships and networking was working together. Participants pointed out the value of working together by using examples from seminars, its importance to keeping the industry alive and their own role in the process of working together. One participant reflected on the issues surrounding a specific seminar location and how working together would result in fulfilling the needs of everyone. The participant stated,

If you want to improve your chances of success on an issue, you need to broaden your base of support to include as many viewpoints as possible. In effect, the [Ranch] epitomizes this principle in that its management combines the wants and needs of cattlemen, hunters, fishermen, naturalists, conservationists, and environmentalists (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 28, 2011).

Participants also pointed out the necessity of the agricultural industry working together as "if we want to preserve our way of life, we have to work together in unison. we have to stand up for our neighbors issues even when they don't directly impact us" (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 28, 2011). Finally, participants observed how they were part of the process of working together as one participant noted; "Throughout the experience, I felt like a small spoke of a much larger operating wheel where all parts are working on their own individual goals, yet together moving forward creating economic opportunity for all" (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

**Application of what has been learned.** The third theme to emerge within individual reflections was application of what has been learned. This theme consisted of the sub categories of industry and community, application in career contexts, the use

of skills such as reflection, increased communication and problem solving skills, and increased preparation.

In applying what was learned within the industry and community, participants noted the importance of using information to promote the industry, use personal skills, and increase their own involvement. Reflections on media training brought out the importance of promoting the industry through skills taught in the program. One participant stated that to be a more effective citizen lobbyist, they would;

use my new connections to help promote the industry- this will be through aligning with other groups for a common goal (i.e. forage seed, dairy association, all use the seed business) and provide information back to our company that may affect how we do business in Florida (Reflection Questionnaire, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

Another participant noted; "I plan to get my three to four points across... to further my community, company, career and so on by making a positive impression" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Participants were also motivated to become more involved in their communities by examining community needs and meeting with program presenters. One participant stated;

To see those high school students and see how much they accomplished was inspirational. Even if they do not end up in agriculture, they now have a deeper understanding for the agriculture industry. I will be looking into my local high schools and FFA to see how I can help or volunteer (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Other participants committed to becoming more involved in their community as indicated in the following reflections:

From this experience, I have decided to get more involved in my community. I have applied for volunteer boards, plan to join a service club in my community and have become more aware of the issues and how I can help around my community (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011)

Many of these experiences have given me a new outlook on how our family as well as our business can contribute to the betterment of our hometown and state. I have learned than an individual person has the power to make a difference in the life and well-being of another. I have learned that it is not always about finance, but simply appreciation and respect for others (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Participants also made observations of how what had been learned in the program could be applied to the work place. Reflections on workplace application dealt with the practice of reflections as indicated in statements such as; "Reflecting at work is helping me evaluate the main things we do; hopefully to improve, focus, and get better results" (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Another person noted "I use [reflection] as a tool with my staff. After projects or a meeting we now take time to set back and talk about the good and the bad. What was done right and where we can improve" (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Participants also addressed the application of reflection in a more general sense than a work context. As a result of the program participants, aimed to "listen more, consider other opinions" (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012) and "reflecting is helping me evaluate the main things we do, hopefully to improve, focus and get better results" (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Additionally, a participant stated that they "use reflection to become more engaging with others... stop and talk about past experience more share time or improve an experience" (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Participants also noted that they used reflection to make better decisions "and think about different outcomes before making those decisions (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Participants also acknowledged change in approaching situations by using reflection. One participant stated; "I think I have always

reflected on projects, tasks or speaking engagements, looking for ways to improve. However, I never reflected at the depth I now reflect on issues (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Finally, participants alluded to the idea of applying program information in their lives to become better at what they do as one participant stated;

As we progress through the program, I continue to pursue the same goal as when I started: to draw out at least a single nugget from each of the presentations and or field trips and to make that nugget useful professionally or personally, immediately or in the future. And through these experiences I hope to become a better catholic, husband, and father. If these experiences allow me to do those three things well I hope it will enable me to focus on being a good leader capable of providing stability and endurance for those who depend on me and to make proud those I represent" (Reflection Letter, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

In addition to applying the practice of reflection, participants also noted they would use other skills taught in the program to improve communication, decision making and problem solving. When working on communicating and solving problems, participants felt the skills they had learned in the program could be applied to future endeavors by communicating a point of view, as participants would "continue to work on delivery of [the] point to fairly communicate and understand" (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Participants also thought skills taught in the program would help them "to make a better decision when [they] have time to really reflect about a situation" (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Participants also measured good leadership by the possession of particular skills which was indicated in reflections such as "all of [the leaders] feel that they have the ability to solve problems and have the experience and knowledge to effect change" (Seminar Three Reflection, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

The final subcategory to emerge in the theme of application of what has been learned was the importance of preparation. Through skill development activities such as the media training, participants felt they were more prepared for future experiences. One participant stated; “I believe it was a great experience and felt like it gave me a good idea of what to expect and how to prepare for such an experience” (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 23, 2012). Though the training was difficult, participants also reflected that future experiences would be beneficial, as indicated in statements such as; “As always, the unknown is what I disliked. I liked that I learned again with practice I could be proficient” (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 23, 2012).

In addition to the training and skill development, participants also recognized the value of preparation in leadership roles and meeting with others. One participant observed; “The opportunity to sit not only as constituents but as fellow Americans to discuss issues with our country’s leaders is a right we as Americans need to recognize, cherish and appreciate. Looking back on this meeting, preparation was key” (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011). Preparation was also as an obligation of the participant and as something learned. One participant stated; “I recognize that preparation is key to the process. And it is not nearly as bad if you are prepared” (Media Training, Personal Communication, February 23, 2012). Finally, through programming experiences, participants recognized the value of being prepared not only in leadership roles or in the workplace but also in their home life. One participant noted;

I was shaken by the stories of medical disaster or some other calamity that edged a family out of house and home. Thanks to our families, we’ll never

be homeless- but it made me realize we need to save more diligently for a better safety cushion than what we currently have in place (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, September 28, 2011).

**Responsibility of Leadership.** The last theme to emerge in the individual reflections was the responsibility of leadership. Sub categories consisted of personal responsibility, passion of leaders, the identification of leadership, being innovative, advocacy in the agricultural industry, serving others and personal growth.

Personal responsibility included acknowledging obligations and service to others. This theme was recognized throughout the two years as indicated through the reflection letters, photo journals and questionnaires. The first time this theme arose was at the conclusion of Seminar Two. The seminar consisted of visiting different businesses in Miami as well as visiting the community partnership for the Homeless. In the following quote from her reflection letter, one participant noted the impact of the shelter as well as what she learned about the dynamics of the community.

The other thing I am realizing is that [name] and I need to serve our community in some way. We need to find an organization that we can contribute to, something that will make our community a better place for our kids and others to live, learn and labor. It's not enough just to look at ourselves- we need to help others too in concrete ways. Whether it's helping serve dinner at an indigent shelter or finally volunteering to help tutor kids/ adults in reading, which is one of my joys in life (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

In expressing her obligation she also expressed that it was more than responsibility but also desire to help others.

This same theme also arose within the photo journals, as one participant reflected of his own responsibility by following the examples of others, which included past and present national leaders. In his photo journal, the participant stated;

I was reminded of my own responsibility to serve others, my family, community, state and nation. Reminded of the duty and opportunity each of

us has to serve our God and each other. It reminded me how thankful I am to live in this country and for the freedoms that we enjoy (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

The second subtheme under the responsibility of leadership was the theme of passion. The topic of passion was mentioned throughout the two years in both individual and group reflections. The first time the theme arose was during Seminar Two and was initially addressed by the first speaker of the seminar, Mr. George Knox. As Mr. Knox addressed passion in his presentation, it was apparent that participants applied the same theme to future speakers. One participant reflected that:

One common thread to all presentations in the portion of the seminar was passion. Each and every individual that we had the chance to meet or speak with was passionate about what he or she was doing. This included everyone from [program speaker] to [program speaker]. It was clear that a key to great leadership is being passionate about what you are doing (Reflection Letter, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

The example provided by many of the speakers and supporters of the program were often translated into the participants' own definitions of leadership. This was very apparent in the Seminar Three reflection. The purpose of Seminar Three was to examine state issues as well as interact with state political leaders. Participants met with political leaders as well as program alumni and supporters that were engaged in the political process. In the Seminar Three reflection, participants were asked to identify the qualities of effective leaders. Passion had already appeared within reflections from Seminar Two, but arose again in Seminar Three. Participants reflected on a leader's passion for their interests, job, causes, and for their constituents or the public. One participant stated;

Firstly, all the leaders are passionate about their work. They are also well informed about not only there area of expertise, but also things relevant or contrary to their area. Similar to passion, they are committed to their cause.

There is no 80%, only 100% committed (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Seminar Three, March 24, 2011).

In addressing passion, the word passion was not always used so much as it was described. In the same reflection activity, another participant noted;

There are so many matters that are the same for all of these issues. These people have a natural love for doing their job and the betterment of the public. They are all energetic, lively and very knowledgeable which makes them a natural leader (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Seminar Three, March 24, 2011).

In addition to passion, participants reflected on other characteristics of leadership. In addition to reflecting on general characteristics in others, participants also identified these characteristics within themselves. Participants identified themselves as opinion leaders and also provided descriptions of others as having characteristics of leadership. This theme, identification of leadership, was mainly addressed in Reflection Letters and Photo Journals. They identified themselves as leaders within the reflection letters and tended to identify others as effective leaders in both photo journals and the reflection letters. This theme also emerged within the Seminar Three reflection questionnaires.

During Seminar One, the concept of opinion leader was introduced to the class through a workshop entitled “The Leadership Challenge in Agriculture and Natural Resources.” In this session, the presenter introduced the concept of opinion leadership and made participants realize that they are opinion leaders in their industry and state. Within her reflection letter during Seminar Two, one participant wrote to her father how she began to identify herself as an opinion leader. In her letter she stated;

In reflecting on sessions one and two, there are a few things that have really hit home with me. In session one I was learning or should I say realizing that I too am an opinion leader. I always knew you were, but I

didn't feel I would ever be (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Later in on her reflection letter, she added to the concept of opinion leadership and her leadership ability and role in stating;

What I did not anticipate is the impact that I would have in developing agriculture. I see this as passed on the key speakers that we have had, but it has allowed me to understand what I can do to make a difference (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Participants also reflected on others as being leaders in their industry. Within the Photo Journaling reflection, participants often reflected on the practices of seminar presenters. During the "homestays" portion of the seminar in New Mexico, participants were able to meet with individuals in production agriculture within an environment different than their own. One of the homestay visits consisted of visiting a wind farm. This wind farm, as others in New Mexico, serves as a supplement business and income for ranchers. One class participant, offered reflected on the visit to the wind farm from the perspective of a fellow producer understanding challenges faced by the cattle industry. The participant reflected that;

I am optimistic that [rancher] is an early adopter of a greater trend, and we will see more energy being generated on America's ranch lands. I value a domestic supply of food and energy and I assume that the success on the [name] ranch can be replicated in various forms across the country. I also assume that as technology advances and infrastructure is put in place, wind will be more competitive with traditional energy sources (Photo Journal, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

The third subtheme to emerge was advocacy within the industry. This theme was apparent throughout both individual and group reflections and throughout the two year experience. During Seminar Two, the importance of advocacy was first expressed

as a concern in that many leaders in Miami did not understand or know about agriculture within the county or state.

Of the jobs that the cities of Gainesville and Miami are trying to create, those jobs will not feed our nation. We must also decide on how we can keep farmers framing instead of selling out there property to be developed into other uses. It was interesting to hear how little some of the speakers in Miami were concerned with agriculture (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

In addition to concern, participants also expressed how their own practices can influence others knowing about agriculture. One participant stated;

The difference is how we approach others. We have not done a great job in educating those that are not in agriculture. This is something that I need to be conscious of, and strive to do a better job in educating others. This was evident with the speakers that we had in our Miami seminar, as some of them did not have an interest in agriculture, and this showed in the way they approached their jobs (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Advocacy for the industry was also addressed in the national seminar while participants visited both the nation's capital and the southwest. Within the photo journal reflection, one participant tied observations of state leadership and national leadership together. Additionally, though he provided a picture of a scene in Washington DC, in his journal he referred to something that was discussed later in the trip, the expression, the importance of being viable, valuable and visible which was a theme provided by a speaker later on in the national trip in New Mexico.

Even though our opponents are so much louder than we are, they don't outnumber us but they are much more vocal. We need to increase our presence in Tallahassee and in DC so that we are more effective in getting the truth across to our legislature. Think of the impact an ag leader from Florida could have on an ag committee member who is from across the country. By being visible and valuable for the industry, we could tell our story and have a changing impact on those members who are not affected by decisions but are crucial to the vote. We can be a voice and we can make an impact by telling our story, sharing the truth about the ag industry

and reminding everyone about the lives we feed and save every day we go to work (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, September 29, 2011).

Agriculture advocacy was also addressed in media training which took place in the second year of the program. In addition to the importance of being an advocate, participants reflected on how the skills and training they received could aid them in being an advocate for the industry. In the reflection questionnaire for media training, one participant reflected that; “If we learn to use the media correctly, it can be a benefit to our industry. [It will] help us get our voices out in a positive way” (Media Training Questionnaire, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012). Another participant stated that; “I think that [media training] is a necessary part of being a leader in ag and the best way to improve is to practice” (Media Training Questionnaire, Seminar Eight, February 22, 2012).

The final theme subtheme to emerge within identification of a leader was personal growth. In personal growth, participants reported how they saw themselves change as a result of experiences and how they could foresee improvement in the future. This was mainly addressed within the media training portion of Seminar Eight. This experience gave participants the opportunity to learn how to better prepare them for working with the media and also to apply what was learned through mock interviews. Several participants reflected on how the practice got them out of their comfort zone. One participant wrote; “The experience was tough and somewhat uncomfortable. But that’s what I liked about it. It turned out to be a great learning experience of getting out of the comfort zone” (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012). In reflecting on the experience, another participant tied the training

with another uncomfortable situation that had happened earlier in the program. He stated;

I was still anxious after. It was as nerve racking as I thought it would be. But I guess I did realize, like jumping off a telephone pole that the first is the most challenging and then with practice I could improve and be less nervous (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

Personal growth was also addressed in the final evaluation in statements about how the process of reflection had helped them as leaders grow. This was evident in statements such as; "I now see the value of reflection. Prior to Wedgworth, I would have never consciously thought of reflection as a tool for growth. I now realize how important it can be for learning from and understanding an experience" (Final Evaluation). Another participant wrote; "Reflection has personally helped me grow. I have left every seminar reflecting on how I can become a better person" (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, Seminar Eleven, August 9, 2012).

### **Group Reflection**

The emerging categories drawn from group reflection data were personal growth, relationships and networking, value in understanding, application of what is learned, and leader definition characteristics. Each category is broken up into subcategories and supplemented by relevant excerpts from the data.

**Personal Growth.** The first theme to emerge from the data were personal growth. This category included the properties of growth through trust, emerging out of comfort zones, coping with challenges, continued growth through involvement, gaining knowledge, and anticipation of future programming. During the first seminar, participants were briefed on the practice of reflection. After the briefing, a program administrator led the first reflection activity. After explaining the process, he asked the

first question: How did you feel about becoming part of the program? Participants gave very short answers as the facilitator went around the room calling on individuals.

Responses included; nervous, excited, scared, apprehensive, and reserved.

Personal growth was often gauged in retrospect. Individuals tended to look back on program experiences to reflect on personal growth and change. In the final group reflection, one participant reflected back to the beginning of his experiences to acknowledge his continued growth throughout the process. He acknowledged the importance of applying what was learned and wanting to remain involved continuing that growth. He stated;

I thinking back to signing up for the program and the reasons I signed up for it and what I've learned along the way to grow personally and professionally. To engage and to be engaged. And the learning experience along the way, if you want that to continue that's a reason to remain involved. This is just the first step. Take the second step and continue that process to get outside your comfort zone and to, I think we said in one of our first seminars is to, build on that circle of influence. That's why I think I would stay engaged (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Earlier in the program, in Seminar Eight, a participant also acknowledged his own personal development but he did not only talk of his own experience but spoke of it as something that he wanted others to have as well. He stated "So for me, if someone asks about the program or if I am talking to someone about the program, someone thinking they'll want to be in Class IX, I would say do the program for personal development" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012). In the same group reflection someone also recognized it as something bigger than one individual's personal growth. As a result, the unit is stronger. "It makes you stronger as a person and I guess the big benefit is it makes agriculture stronger as a

community. The more we go out and do, the stronger that gets" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

In addition to acknowledging the growth that had taken place, participants also referred to the motivation to challenge themselves again as a result of the program. During the group reflection in seminar Five, one participant acknowledged the importance of challenging himself and becoming involved again. This individual was involved in community programs and community governments. However, in the reflection he recognized that he could be even more so involved and wanted to challenge himself again. After providing this reflection, he later stated how he was going to emerge out of his comfort zone and challenge himself again through personal activities and through civic engagement.

One thing I've learned is from the program really amongst a lot of other things is really to challenge myself again. Early in my career I was Lions Club president. You know, just involved in all the civic organizations and really active. But then you get three kids and you move up the ladder at work and you kind of get in a rut and just kind of go to work. And that's where I was for at least ten years or so. So one think that I've really have gotten to do is to challenge myself again, get back out and get active, get going again. The other think is really that comfort zone. A little getting out of it. The pole dive we did was really scary and I want to challenge myself again (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Participants also tended to challenge themselves in terms of comparing themselves to other participants. One participant stated;

I'd say challenged. Personally, when you go out here and see everything everyone else in the room is involved in and then you look back at yourself and you start challenging yourself to start doing some of these things that you see other folks doing. So I know I am challenged, but in a different way (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

**Leader Characteristics.** The second to emerge was leader characteristics.

Similar to the individual code of leader characteristics, this category included passion and opinion leadership. In addition, this code also included the importance of preparation and responsibility.

The first subtheme to emerge within leader characteristics was passion. Passion was often acknowledged in variety of contexts including as something to be observed, learned and applied. Participants spoke of passion as something to learn from others. By learning passion, it can be applied in their lives. Participants also acknowledged passion in their fellow classmates and the organization at large. Passion contributed to the motivation of staying in the program. In describing her motivation to remain involved, one participant expressed admiration of the passion others had for their own occupation and how that translated into something to teach others;

We have not only learned or shared with each other about our own industries but we have learned about industries that we didn't even know existed before. And the passion that we have for our own industry is equal to if not surpassed by the passion that somebody else has about their industry. And why would you not want to stay involved or contribute to this program to help pass along that gift so somebody else can learn about all the amazing things that not only occur in front of them, but occur statewide and even internationally. Even though it may be a little bit different, it's still a passion that we all have sitting here (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Earlier in the program, this same participant had acknowledged her relationships with her classmates and pointed out different experiences she had with some of them and how she admired their passion for what they did;

I found that its whether I've spent a few minutes with each of you or a long time, that's what I am getting out of this. [Name] showed me around his grove. I can see his passion first hand. I got to go with [name] he showed me his cows. So I really tried to follow [name], I've been to [name] place and his passion for that. Each of you are making this program more

beneficial for me (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Individuals also spoke of passion in the context of their role in agriculture and advocacy for the industry. In her reflection statement, one participant explained the differences in her farming community between large and small growers. She acknowledged her role in the process of working together. She stated;

I have this inner passion and desire for people to understand that agriculture is important in the US agriculture is important. And as a small farmer in a big grower area, I was always really irritated with that small grower/big grower we can't get along.... So I hope I am getting enough information that maybe I can help bridge that gap and how it's important for all of us to support each other so we can all survive (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Finally, participants also recognized the absence of passion within speakers and how that absence was apparent and detrimental. When asked about disagreements with programming, this participant stated;

The one real quick little disagreement I had... I didn't see the passion in the lady who was EBC, the tourist development in Wakulla County, I thought she was a little apathetic. I thought I didn't get fired up about coming to [County] from her talk (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

The second subtheme within Leader Characteristics was self-identification as a leader. This included identity of leader characteristics, opinion leadership and value or recognition as an opinion leader. During the final reflection, participants drew back to previous lessons learned over the two year experience. One participant drew back to Seminar Three. In this seminar, the class met with state leaders and presenters briefed them on the legislative processes and issues within state government. In drawing back to this seminar, one participant stated;

And kind of going off what [name] also said: In Tallahassee there was a lady that said "there's people that come here because they either want to

be something or do something." I think we really have to ask ourselves that question. Do we want to be somebody or do we want to do something? (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

The importance of opinion leadership also emerged. As previously mentioned, this concept was introduced to the class within the first seminar of the program. In this, the workshop presenter encouraged to identify as an opinion leader as recognize the networks in which the participants were involved. In the group reflection during Seminar Five, participants reflected on and shared what they had learned so far in the program. In referring to their leadership role one participant noted;

And like [name] said, we are leaders in our communities even though we probably only think of ourselves as real leaders until we got into this program. I know I didn't think of myself as being a leader. But being in this program makes you be one. But I think that's probably what I've garnered the most (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Another participant echoed the same sentiment. This participant was surprised to see themselves as a leader in agriculture as before the program had not always directly identified herself with the industry. She stated;

I think one of the biggest things for me was the whole part of being the opinion leader. I just never saw myself as that. I knew what I did and I did what I had to do and did my job and went home. I never thought that I influenced enough people, especially on things that I am not 100% comfortable on. I am not a farmer, I am not a grower, and I am not necessarily on that side of what I would consider agriculture (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Participants also recognized their opinions were valuable on different issues within agriculture. While in Washington DC, not only were participants able to learn about congressional processes but they were also able to discuss issues impacting the agricultural industry, specifically water, immigration and government regulation. During the national seminar reflection, one participant noted the value of their opinion and their

surprise. In tying several lessons together they were able to acknowledge their value but also set out to become more of an opinion leader. During the reflection, the participant stated;

I chose valuable, viable, and visible. And the reason I did was because there a lot of things I do or that I like that may be very visible. But there are a lot of times that I am not really sure in what I say. And when we were in [Congressman's] office and the fact that his staff said, we want you to tell us what's good, what's bad, and what we need to have in immigration. It made me realize that we are valuable. And I need to remind myself of that and the things that I do or the contributions that I make are valuable (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

The third subtheme to emerge was decision making and how as a result of the program, participants were able to apply decision making skills and thought to decisions that need to be made. During the fifth seminar, one participant noted how he had changed in how he approached decisions with business. By examining issues critically, he acknowledged the drawbacks of making immediate decisions. This individual had stated in prior group reflections how he was learning about the industry because he was new to agricultural production and his current position. In the group reflection he stated;

And it's got to the point where not only has Wedgworth taught me patience from a leadership standpoint. Because in my prior industry, all decision made you know, decision making needs to be done in five seconds. It's a knee jerk reaction and we've got to live with the consequences. And figure out later and just keep going. This really allowed me to get a better understanding of sitting back and saying, okay, now what's the issue? Why do I need to think this way or why can't you accept my way? It's no longer that way, you've got to open a box and make a better decision. I think that's really ingrained with Wedgworth (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Decision making was also addressed in the final group reflection. When asked why individuals would stay involved, most talked about the network and continued learning. One individual addressed the idea of continued learning and personal growth but how that would contribute to future involvement and future decisions for the industry.

In that, he went beyond his own individual industry and acknowledged his role in agriculture. This came as a result of learning about various industries and being identified as a leader within one agriculture industry. In the group reflection, this individual stated;

I think it's gotten me out of my own little world in citrus I was sort of stuck in and very involved in that. Now were talking in that of going and seeing timber or going and talking about hay and grass and cows and everything else is really making me say, if I want to be involved in decision makings that I need to be educated in all of ag and how those decisions effect all of ag instead of just citrus (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

The fourth subtheme to emerge was the importance of responsibility and having priorities. During the fifth seminar, participants were briefed on different agricultural issues in preparation for the national trip and meetings with their congressional delegations. One of the speakers presented on water use in Florida and present challenges. The presentation brought about conversation of the issue of water use and agriculture's consumption being the highest of any industry. This brought about the discussion of advocacy for the industry, but in that, it also brought up the discussion of responsibility of agriculturalists to educate others about their industry. One participant noted;

Well of course what's fresh in our mind is one we heard today with the 70% of our use and the whole comment about the food, the price of food. That kind of threw me back a little bit because I hear that a lot in the grocery store when I am picking up the gallon of milk and the average consumer says "my gosh, the dairy farmers must be wealthy." Because tis know what it looks like, the farmers, as we all know don't get the price the grocery store shows. So I have a little bit of an opinion of some of her comments today and I think it's our job and our responsibility to educate our own communities on what we are about and what its really like on the farm (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Responsibility also emerged when discussing conflict resolution. During Seminar Five, participants were briefed on conflict resolution as a means of working within the team and working with others. Problem solving styles were also discussed, assessed, and applied within the context of preparing to speak on the issues of water, immigration and government regulation. One participant noted that in addition to learning how to manage conflict resolution, an individual had the responsibility within their role in the conflict. The participant stated that;

And so you know we talked about a lot of ways of conflict resolution but a lot of times conflict resolution can come through education. You know educating each other on both sides of the issue and then awareness also in terms of making people aware of your expectations or their responsibilities and also being aware of your own responsibilities (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Responsibility was also addressed in the final seminar in the context of program involvement. When asked why someone would stay involved in the program after graduation, one participant stated; "We've been given the training here of really learning about our industry, especially a newcomer like myself. Seeing everything that is going on, it's exactly what Marcie said. It becomes our responsibility to do something about it" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

During the same reflection another participant noted that;

Why we should stay involved are the people. The people in this room and the people we have met, the network. It inspires me. The other thing is related to our responsibility and I am reminded of when we were in the rotunda and I think about the people that had been there and sacrificed. We have the same responsibility I think. And we can, I think the group and the whole organization obviously can do things to influence our community, our jobs, our state, and our country. And so I look forward to being part of that (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Another individual reflected on responsibility and used the analogy of her business to convey a point. She stated;

In order for my grove to give me the things I need, to be successful and that type of thing, I need to take care of it. And so in order for Wedgworth to continue to keep benefiting our industry, I need to try to take care of it. And so it is that when you have such a wonderful asset, in order for that asset to continue to be that wonderful, you have to take care of it and nurture it and grow it and that's really how I look at it. And that's my obligation to the program (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

The final subtheme to emerge was the importance of adapting to situations. This was most evident during Seminar Ten, the international experience. Participants had to adjust to language barriers and moving around in different cultures. In trying to adapt they also had to acknowledge their deficiencies. One participant noted;

When we got here to the airport its really strange to feel like a minority in a place. It's a little scary even though we found out that people are willing to help and do whatever they can to understand you, and you can get around so just that initial feeling of "I really don't know how to speak French" that you had to cope (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

During that same experience, another participant talked about adapting to not only traveling to a foreign country, but also to the expectations of those at his place of work and home. In seminars past, most participants were able to be contacted, though employers, family members and others knew that emails and phone calls would be returned at specific points in the day. However, on the international trip, with the time difference, it appeared that expectations were different as one participant observed.

I've rather been surprised at one of the things I've noticed is how we have been able to disconnect from our life as easy as we could. I mean in our local seminars, I mean everybody's rushing out to take phone calls and do this and that. And our loved ones. I've been really surprised. You know, I called work yesterday and they were like, don't worry; we've got it taken care of, quit calling. You know, I mean, it's a different feeling (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

**Application of what has been learned.** The third theme to emerge was application of what has been learned. Properties included value of information, applying skills such as reflection, teaching others the lessons within the program, using information to become more involved, agricultural advocacy, and embracing opportunity.

Program participants initially recognized the value of program information. Whether it was skill development or issue awareness, participants reported the ability to apply what was learned within their home and work environments. With that, an appreciation was established for the program. When asked about what had been learned in the first year, one participant noted that it went beyond material but the application of what was learned. Additionally, the skill development of reflection was also appreciated. One participant observed that;

I mean I've learned something from each and every seminar. Getting to see things that people don't get to see. It's been great.... But it's like Dr. Williams has said. She didn't give us tips. It's not just something [methods of conflict resolution] we can just write down. We've got to kind of follow through with it, work at it. And the thank you notes help a lot. It helps you go back through everything you did and review it and read over everything again (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

During the first seminar, participants were learned how to reflect through a workshop to explain the concept of reflection and by a program administrator leading the first reflection. Class members participated in reflections during each seminar in the program. During these reflections, participants indicated that since they understood the practice, they incorporated reflection into their daily lives and reflected on many personal decisions as a result of the program. This same concept was indicated in individual reflections. In indicating what he had learned from the program, one

participant indicated that he not only applied information but also skills that had been taught in the program.

And it got to the point where not only has Wedgworth has taught me patience for a leadership standpoint because in my prior industry, all decisions made, you know decision making needs to be done 5 seconds , it's a knee jerk reaction and we've got to live with the consequences. and figure out later and just keep going. This really allowed me to get a better understanding of sitting back and saying okay, now what is the issue, why do I need to think this way or why can't you accept my way. It's no longer that way, you've really got to open a box and make a better decision. I think that's really ingrained with Wedgworth but on the political front, its truly show that we were able to experience in Tallahassee is that one person can make a huge difference. A group can change the world, and being quiet doesn't work (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Participants also reported that they were passing on the lessons they had learned to other individuals, including work colleagues, industry and family members. This same theme was evident in individual reflection as well. The first leg of the international trip provided exposure to agricultural operations, the city of Paris, a large food and agricultural market and opportunity to embrace the French culture and experience different systems, such as transportation throughout the country. In the reflection for the international trip, most individuals commented on the differences and similarities between the two countries. In doing so, one participant added to the conversation stating the importance of exposing others, mainly her children, to different cultures and perspectives.

You truly don't appreciate how incredibly amazing the program is until you are in it and you start at home going back and having those conversations and are able to look at your child and say, we need to do things that expose you. I need to do things that expose you to different aspects and differ thought processes so that maybe you can find a different path, or a path that you want to make. And have a path that you love. And there's a lot of things that Wedgworth has done for me and its truly is amazing (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, June 4, 2012).

Throughout seminar reflections, participants reported how they would use what they learned, but they also connected how they used what was learned to aide in the improvement and security of the agricultural industry. Agricultural advocacy was a reoccurring topic of conversation that fell into several themes throughout the research. In the reflection discussing future involvement, participants discussed the importance of remaining involved for personal growth, to remain connected to the program and to provide opportunities for others in the future. However one participant also noted the importance of leadership for the industry and the importance of working with others in order to advocate.

The big take away I take is from everything that we have seen, our industry needs us. They need more people like us fighting within our industry but also really educating people outside of our industry. And it think that has become more and more apparent you know, as the different areas we've explored here but also what we see in our day to day life. And if we are not giving back to that, we are going to be hurt as a whole (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Advocacy was spoken as a general term, but also as a personal obligation. When asked what participants had taken away from the program, one participant pointed out that advocacy began by doing things presented at a local level or in the here and now. To him, these were just as important as the change on a larger scale.

What I noticed most about everything that's going on is we have a tendency to make or try to make universal changes and try to complain about universal changes and go to DC or go to our legislators, making these whole big huge changes. And I think if we just stop for a minute and looked back at what we can influence and what we can get our hands into we should probably get a whole lot more done (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

This same sentiment was shared on the national trip when one participant reflected on the statement, "We raise everything but our voices."

I think mine is, "the one voice." The one voice does matter. Whether it's our one voice as a group, as Wedgworth, or it's my one voice as Julie. It does matter, it does make a difference and I'm glad that I've learned to frame that voice and be able to carry out the message about agriculture (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

The final subtheme to emerge under application of what has been learned is the importance of embracing opportunity. Participants often shared life and job changes with fellow participants. Throughout the two years several participants reported making career changes as a result of this program. At the conclusion of the program, one participant spoke on how she had drawn on prior experiences, lessons and network to aid in making the change and receive advice on the change. In her reflection, she drew on the lessons learned in Seminar Three. During the last program session, a program alumnus and current Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services asked participants to reflect on their Wedgworth experience. He also encouraged the class to value the opportunity they had been given and offered several pieces of advice on getting the most from the experience. Statements included, "The program is a game changer for all of its players." In the final seminar, one participant drew back on that statement to reveal how the program had changed her both personally and professionally.

And I think what always hits me is what [Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services] told us in Tallahassee when he said, this is a game changer. And I firmly believe that, absolutely. And I ran into him last week, before I took the job with [a company] and he said to me "How was the international trip?" And I said; "It was really good." And he said, "It life changing, wasn't it?" And he had no idea the decision I had on my plate to make. And I said, "You have no idea. This absolutely was a life changer." And I wouldn't be in the situation I am in right now and the opportunity I have ahead of me if you had asked me three weeks ago or a month ago or six months ago if I would be moving home. I would have told you that you were crazy. So the fact that I get to go home is because of Wedgworth. It was because of the network that we have here that I get the

opportunity to move home and be close to my family and to carry on and to find others to have this experience (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

**Value in Understanding.** The fourth theme that emerged was finding value in understanding. This category included the properties of understanding others, continued learning, perception, changing perspectives, and acknowledging differences. Throughout the two year experience, participants were able to examine issues on local, state, national and international levels. Each seminar provided them opportunity to learn about new industries and business, examine issues and evaluate effective leadership within those contexts. In the Seminar Five reflection, when asked what participants about program ‘take-aways’, one participant responded;

Prior to getting involved in the program I know I was very myopic in my thinking. You know, I was very focused in what my core business was all about and who we need to become better in our own business. And this has really allowed me to have more of a global mindset (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

The first subtheme within value in understanding was the opportunity to understand others. Participants began to understand others in terms of culture, economics and issues. This subtheme first emerged in the Seminar Five reflection when asked what had been learned one participant referenced a statement made by George Knox in Seminar Two. The participant reflected that;

So it's been fun though because I remember back to what Mr. Knox said in Miami is that to remember that all people are coming from the place that they feel is right and I genuinely believe that about people. They are coming from their point of view is what they think is best that will get us to you know, where we all want to be. So I think that is important (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

In the same reflection, it was reflected upon that it is also important to understand where others are coming from, their issues and their intentions.

In terms of awareness, it's both being aware of the other side of every issue. Because there is always one, and the people on the other side are not there, they are not generally out to get you. They are fighting for what they believe is right (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Understanding others, in addition to understanding where someone is coming from also included understanding intention. Participants learned this on both the individual level and on the level or business or industry. During the Seminar Ten reflection, one individual recognized the surprise he felt when trying to compare a European company with his own previously held assumptions. In the reflection he stated;

Mine was Monday, talking with [name] and [name] and with the assistance of [name]. How they don't even think in a regional perspective. Everything they do is with Asia, Europe, and the United States. There region is tens of thousands of miles. And we just haven't caught that yet. So it was pretty impressive (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

The second subtheme to emerge within value of understanding was the importance of continued learning. In the first seminar, participants remarked how important it was to reflect and think critically to avoid habitual group think and prejudice. Additionally, reflection was perceived as important as a requirement to growth and application (Group Reflection, Seminar One, Personal Communication, November 11, 2010). Following reflections did not address those to concepts specifically but did acknowledge the value of keeping an open mind to understanding others. For example, when asked to elaborate on the expression, "always do what is in front of you", one participant stated;

So I think it is very important not only to do the things that are in front of you, but also be mindful of all the things that are outside of just your tunnel vision, your industry. Because it is such a big industry in general (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

Participants also had the chance to critically examine issues that had been discussed within seminars. GMO's had been introduced as a contentious issue within European markets and as something that differentiated American food supply demands from European demands. The conversation during the reflection had geared toward what was learned and comparing it to what had been seen before or more familiar practices. Before the international seminar, participants had been briefed on international trade and the use of GMO's and their perception in Europe. As participant met with the seed company, the discussion of GMO's took place. In the reflection, one participant revisited the subject and noted;

The other thing is that I keep thinking about yesterday and the seed company when they were discussing the GMO's and how they pretty well have come to the conclusion that they have lost that battle. And so what can we learn from that in our own country related to whatever issues we face? Whether it's framing the issues for the public... I'd like to learn about that. What they did differently, to change the public's perception (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

Participants also acknowledged learning how to increase understanding through other individuals. During Seminar Five, when reflecting what participants had learned, two participants used the examples of two former leadership program participants to convey how they had learned to further understand others. One participant reflected on the skills used to understand others. Another participant disclosed how he had learned to understand others from watching deepen understanding of others or issues.

When we sit around and night I am learning things about a lot of different industries and its really helped me in a sort of got from watching [colleague] and people making comments about him from the class last year. I really [thought], sit back and listen really take in what everybody is saying and Miami, everything about the economy down there and how their net export is now. You know [colleague] has really changed in the last two years and seems like he's gotten more liberal. And I said, no, I think he's just done this Wedgworth program and he starts out now in his thinking where he thinks of what the solutions going to be. He's looking at all sides instead of

just coming from his side, he's more centered now and to listen better (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Another subtheme under value in understanding was the dispelling of perceptions or impressions as a result of seminar programming. This was most prevalent in the Seminar Ten reflection, when participants of their changed impressions and expectations. Impressions were changed through programming as well as participants' free time. In reflecting, participants disclosed how surprised they were regarding the language barrier. At first, participants were surprised how many individuals including program hosts and speakers knew English.

It's almost evident how ready they are. From our previous speakers, and the previous seminars, that they are making themselves ready for the world by knowing English and all these other languages where I feel like we are behind because we know what we are comfortable in and that's it. Even in the restaurants, some of the restaurants we've been to outside of our gatherings that if your own personal waiter or waitress doesn't speak great English, they are just calling someone over [snaps fingers] and they are on it (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

However, another participant had a different experience. After the impression that so many individuals understood English, he was surprised that specific individuals did not know English. Additionally, he disclosed how uncomfortable he was by interacting with those who did not speak English.

I was just kind of surprised about the gentlemen that spoke yesterday, Pierre, that he didn't know English. I mean he was in charge of a multi-billion dollar company and actually wants to change the world. And there is just so much that gets lost in the translation when you just have to sit. I was really surprised that he didn't know, which he may have its just maybe he was a proud Frenchman that wouldn't speak. But I was kind of surprised by that. And you know, we are around a lot of the service industry here, and they are all going to know English. I kind of stepped out on my own today and went and washed clothes and made a couple mistakes at the Laundromat and they didn't know any English at all. I was in the dark right there so if you step out of the service industry, it's not as prevalent as you think it is (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

An additional perception that was dispelled was that of the amount of differences between a home region and a foreign country. One participant reflected on similarities in stating “the same problems we deal with here or in the US are the same here. That’s been really enlightening” (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012). Another participant remarked on how many similarities existed between the two places.

I think for me I was really surprised how close this economy is and all of France is to how it is in south Florida. It’s amazing; I thought it was going to be like all your typical French people walking around. This was my mentality, and I was totally shocked when I got here. Like I can’t tell who’s a visitor and who’s not a visitor. I mean we might see a typical French person, but not very many. So it was really surprising to me how welcoming they are and how very close they are to us and to everything they want to do (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

During this same reflection, participants also reflected on their observations of Rungis market, which was a large food and agricultural market outside of Paris. Buyers at the market included wholesale, retail, grocers and restaurateurs. Earlier that day, participants had the opportunity to visit one of the largest food and agricultural products market in the world. Participants toured the wholesale market and were briefed on the processes, customers and products available. After visiting Rungis market, participants reflected on the differences between the two food systems. Reflecting on food systems then digressed into observing general differences between the two countries.

To follow up on what [name] had said, and what [name] had said, you know I thing were definitely, you know I don’t want to use the word ahead, but on some things. I mean we are definitely already in the box beef and other meats. But we are behind them on the traceability of our foods. And I think that’s become a lot bigger deal in terms of the worldwide competition. You look at everything purely efficiency and standard of living, there’s a lot of things that you.... There currently lifestyle they have in Europe they are happy with not having air conditioner in your hotel room and one bed in their hotel room. Its smaller rooms and they have a much more efficient

transportation system(Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

In understanding others, one of the interesting conversations came from the international trip reflection. After visiting Rungis food and agricultural market, as noted in the previous statement, participants remarked on the differences between the participants' home country and host country. Participants reflected further on the differences between the two systems but in doing so, they arrived at the understanding of those differences. When touring Rungis, participants observed and remarked on the packaging and advertising of food products to restaurateurs and grocers. Foods were packed to be visually appealing to sell to buyers at the market. Participants recognized this as very different from their own practices. One participant stated;

It's amazing the differences in the way we package these goods and how we sell them. What we saw today was beautifully packaged for, I don't want to generalize, but basically restaurants, individual people coming in and buying. Where in the United States....they are going out in bulk, quick, easy, the cheapest you can possibly get them out. We are selling things to the market where we are selling bulk, and it's a whole different structure. And what you were talking about, how do you bring this together and move it all over the world, that's one concept we got to get together to start with. They are completely different concepts. It's a different price, its different markets you know.

On first impressions, though they did not agree with it, they appreciated it. As the conversation progressed, one participant reflected on how the practice would not work for her at all. In examining the 'pretty package, she found faults with the product.

If I tried to sell that celery, the celery we saw today, I could not sell that....I was looking at the cherries within that beautiful package and they weren't uniform. ... they didn't look beautiful to me and I wouldn't want to buy it because it had some beautiful leaves and presentation on it. So I think there is a huge disconnect from mass marketing commodity quality specifications that are required for the mass market...I think they are just totally different perspectives from our world point of view versus theirs because they are so accustomed to the value and the quality of food versus

us who, we are trying to mass feed everyone (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

The last subtheme to emerge was the importance of keeping perspective.

Following the discussion on differences between food and agricultural markets, one participant remarked on having different perspectives. In having different perspectives, some things are observed while others are not seen. In explaining this, he stated;

Because we all have different perspectives. I guess the things that I look at in places sometimes are obviously different than others. When we were at the White House, there were weeds in the turf. When we were at Versailles, there were vines in the boxwood. From a distance, all of these things look wonderful, but when you get up close and sort of put a microscope to it, you find issues. I don't know what it means, I may need some time to reflect on it. But there's got to be something there to learn from that (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

Another participant agreed with the comment and added by articulating the importance of looking at things differently. First impressions don't always provide the whole story and it depends on how things are viewed. In that, it is important to exchange dialogue to resolve issues and solve problems.

Because you know, 30,000 foot level of everything is, we can all agree on, that sounds like a great idea. But the devil is in the details and that's when work gets really, really hard. And that's when all of the lessons that we learned of compromise and conflict resolution are what's important... The devil is all right here in trying to figure out and so the dialog and exchange is a necessary part. And [name] is right, when you get up to the boxwood and there's vines growing all through it, well, you've got to figure out how to get that worked out and done right to make it beautiful at that level (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

**Relationships and networking.** The final theme to emerge was relationships and networking. This category included the properties of value of relationships within the class, program, and industry, and importance of passing on what had been given to others.

The first subtheme to emerge was the value of class relationships. During two reflections, facilitators asked participants about future involvement. For Seminar Nine's reflection, facilitators asked the group how the class would encourage everyone to remain involved in the organization. In Seminar Eleven, the facilitator referred back to Seminar Nine's reflection and then asked the participants why someone would stay involved in the program. Responses varied from personal growth, personal obligation, the network and advocacy. During Seminar Nine's reflection, participants mainly focused on the class and the relationships that had been established as a result of the two years. With that, reflection geared toward keeping the network together. One participant stated:

When I go through the reflections that we've done, always for me it's you all that are what makes this to me, so extraordinarily different from anything else that I have done. And you know I've loved it, in the right way, when you sent me the update on your dad. So just remembering that it's not just about you, but also that we care about you and your feelings. I can see emails going back and forth on that. But I would hate not to see you all in person. So I too will make that commitment to be at something (Group Reflection, Seminar Nine, Personal Communication, April 18, 2012).

During Seminar Eleven, participants also referred to the value of the class relationships but also referred to its value.

I would say stay involved because of the relationships and friendships built that the network that is formed. Not only in our class but in the whole Wedgworth program; alumni and all of that. So I just feel like that network is so valuable stateside that we can call each other at any time on a variety of needs, professional or personal (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

The class relationships apparent through all seminar reflections, group and individual. When asked in the last seminar why one would remain involved in the organization, he mentioned the relationships but also elaborated on why those relationships are important. As participants had traveled together for over 40 days in

the course of 22 months, participants realized the value and amount of the shared knowledge between the thirty participants.

Several people have already mentioned the network and obviously that network is very important, but I think it takes this network of 30 individuals to hold to that level, because we have so many different experiences, we have had together. It's kind of like your ex-college roommate. You've grown up together, you are buddies. You just have this experience; it takes this relationship to a whole new level. With that being said, I think so many of us or all of us want to be opinion leaders in our field... And because of these relationships and how thick they are, you are already allowed to look beyond just your own backyard to become a better opinion leader for your state, community, nation, etcetera. So definitely, we realize we need to build these relationships (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

In addition to recognizing the value and unique nature of the relationships, participants also realized participants needed to remain involved in the program as a class to help each other in the future.

And you know, with the relationships in this room, I don't want to see [name] struggle because he's not getting the labor he needs. You know, I don't want to see the individuals here that have worked so hard to provide us what we need here in the state of Florida not getting the resources they need because we don't have the support for them (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

Finally, in reflecting on the class relationships one participant stated the importance of keeping involvement centered around a purpose. In his reflection, he encouraged participants to brainstorm ideas to aid the program in the future as a means to stay together.

I think that having some kind of purpose helps keep people together. So maybe each year, there is a specific purpose that our class would have that could be a specific charity or foundation or it could be saying that during Wedgworth years like who would really like to host Class Nine for Seminar Five or something like that. Then as many of us get there as we can. But also like we did for the Mason Smoak Foundation, you know it could be thing like that we there is not class. Just something, just some purpose for people to stay involved (Group Reflection, Seminar Nine, Personal Communication, April 18, 2012)

In reflecting on relationships and networking, program participants often drew back to the second subtheme, the program network. As a result of the Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture's challenge in Tallahassee, participants were aware the obligation they had to the program. In reflections and conversations, they noted they were part of a larger organization and mission. During Seminar Eight's reflection, in describing the program, one participant stated; "I think about two words. One would be inspired and the other is [Alumni Member] challenge to us; honor the family name. And so what will we do? What will I do? What will we do to honor the family name?" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012). In that same reflection participants echoed this same sentiment in stating "Integrity. It seems everywhere we go, we're treated like we are treated like VIP's because of the name on this program and the people that run this program and how we conduct ourselves while we are in this program" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

When recognizing the program network and relationships, participants also reflected on the size and scope of the network. During the international trip, following meeting with program alumni based in France and a fellow class member announcing a move and a job change, one participant stated;

But then on that, also you know that when you get into Wedgworth, you have a huge network of people. That network is now global. You have two members that are going to be moving over here eventually and people like [name] moving to Houston. You have people in DC. It starts out just as a group of Floridians but it quickly grows worldwide (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

In discussing the value of the program network, participants also reflected on the obligation they have to the program and In discussing the value of the program network,

participants also reflected on the obligation they have to the program and future participants. In reflecting on future involvement, one participant drew back to previous experiences and the lessons that were instilled.

Why should we stay involved is the people. The people in this room and the people we have met. The network inspires me. The other thing related to our responsibility and I am reminded of when we were in the rotunda and I think about the people that have been there and sacrificed. We have that same responsibility I think. And we can, I, the group and the whole organization obviously can do things to influence our community, our jobs, our state, and our country. And so I look forward to being a part of that (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

The last subtheme to emerge was the industry network. However, as opposed to just defining the industry network, participants talked about its importance, and desire to build their own industry networks. During Seminar Six's reflection, one participant elaborated on the phrase "We raise everything but our voices." In doing so, she did not necessarily speak on the importance of getting the word out, but working within the industry and the industry working together as a network to achieve one voice.

I picked we raise everything but our voices. Not being a big producer, one of the things that I see throughout the industry is a lack of communication between the industries and agriculture. And it really distresses me because I constantly see the left group and the right group not wanting to talk to each other and unify. And things would be so much simpler in my opinion, if people had one unified voice. And we went forward and were able to talk about different things (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

### **Objective Three- Levels of Reflection**

For the third objective, to determine how program participants' level of reflection, data were categorized using Mezirow's (1991) levels of reflection. Once data were grouped into individual and group reflections, data were grouped into the categories of the six levels of reflection; habitual action, thoughtful action, introspection, content

reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. Following the initial coding, processes participants were using to reflect were used to separate the data further into the subcategories which described processes of reflection. Levels of reflection and its processes are displayed in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6.

**Table 4-5. Individual Reflection- Levels and Processes of Reflection**

Introspection	Content Reflection	Process Reflection
Using others experiences to convey observations	Using others experiences to convey observations	Using others experiences to convey observations
Using observations to disclose goals and wants	Observations to disclose goals or wants	Conveying personal obligation or responsibility
Conveying an opinion	Conveying an opinion	Observation of self
Observation of self	Conveying personal obligation or responsibility	Change and transformation
Lessons learned through experience or examples	Observation of self  Lessons learned through experience or examples	Change and transformation

Table 4-6. Group Reflection- Levels and Processes of Reflection

Introspection	Content Reflection	Process Reflection	Premise Reflection
Learning through shared class experiences	Using personal experience	Using personal experiences	Learning through shared class experiences
Connecting multiple class experiences	Learning through shared class experiences	Learning through shared class experiences	Using personal experiences to convey understanding
Direct Observation	Direct observation	Direct Observation	Direct observation
Conveying future action	Connecting multiple class experiences  Conveying future action		

### Individual Reflection- Introspection

**Using others experiences to convey observations.** An observation that arose in both individual reflection and group reflection was the fact that participants were very busy during seminars with little time to touch base with home. As part of program accountability, program participants do not utilize their cell phones or email during program. Breaks in between speakers allow for participants to call in to work and home, answer emails, and return phone calls. In the following comment, the participant expressed that it was nice to meet others spouses, and also how spouses could finally notice how busy the schedule was. It was also important to notice that participants only expressed feeling without connecting it to prior learning or past experiences.

It was interesting to see the dynamics with people when their spouses were included. It was also helpful in keeping the peace for the future because the spouses got to see how jam packed our day was and that we're not lying when we say we didn't have time to call (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

In observing other individuals, one participant noted how thankful she was for what class participants had done for her. However, in the photo journal, the participant did not acknowledge why feelings emerged. She stated;

Through home "heart" ships and home sickness, my Wedgworth family has uplifted me. At my seat on the bus I have seen my friends walk by with words of encouragement, tissues for tears and love. Every day with a sunny hello and how are you doing even through tired and weary eyes. I have had interesting conversations and laugh out loud moments! Before my ride on this bus my friends celebrated my birthday in Washington DC and while in New Mexico offered up prayers for my father, moving me beyond emotion (Photo Journal, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

**Using observations to disclose goals or wants.** At the conclusion of Seminar Two, the participants were asked to write a letter to reflect on program experiences, and convey what they had learned to other individuals. In addition to sharing learning experiences, participants disclosed goals or wants. Within the reflection letters, many participants shared with others their experiences at the Community Partnership for the Homeless. During this seminar session, participants served dinner to the homeless population as well as toured the facility. As a result of the experience at the Community Partnership for the Homeless, in Miami, participants showed how they were impacted. In the following statement, the participant describes the experience and feeling, but does not tie it to prior experiences or question prior experience.

I wish that you and the girls could have been part of the experience we had with serving dinner to the homeless at the Community Partnership for the Homeless Shelter. It was so moving to see each person walk into that dining room hungry and wanting something to eat. They were so grateful for us helping them (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

**Conveying an opinion.** In conveying an opinion, participants offered their own personal views as well as applied new material to build upon previously held

perceptions. One participant used her occupational knowledge and applied it to the present experience.

Many people today like to invoke the “Founding Fathers,” but I believe most of them have absolutely no understanding of the thoughts of those leaders that actually make the basis of our governance so great. When a politician running for the presidency would even dare to hint they would do away with the separation of church and state that makes it very obvious that they do not appreciate the thoughtfulness of the drafters of our Constitution(Reflection Letter, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

**Observation of self.** In the final evaluation, participants were asked to describe ways the participant used reflection has changed because of the leadership program. Some participants offered short, succinct answers with no indication of how those feelings developed such as, “trying to reflect more” and “it helps with time management” (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

In preparing for the media training, participants also used introspective reflection within the questionnaire. Succinct answers included; “I thought it was going to be tough” and “looking forward to professional training” (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 20, 2012).

Both the evaluation and training utilized questionnaires at either the end of the day or end of the seminar. This may allude the use of shorter answers, however, in filling out these questionnaires, some participants reflected at a deeper level.

**Lessons learned through experience or examples.** Participants used displayed introspection in answering questionnaires, particularly the media training reflection. For example, when participants were asked if their impressions had changed as a result of the experience, one participant noted; “the experiences was not as challenging as anticipated. It was still challenging but Ray did a great job of helping us

to prepare and handle it" (Media Training Questionnaire, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, March 24, 2012). Participants also provided reflections at the introspection level in the Seminar Three questionnaire. In response to the question of what was learned from the seminar, one participant stated

The way bills are formed and passed was quite different from what I thought. The system is so complex that it is actually very orderly and simple. An idea (bill proposal) goes down the pipeline and it gets checked off or pushed back again until it is eventually passed or dropped completely (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

### **Individual Reflection- Content Reflection**

**Using others experiences to convey observations.** Participants utilized content reflection in describing thoughts and feelings by elaborating and explaining their reflections in reflective activities such as photo journals. In one photo journal, the participant reflected on what she perceived when visiting the Vietnam Memorial during the National Seminar. She began her reflection by placing it in the context of the war and her family's experiences. She ended her reflection with what the experience meant to her and what she and others should do with what she learned.

This picture brings many emotions forward as well as thoughts of how we can learn from our past. The Vietnam War did not end till April, 1975. I had barely begun to live in 1975 and all these people had died to protect my American rights. That really struck a nerve with me. I had 3 uncles who served in Vietnam and I am very blessed to have them all with me today. My uncles were the lucky ones; they made it home. The rose standing at the base of the wall was in honor/memory to some who was lost; who never had a chance to really live...I was reminded as leaders we must never forget our past. Finally, we must learn to be better leaders to secure the future of our children and their children (Photo Journal, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Reflections in this category were also discovered in the final evaluation. Even though the participant did not elaborate on feelings or perceptions, they did reflect on

what they think in stating; "I have gained a greater respect for a more open mind for people with a different opinion. They have much to add to a positive solution" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

To reflect on what was observed or learned, participants also used examples of others actions to reflect on what was perceived. This was done both in writing activities and questionnaires. Within the reflection letters, responses were obviously longer and more detailed. For example, in the following reflection letter, individuals are specified by name and occupation.

That passion that [program speaker] talked about is what [business owner] has found with his winery, what [program speaker] has, and is the common thread so far. [Program speaker] of the Coast Guard, [business owner] of the [business corporation], [hospital CEO] from [hospital] to the ag teacher at [High School] all have optimistic outlooks and are a powerful energy (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

However, when providing reflections within a questionnaire, observations of others were made and perceptions were conveyed, but answers were more general, such as; "As we reflected during session, it was nice to hear what others gleaned from an experience and that what they got out of it was totally different than what I got. It was nice to hear different perspectives" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

**Observations to disclose goals or wants.** It was found that when participants disclosed goals or wants within reflections using content reflection, participants would provide observations of what was learned and then disclose what they wanted. For example, in their reflection letter, one participant stated;

Next, I have been impressed with the common theme of people's passion both from other classmates and from program speakers. This passion is encouraging and inspirational. I hope to have the same level of passion for

my job in striving to help Florida agriculture while helping make Florida better (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

**Conveying an opinion.** The majority of reflections under the code of conveying an opinion related to the agricultural industry. It was very apparent the passion and concern that participants held for the industry. Most reflections that provided an opinion on the agricultural industry were with reflection letters and photo journals. Participants conveyed what they perceived as well as what they would act upon. In their photo journal, one participant stated;

Agriculture plays many important roles and they are not just the ability to carrying on a family business. We provide a vital service in feeding our citizens, providing environmental services like recharging the ecosystem, giving wildlife a place to live and hunt for survival. By constantly improving our operations we can become more efficient in production, improve the amount and quality of the water we return to the ecosystem and we can look at playing a part in storing water for urban areas all the while providing a viable economic engine to our communities whether they are on a local or international level (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Participants also conveyed an opinion using content reflection within questionnaires. Though the reflections were shorter, participants still reflected on what was perceived and felt. For example, when reflecting on common leadership qualities, one participant stated;

There are so many patterns that are the same for all of these issues. These people all have a natural love for doing their job and the betterment of the public. They are all energetic, lively and very knowledgeable which makes them a natural leader (Seminar Three Reflection Questionnaire, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

**Conveying personal obligation or responsibility.** Reflective journals indicated participants felt a sense of obligation and responsibility. Some participants provided

observations of past leaders and in doing so, participants tended to be reminded of their own obligations and responsibilities. One participant stated;

I felt a sense of awe to think about the people that had been there and the history that occurred here in past times. I was humbled and inspired to think about the faith, sacrifice, and service of our founding fathers. I was reminded of the dedication of those currently serving, and of my own responsibility to do what I can where I am to serve others. I was reminded of my own responsibility to serve others, my family, community, state, and nation. Reminded of the duty and opportunity each of us has to serve our God and each other. It reminded me how thankful I am to live in this country, and for the freedoms that we enjoy (Reflection Journals, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

They were also reminded of leader qualities and how they tied to their own obligation to their industry.

It takes several working parts, minds, and people to make a masterpiece. No one person can do it on their own. We are outnumbered in voices and votes, however, we must reach out to our friends, neighbors and the general public to gain continued support of our production of food and fiber(Reflection Journals, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

**Observation of self.** Within the code of self-observation, participants focused mainly on what they learned or learning practices. This theme resonated throughout the two years. As personal growth was a subtheme in individual reflection, it is apparent that participants would talk about their development using what they perceived, thought and felt. In the reflection letters, a participant observed that;

I am continually amazed at what I am learning about myself. My perspective has been changed even though we have lonely been together several weeks. My view of those in my class, program speakers, and communities all have changed. I believe my understanding of these things will improve my ability to solve problems in the future (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

**Lessons learned through experience or examples.** Statements that reflected perceptions thoughts and feelings about what has been learned were found in both

questionnaires and journaling activities. Within the questionnaire, a participant succinctly reported on what they felt about the media training and being in front of a camera. The participant reflected that;

I did not like seeing myself on camera, but it is a good experience to see what you would do differently if put into this position in the future. I liked the practical opportunity. It is hard than it looks when presented with the original presentation (Media Training Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

Content reflection was also observed in a reflection letter which conveyed feelings about how to prepare the family for potential disaster. This theme was influenced by the visit to the Community Partnership for the Homeless and as a result of the visit, participants took what they felt and applied it to preparing families for potential disasters or events.

I was shaken by the stories of medical disaster or some other calamity that edged a family out of house and home. Thanks to our families, we will never be homeless, but it made me realize we need to save more diligently for a better safety cushion than what we currently have in place. I also need to make sure [daughter] and [daughter] work harder at school to excel and that they take advantage of opportunities to explore their passions (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

**Change and transformation.** Content reflection within the processes of change and transformation was marked by participants observing changing their own perspectives but also the importance of changing the opinion or perspectives of others. In visiting Biosphere 2 during the national trip, one participant pointed out changing perspectives and viewing something different. In her reflection she conveyed what the class learned as well as her thoughts on how to apply the lesson in life. In her photo journal she reflected;

We were reminded on several occasions while visiting the biosphere 2 that the project was not a failure. Just as those who designed, constructed and

lived in the Biosphere 2, we must continue to push forward, adapt and remind those around us that agriculture is alive and well in the state of Florida and across the country (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

On the national trip and other participant reflected on the importance of changing other's perspectives. In her reflection, she implied that her perspectives had changed from viewing the border fence in New Mexico and that other's perspectives would change if they had a similar experience. In her photo journal, she stated;

Seeing the actual fence and hearing the truth to the rumors we hear about workers trying to come to America to do the jobs Americans will no longer do heightened my concern... I wish folks that are working to remove our labor force from our country could spend a day in the shoes of a farmer and then travel where I did with my Wedgworth Leadership Institute class; maybe that would change their position (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

### **Individual Reflection- Process Reflection**

**Using others experiences to convey observations.** Using process reflection, participants used others experiences to convey how they thought, felt or perceived something. Participants were influenced by others to think about what they experienced in a different way. After meeting with officials in Miami and West Palm Beach County, one participant indicated that by watching how others conducted themselves, he would change how he embraced different opportunities. In his reflection he stated;

The learning experience has been significant for me. It is really encouraging to meet the great minds ...of our workforce. They have inspired me to get more involved in the necessary items that are needed to move agriculture forward. This is something that we do not think about on a daily basis, and I know that I am blessed to have the experiences that we have had so far. The question is what will we do with these opportunities? (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

In observing other individuals while using process reflection, participants did not necessarily reflect directly on others actions, but on how they could learn from their

actions to change their own behavior. This process was most common within the two questionnaires; media training and Seminar Three questionnaire.

In discussing how to better work with the media, one participant stated the importance of “keeping on message, developing three to four key points to deliver, develop a question and answer prior to interacting with the media in an interview setting” (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012). In observing state leaders in the context of the legislature, one participant observed that

I have seen the impact that can be had if we participate in the political process. I will focus on working with my elected officials, organizational associations, and my company to help in giving our thoughts and concerns to our government (Seminar Three questionnaire, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

**Conveying personal obligation or responsibility.** Reflective journals indicated participants felt a sense of obligation and responsibility. Some participants provided observations of past leaders and in doing so, participants tended to be reminded of their own obligations and responsibilities. This was indicated in both photo journaling and the final evaluation. The photo journal examined how feelings develop and the final evaluation examined the acting and assessment of performing a new skills. In the photo journal, one participant was reminded of her own obligations to give back;

Reflecting on this classroom coincidence in the context of its location – the War College – reminds me that the freedoms I cherish have been won, and are defended by, those willing to give their lives to preserve what makes this country great. I was reminded anew of the debt I owe and the obligation I have to give back some measure of what's been given me (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Within the context of the final evaluation, a participant reflected on how to hone in on his ability to reflect and to “Continue to work on delivery of my point of view to fairly

communicate and understand" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

**Observation of self.** In the final evaluation, participants were asked to describe ways the participant used reflection has changed because of the leadership program. One participant provided observation of how he reflected but also that as a process he was reflecting at a deeper level: "I think I have always reflected on projects, tasks or speaking engagements- looking for ways to improve. However, I never reflected at the depth I now reflect on issues" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Participants also reflected at length on how they performed the acts of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and acting. In his reflection one participant observed that;

Lastly, I guess I simply felt. I could write volumes of feelings associated with each program. The young coast guard specialists made me nearly tear with pride as they described plainly and matter of factly how they protect our coastal borders and those trying to reach them. As well, [hospital administrator] left me feeling both envious he has created an environment of harmony amongst his employees (something all of us business folks strive) and envy that I cannot seem to do it.... Despite my best efforts. But again, I felt, something I rarely do in my day to day enterprises. And, quite frankly that is nice to connect and not be so analytical (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

**Change and transformation.** Change and transformation within process reflection was most apparent in questionnaires asking the specific questions of what participants would do with information provided through the training or seminar. As a result of media training, one participant stated that he would "become more available for interviews. In the past, I would dodge interviews. Now I feel more comfortable. Working to talk about certain subjects that I know will get the media attention" (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012). Additionally,

since being taught about reflection and having to reflect during the seminars, participants were using the practice in their own life. One participant observed that; “reflecting at work is helping me evaluate the main things we do- hopefully to improve, focus and get better results” (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

### **Group Reflection- Introspection**

**Learning through shared class experiences.** Participants observed the value of learning through the program. In group reflections, participants would convey what was learned by relating them to shared experiences within the class. In this, participants would not have to elaborate on the experience because of shared knowledge. However, levels of reflection could still be indicated in this code by participants willingness to share what was perceived but also how those perceptions developed. Within introspection, how feelings developed was not indicated in reflections such as;

A lot of you guys know that I am new to agriculture, I've only been in it about two years so the experiences of being able to visit all these different places, learning about different types of agriculture and all the problems that are going on in all different types of industry. It's been absolutely phenomenal for me (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

**Connecting multiple class experiences.** In communicating multiple class experiences using introspection, participants would recall multiple events. Feelings and thoughts were conveyed but no description on how those feelings developed was revealed. For example, when asked what participants gained from the program during Seminar Eight, one participant stated;

I enjoyed the most is just seeing how much more ag has to offer. As a [County] boy it's really all citrus and cattle and then getting the chance to go

down and see sugar cane, lettuce operation. Going to see the cellulose plant with the timber. And then shifting this all on the rural and how much I mean really, all that's coming right out of Florida. Seeing the oyster operation. There's just a lot more of Florida ag, it's interesting, than just citrus and cows. I've really enjoyed getting out of Polk County and seeing some of these other parts of the state (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Within different reflection activities, it was common for participants to connect multiple experiences within their observations. Within the international trip one participant was able to discuss the differences by connecting her own personal experiences in two different locations. In the group reflection she stated;

I've enjoyed seeing the different perspective, kind of what [name] was talking about, between Paris and here. And it was a lot of fun walking around today and getting to go in the little shops and actually seeing a lot of local things. And like we did the olive oil tasting. And it was just a very unique experience whereas in Paris it was very touristy and a lot of people from all over the world. But here you really got to immerse in the culture and I really enjoyed that today (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

**Direct observation.** During the first seminar, participants were briefed on the practice of reflection. After the briefing, a program administrator led the first reflection activity. After explaining the process, he asked the first question: How did you feel about becoming part of the program? Participants gave very short answers as the facilitator went around the room calling on individuals. Responses included; nervous, excited, scared, apprehensive, and reserved. Feelings were conveyed but how or why those feelings had developed was not discussed.

Participants reflected on shared experiences throughout the two year program. During seminar nine, in the participant led reflection, participants were asked how they would stay involved in the program. Reflections came in the form of ideas and suggestions. Though the feeling of wanting to keep in touch was apparent, indicators of

how those feelings evolved or developed were absent in the reflection. One participant offered;

I just think maybe check in with I mean it's such a big group. Personally, if somebody is kind of dealing with something and you've heard it. You know maybe not an email, but maybe just a quick phone call just to make sure they are doing okay. Whatever they are going through. I just feel a little bit more personable with our whole group (Group Reflection, Seminar Nine, Personal Communication, April 18, 2012).

**Conveying future action.** In group reflections participants tended to share goals, future aspirations and application of what was learned. One participant stated;

For me one of the biggest things that have changed for me is I have wanted to become more involved on more of a state level than a local level. I mean not as far as politics and that type of thing, but I wanted to know what is happening, reading more about the issues and really care about them and I am hope we go to the national level. Having the same enthusiasm about it too (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

The participant expressed feelings and thoughts about himself and his future aspirations, but he had not examined or made a decision on why those feelings had developed.

### **Group Reflection- Content Reflection**

**Using a story or experience to reflect on an observation outside the program.** To contribute to discussion or convey a point, participants would often use a story or personal experience to provide explanations. During Seminar Five, one participant reported on what she had been doing between Seminar Four and Seminar Five. During the Seminar Five reflection a participant discussed a personal experience she had as a result of visiting an oyster operation in Apalachicola during Seminar Four. The company's owner discussed with the class the challenges the oyster industry faced as a result of the economy and the British Petroleum Deep Water Horizon Oil Spill in

April 2010. The interaction with the business owner impacted the entire class. As a result of these interactions, this particular class member used her contacts to make officials aware of what was going on from her perspective in the Apalachicola bay area.

In providing her reflection during Seminar Five, she stated;

So I think that I've probably come to find myself to actually be more engaged. And this program has taught me to be more engaged. In fact, when we got back from the panhandle, I sat in on Florida Food Safety. I am on the Florida Food Safety Security Advisory Council for the Florida Legislature. I actually spoke up for the oystermen there and Apalachicola. Totally, outside of my area. I got a very quick call after the phone, after we got off the conference, from [state official] to talk to me about it. And she's continuing to talk to me about it trying to figure out how to help these folks get beyond the issues that they are facing. Because it's more than just Florida. Because they are with me (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

**Learning through shared class experiences.** Participants were given the opportunity to travel and meet individuals from all walks of life throughout the two year experience. In this, different stories would emerge as questions were asked and conversations began. These experiences as a result of learning something new often emerged in the group reflections. In sharing these experiences, though shared meanings were apparent, giving to abbreviated stories and reflections, feelings and perceptions still emerged within the reflections. During the international trip reflection, one participant provided insight on what she had learned through seminar facilitators.

She stated that;

I think that people helping us our like the tour guides and our bus drivers what they are doing for us and their own personal lives. Hearing [bus driver's] story today really got to me. And "okay, he's the bus driver and now all of a sudden he's a bus driver and he's a motorcyclist tour guide in Thailand. I mean just so many different chapters in that life and every time he said something it was just like wow. He started out as a bus driver and ended up as somebody that is just amazing (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

**Direct observation.** Direct observations included explanations in addition to opinions and ideas being conveyed without the use of a lot of detail or class experiences to qualify the observation. During Seminar Five, participants reflected on what they had learned so far in the program. One participant provided observations of her own development as an opinion leader. In being direct, she was also able to convey what she perceived and how those observations had developed over time. In reflecting with her class, she stated;

I am a complete and total nerd and I should probably come up here and get a PhD or something. Because I really love to learn about stuff so, even though we had these really long days of listening, to people speak, and yes my eyes start to get a little heavy. I really like to learn about things and understand them. So I feel like I do have an opinion that is valuable not that other people's opinion can be less valuable. But I think if you have more informed opinion, it is and you can argue your position more effectively. So it's made me remember I really like to know what's going on I found that I am reading quite a bit more than I used to and really want to look at something's in depth and also maybe a little bit, to remember the importance of being involved on the local level. A lot of times I look at things that are going on, especially politics on a state or national level. But it's really important to be involved on a local level (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

**Connecting multiple class experiences.** In connecting multiple class experiences, participants could observe two different situations, state how the connected together or provide comparison of two different situations. During the international trip reflection, there was a tendency to compare practices and culture with American practices. For example, one participant compared private and public sector relationships. In doing so, he conveyed perception and how that perception had evolved.

Going back to the [Seed Company], I was impressed by the 3500 growers and how they come together for product development and researching and bringing that into a private structure. Whereas in citrus we are very dependent on the university. The university does a good job but it certainly

presents its challenges trying to have that public private partnership. And on top of that, these guys, 50 years ago, they were very dependent on research, but they kind of made that transition into more of a private structure (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

**Conveying future action.** In group reflections participants tended to share goals, future aspirations and application of what was learned. Statements using content reflection conveyed not only the goal, but also feeling toward the implementation and potential success of the goal. One participant stated;

Every time every session is new and overwhelming for me. But I get something from it every time. And I am so excited when I talk to, listen to [presenter]. I'm in a leadership with our local FNGLA and we have some conflict going on with our board members. And I feel like this is a perfect opportunity for me to take back what I have learned from this program and help facilitate a resolution to what is going on (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

### **Group Reflection- Process Reflection**

**Using personal experience to convey understanding.** To provide reflection, participants would often use a story or personal experience to provide explanations. When participants reflected using processes, they would refer the processes of thinking. During Seminar Five when asked what a participant had learned as a result of the program, she examined the act of perceiving but also the efficacy of perceiving and acting within a given context. In discussing how she implemented changes in her workplace she stated;

I was doing for others in my association what I should have been leading them to do for themselves. And that if I truly wanted to be a leader, I needed to do less for them but enable them to do it instead. And the other things that I have found out I shared it with But for Wedgworth yesterday, that I horded information (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Within this type of reflection, participants also used personal stories to convey a point to others about how to approach different lessons that had been learned by the class. One participant used an example of his employer to explain how processes and issues can be approached.

A couple of you know [alumni member]. He's our CEO. Conflict I don't think is always necessarily a bad thing. He is forever going to, throwing conflict at you. It's not necessarily arguing with you, but making sure you're thinking of every possible option. Not necessarily that he wants you to do something different, that he doesn't agree with you, but he wants you to look at it from both, from all sides and make sure you are sure about what you are doing (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

**Learning through shared class experiences.** Participants often reflected on value of learning together. As a result of learning together and shared experiences, one participant noted that how he perceived and acted in conversation had changed because of the knowledge he had gained. In the last reflection he stated;

My knowledge and experience is so much higher now because of everyone and everywhere we've been and everything we've actually seen. Like I was always there like on the weekend or you know somewhere nothing was going on pretty much. But I mean the things that we saw, the places that we've gone, places that we've seen are just amazing to me and I just I feel like I have such a basis now when I have a conversation with somebody like not only the horticulture industry but like this part, and this part, and this part, always different parts of ag all tie in to the same situation (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

**Direct observation.** During the Seminar Six reflection, participants offered succinct reflections. Most reflections referred to content being concerned with what was perceived, but several individuals offered reflections on how we perform thinking, feeling and reflecting. In reference to perceiving the industry, one participant remarked;

So I think that is something to do. So I think it is very important not only to do the things that are in front of you, but also be mindful of all the things that are outside of just your tunnel vision, your industry. Because it's such

a big industry in general (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

### **Group Reflection- Premise Reflection**

**Learning through shared class experiences.** During reflection, participants would often use shared experiences to reflect on what had been learned. During seminar Nine and Seminar Ten GMO's were discussed within programming and outside of programming. During Seminar Nine, discussions were held on the European perception and consumption of genetically modified products. While at the seed company, questions were asked about GMO's, their use and sale. One individual chose to reflect on this issue, but in doing so, not only offered observation and conveyed his perceptions but also questioned how the seed company had reframed this issue and expressed desire to apply the same processes to how he could change others beliefs on GMO's. In his reflection he stated;

The other thing is that I keep thinking about yesterday and the seed company when they were discussing the GMO's and how they pretty well have come to the conclusion that they have lost that battle. And so what can we learn from that in our own country related to whatever issues that we face? Whether its framing the issues for the public or ... I'd like to learn about that, what they did differently, to change that public's perception (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

After visiting a large food and agricultural goods market in Paris, participants reflected on what they saw and also how what they saw had changed their perspectives and what they thought to be true about the advancements of American agriculture and marketing versus European practices. By touring the market, Rungis, perspectives on efficiency versus appearance had changed for some individuals. In the following statement, one participant acknowledged how he and others may have thought

differently before, but as a result of the experiences, exposure had influenced potential changes in meaning frameworks.

My thought was along the line with [name] especially going through the fruit and vegetable section today at the Rungis market. It kind of amazed me that when you're looking at this stuff in a box and everything is hand placed in it perfectly. Everything looks nice. The cherry tomatoes are in way, in one direction with the stem on the top. And what I'm driving at is that we may not be as advance or in the lead in the world market as we think we are. And that stuff takes labor, it takes time and when I look at stuff in our market compared to what I saw over here. I mean stuff was coming out of Spain, it was coming out of Brazil, it was coming out of France, it was coming out of Israel. And I didn't see one thing from the United States (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

**Using personal experiences to convey understanding.** Personal experiences can be used to communicate that one understands a new issue, but can also be used to display how transformation in meaning has taken place. When sharing what he had learned, one participant explained how the use of reflection had also made him become aware of why he thought and acted as he did before. In his example, he disclosed how working in the business industry had governed his reactions and within his new career he understood the value of reflection.

And it got to the point where not only has Wedgworth has taught me patience for a leadership standpoint because in my prior industry, all decisions made, you know decision making needs to be done five seconds . It's a knee jerk reaction and we've got to live with the consequences and figure out later and just keep going. This really allowed me to get a better understanding of sitting back and saying okay, now what is the issue, why do I need to think this way or why can't you accept my way? It's no longer that way, you've really got to open a box and make a better decision. I think that's really ingrained with Wedgworth but on the political front, its truly show that we were able to experience in Tallahassee is that one person can make a huge difference. A group can change the world, and being quiet doesn't work (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

**Direct observation.** In providing a direct observation, one participant gave his opinion and perception of the perspective changes within the two economies of the

United States and Europe. This reflection was also in reference to the large food and agricultural market and how what was experienced changed perceptions and meaning frameworks. Additionally, in his reflection, this participant observed that not only had his frameworks changed in viewing European agricultural marketing versus American agricultural marketing, but that perspective changes may arise that were not noticed or reviewed before the experience.

Just listening to the folks yesterday and the different economies and everything. I think it's going to be game on. Everything we have today is going to be challenged. The relationships we have, the comforts we have with our own government, the farm bill. These guys know our farm bill better than we know the farm bill. And that kind of stuff. So I think we are getting ready for game on. And we've got to get ready for it (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter four explained the results found for each research objective; (1) to identify how program participants reflect on program experiences, (2) the themes from experiences participants reflected upon and (3) to identify if, or to what extent, reflection methods utilized by the program lead to critical reflection by participants. For the first and third objective, findings were categorized as processes of reflection. Findings indicated that participants utilized reflection-on-action more than reflection-in-action in both individual and group reflections. In both individual and group reflections, participants reflected at the levels of introspection, content reflection and process reflection. Group reflections also showed evidence of premise reflection. Finally, themes from experiences were similar among individual and group reflection with personal growth being an additional theme within group reflection.

## CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

### Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore how an adult agricultural leadership program utilized reflection methods and to determine how various reflection methods influenced the development of critical reflection. The objectives of the study were;

1. To identify how program participants reflect on program experiences
2. To determine the themes and concepts from program experiences that participants are reflecting upon
3. To identify if or to what extent to which each reflection method utilized by the program produces critical reflection by the participants.

From the literature reviewed and the data collected and analyzed, the researcher set out to establish a constructivist grounded theory on the use of reflection within an adult agricultural leadership program. Chapter Two proposed a conceptual framework to guide the study that utilized the theories of constructivism and adult learning, and the approach of experiential learning. Studies on adult leadership development, agricultural leadership programs, and other adult leadership programs were reported to supplement the study. Chapter Three outlined the study's research design and methodology.

Qualitative data were collected using participants group and individual reflections within an agricultural leadership program over the course of two years. Chapter Four described the findings from the study. Chapter Five provided a discussion of key findings, a proposed theory, implications and recommendations.

Data were collected through group and individual reflection activities, including recording and transcribing group reflection activities, participant questionnaires, and journals. Upon completion of data collection, data were divided into the three objectives

of the study for analysis. Data in each objective was coded separately as Objectives One and Three sought to find categories in processes in reflection and Objective Two sought to find themes from participants' reflections.

Findings in Chapter Four indicated that participants utilized the practices of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action within individual and group reflections. Identified themes that were reflected on as a result of the program experience were similar among individual and group reflections, with the group reflecting having one additional theme. Finally, the researcher discovered that participants reflected at the levels of introspection, content reflection and process reflection within individual activities and introspection, content reflection, process reflection and premise reflection within group reflection.

### **Key Findings**

Findings are broken down by the objectives of the study. Within each of those objectives, data was coded through the process of constant comparative analysis from initial coding to focused coding. Within Objectives One and Three, 225 initial codes within individual reflection and 206 initial codes within group reflections emerged from the data. Within Objective Two, 332 initial codes within individual reflection and 351 initial codes within the group reflection emerged from the data. The procedure of breaking down the text into codes was conducted through a constant comparative analysis beginning with the first reflection activities and continuing the analysis in a chronological pattern throughout the two years of data. Appendix D provides an example of coded text indicating both initial and focused codes. Findings offer a comparison between individual and group reflection as well as offer a comparison between different codes found within individual reflection and codes found within group

reflection. Throughout the research codes are referred to as processes or themes. Processes refer to the coding scheme for processes of reflection within Objectives One and Three. Themes were referred to as the codes based on the themes and concepts of reflection analyzed for Objective Two. To conclude the process, focused codes were placed into the proposed theoretical codes. Theoretical codes are introduced within theory construction.

### **Objective One- How Participants Reflect**

For objective one, the researcher examined if and when participants used reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action strategies offered by Schon (1983; 1988) to reflect on program experiences. Evidence of both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were found on both the individual and group levels of reflection. However, what participants reflected on and the processes utilized differed between individual and group and between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action.

**Reflection-In-Action.** The practice of reflection-in-action was not common in the data, but it was evident in both individual reflections and group reflections. In the individual reflection, it was found when participants reflected using others' experiences, disclosing goals and wants, conveying an opinion, and when reflecting on their own personal obligation and responsibility. This was different from participants using reflection-in-action among the group. At the group level, participants referred to personal experiences to convey a lesson learned, reflected on what had been learned through shared experiences and tended to connect multiple class seminar experiences.

When reflecting individually, participants drew on the experiences and also revealed the change they wanted to provide insight in their own lives. For example, when disclosing goals and wants, one participant stated; "I wish our family could have

witnessed that together" (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011). This reflection, as well as others, gives indication of constructivism in that the participant was negotiating with his environment and making sense of how he saw the world (Crotty, 2010). In doing so, he saw his role in that world, being that one to help others and hopefully have his family do the same. At the time, this was a unique experience since when the class worked at the homeless shelter, there was no time to discuss what was going to happen in the experience beforehand. This is evidence of reflecting in the experience (Schon, 1983). In composing the letter, the participant took himself back to the experiences, drew on his own knowledge and not so much the experiences or observations of his fellow classmates.

This was different from participants reflecting-in-action among the group. In the group level, participants referred to personal experiences to convey lessons learned, reflected on what had been learned through shared experiences, and connected multiple class seminar experiences. The previous statement fell under the code of disclosing goals and wants. In the group reflection setting, participant tended to reflect on what they needed to do, but never outright stated a goal or desire they felt as it appeared to be implied: "And that if I truly wanted to be a leader, I needed to do less for them, but enable them to do it instead" (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011). This could be an indication of not only shared knowledge, but a shared goal of wanting to become a more effective leader, hence enrollment in the program. Group reflections drew on socially defined meanings and socially shared stories. Even when using personal experiences, participants implied lessons or roles that each take within leadership. In the reflection, though the

participant was reflecting on what she did at that moment, she did not have to explain what was going on so much because of the shared knowledge and the construction of meaning and value (Crotty, 2010). This is evidence of social constructionism in that the participant was part of a larger group that had already defined the needs of leadership and implied the goals of being an effective leader. Social constructionism allows for socio cultural dynamics (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and a definition of meaningful reality (Crotty, 2010). Additionally, in the context of social constructionism, when this participant described the “True Colors” assessment, as well as delegating work, she did not have to be as straightforward about her actions, as fellow class participants understood her position from prior knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In other group reflections utilizing reflection-in-action participants were able to reflect on what they saw at that moment in order to broaden their knowledge and analyze issues during the seminar and particular briefing (Kaagan, 1998).

**Reflection-On-Action.** Reflection-On-Action was evident in both individual and group reflections and was a much larger practice than reflection-in-action. The codes were larger, but the processes were similar to the number of codes in reflection-in-action, meaning that participants reflected using a similar number of processes throughout the two years. Differences were also observed between participants reflection-on-action at the individual and group levels. At the individual level, participants conveyed goals and wants, provided self-observation, reflected on lessons learned through experiences and the changes they had experienced as a result of programming. Within the group level, participants shared with others reflections by

using personal experiences, shared experiences, direct observations and conveying future action.

Though there were similar codes between individual and group processes, how they reflected was different. Similar to reflection-in-action, participants reflected on their own learning in both situations. For example, though some of the codes were similar such as lessons learned through experiences and learning through shared experiences, what was reflected upon in both contexts was different. In the individual reflection, one participant shared in their letter,

From there, our adventures took us to conquering a high ropes challenge course, where we climbed over 30 feet up a pole, jumped off a platform and rang a bell. I am still amazed that not only did I climb that high, but I was able to count on and trust these 30 new friends that I had just met only hours ago (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

In discussing with the group a shared experience, one participant reflected on what the class had experienced together.

If we have all these speakers come into a classroom, this course wouldn't have anywhere near the effect as it would have of the effect to be with all of you all ....Because as we go into each of these communities, it opens us up. It makes us take something in.... (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Reflections were different being that in reflecting on their own experience, the person acknowledged personal feelings and growth whereas in the group reflection it was indicated that the reflection was intended for and connected to the 29 other individuals in the room. Additionally, the benefit of offering the reflection was of mutual agreement and understanding (Crotty, 2010). Feelings about the action were shared in the individual reflection whereas feelings about the action are assumed in the group reflection. The individual quote does show evidence of constructivism in the learning and transformation taking place in the participant (Doolittle & Camp, 1999); however, in

the group reflection, the participant eludes to the shared knowledge and how it impacts the group as a whole, not just how it impacts him as an individual (Crotty, 2003).

**Comparison of Reflection-In-Action and Reflection-on-Action.** Differences were also indicated on what processes were adopted at the individual level of reflection and the group level of reflection using the process of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Figure 5.1 displays reflection processes at the individual and group level for reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. At the individual level, only one code was similar; disclosing goals and wants. In both types of reflection, participants referred back to experiences through observations of self and what practices they learned or experiences with the program (reflection-on-action) or conveying what was learned through watching or reflecting on the experiences of others. Within reflection-in-action, participants discussed personal responsibility which correlates with a large subtheme within Objective Two, meaning that participants discussed responsibility and also used it as a process. Within group reflections, participants used the methods of using personal experiences and shared experiences to reflect using both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Participants using reflection-in-action only used experiences as the third process was connecting multiple class experiences. Participants using reflection-on-action shared direct observations by conveying succinct thoughts or opinions and conveyed what they wanted to do with what was learned in addition to reflecting on experiences. Reflection-on-action was a larger data to analyze, and offered more codes than reflection-in-action.

One significant finding was that when participants reflected-in-action at the individual level, they tended to use others experiences to convey an observation rather

than their own experiences. This did not happen at the group level or reflection-in-action nor did it occur when participants reflected-on-action, at the individual or group level. In utilizing the process of using others experiences to convey an observation, a participant stated,

As I stood there, I thought about great individuals like George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Ronald Reagan. I thought about the men and women that had served and died in our military to give us the freedoms that we enjoy today. I thought about the sacrifice of those that had served as ambassadors in other countries separated from their families for years at a time. I thought even with the challenges we face today, our country is still one of the greatest and stands for good (Photo Journal, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

When reflecting in action at the group level, participants used their own experiences to reflect what was learned in statements such as “I never understood the impact I was having on others. And the color sorting made me find out how true blue I was” (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011). When reflecting-on-action, participants used their own experiences to draw back on what was learned in programming. This was indicated in individual reflection statements such as, “Although I’m still processing how I feel about some of the Miami experiences, I can tell you that going to the homeless shelter was quite humbling” (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011) and in statements group reflections such as “And what we’ve done with the [Foundation] or whatever the case may be, we have a great network that does make us stronger” (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2013).

Using others experiences and using personal experiences confirms Schon’s (1983) suggest that participants frame their situations “metaphorically” to interpret and “make adjustments based on feedback” (p. 210). The frames provided new questions

and therefore new outcomes. The use of others experiences provided examples for the participant reflecting-in-action to use others to help understand, construct knowledge and examine his own obligations. In the reflection, the participant suggests that he could learn from others actions and these examples can govern his actions (Schon, 1983; Mezirow, 1991). The interpretation provided a description of the event rather than “a rule for predicting and controlling an event” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 114). Additionally, the process of using others experiences to reflect occurred in the photo journaling reflection activity. The activity allowed participants to draw back on an experience by examining a photograph and allow the expression of feeling and meaning through the photograph (White, Sasser, Bergren & Morgan, 2009).

**Table 5-1. Reflection-In-Action Codes**

Reflection-In-Action- Individual Reflection	Reflection-In-Action- Group Reflection
Using Other's Experiences	Using Personal Experiences
Disclosing Goals and Wants	Learning through Shared Experiences
Conveying an Opinion	Connecting Multiple Class Experiences
Personal Responsibility and Obligation	

**Table 5-2. Reflection-On-Action Codes**

Reflection-On-Action- Individual Reflection	Reflection-On-Action- Group Reflection
Disclosing Goals and Wants	Using Personal Experiences
Observations of Self	Learning through Shared Experiences
Lessons Learned through Experience	Direct Observations
Reflection on Change and Transformation	Conveying Future Action

## **Objective Two- Themes of Reflection**

For the second objective, the researcher examined the themes reflected on by participants within an agricultural leadership program. Major themes were very similar between the individual and group reflections with subthemes differing. Within the group

reflection, participants reflected on an additional major theme than in individual reflections. Themes for individual reflection were increasing understanding, relationships and networking, application of what has been learned and the responsibility of leadership. Themes that emerged in the group reflection were personal growth, leader characteristics, application of what has been learned, value in understanding and relationships in networking. In addition to personal growth theme and the differing subthemes, individual and group reflection differed in the order in which themes were first discussed within the two years and surfaced in the data.

At the individual level, when participants reflected on increasing understanding, they reflected on what they had learned from different environments, understanding and appreciating others, seeing the larger picture, avenues of learning and moving beyond assumptions. This theme emerged within the first individual reflection activity following the second seminar. In comparing environments, participants offered observation of an environment and the importance of fitting in or acknowledging they were part of a larger picture or system. Participants also discussed having an open mind toward others and issues. This theme was most evident in the reflection letters from Seminar Two as a result of visiting a homeless shelter in Miami and listening to a keynote on respecting the diversity of the city. This was noted in reflections such as;

This trip to Miami made me realize how important it is to continually expose myself to new people, interests and places near and far, never passing judgment, but rather to appreciate the differences and the impact they have on the bigger picture (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

In viewing the larger picture, participants joined lessons from different seminars to construct a larger world view, and build knowledge upon what was previously known.

This was an example of constructivism in that knowledge about communities or the state was built upon by experience (Doolittle & Camp, 1999; Roberts, 2006).

A similar theme, value in understanding was the fourth theme to emerge within the group reflections. The theme included understanding others, continued learning, perceptions, changing perspectives, and acknowledging differences. This theme was also first discussed the second seminar which was evident with the Seminar Five reflection. The theme was the fourth to emerge as the first group reflection focused on personal growth, leadership characteristics and application of concepts. Though the code is similar to its match in the code of value in understanding within individual reflections, the subthemes are different. Within this theme participants talked about the changes within their viewpoints they experienced as a result of the program. One participant noted;

Prior to getting involved in the program, I was very myopic in my thinking. You know, I was very focused in what my core business was all about and how we need to become better in our own businesses. And this has really allowed me to have more of a global mindset (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Participants reflected on several subthemes including the opportunity to understand others in terms of culture, economics and issues. A reoccurring theme after the two year experience came from a presentation in the seminar, which was to “remember that all people are coming from the place that they feel is right” (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal communication, July 20, 2011). Participants also acknowledge the importance of continued learning which included reflection and keeping an open mind about people and issues. Participants also had the opportunity to discuss and compare new practices with traditional forms or their own practices. In addition to learning about issues participants also acknowledged learning from other

individuals. Participants also discussed dispelling perceptions and changing perceptions as a result of experiences. This theme emerged through discussions of individuals and environments within the international seminar. Finally, participants reflected on different perspectives and the importance of understanding these perspectives.

Relationships and networking were reflected on at both the individual and group level. It was the second theme to emerge within individual reflections. In both the individual and group reflections, this was the largest theme drawn from the data. This confirms previous studies on agricultural leadership programs reporting that relationships and networking were major outcomes and benefits to the programs (Strickland, 2011). On the individual level participants reflected on the importance of relationships and networking within the class and industry. In identifying effective leadership, relationships were described as key to the process. One participant observed that “the most effective [leaders] are those who have built good relationships with peers, legislators and staff. They are the deal makers that work with all interested parties and strive to reach consensus” (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). Participants also reflected on the relationships within the class in statements such as; “the national trip really bought our class fully together” (Photo Journal, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011). Additionally, participants reflected on the value of relationships within the industry and their importance when working on an issue.

Participants also addressed the value of the leadership program and industry networks. Participants reflected on the program networking referring to the privilege it is

to be part of the program and associated with those individuals within the alumni organization. Finally, participants recognized the value of the industry network, but also the necessity of working together in statements such as, "if we want to preserve our way of life, we have to work together in unison. We have to stand up for our neighbors issues even when they don't directly impact us" (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 28, 2011).

The final theme to come out group reflections was relationships and networking. In contrast to individual reflection, participants at the group level reflected on the value of relationships within the class, program and industry, and, in contrast to the individual reflections, discussed the importance of passing on what had been given to them to others. The relationship with the class was reflected on throughout the two years and was expressed in statements such as,

Several people have already mentioned the network and obviously that network is very important, but I think it takes this network of 30 individuals to hold it to that level. Because we have so many different experiences, we have had together.... You just have this experience; it takes this relationship to a whole new level (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

In recognizing the uniqueness of these relationships, participants also acknowledge the importance of remaining involved with the organization. In reflecting on the organization or program network, participants reported having an obligation to the program, especially the importance of passing on what had been bestowed upon them to others. In addressing the industry network, participants talked about the importance of the network and desire to build their own networks within the industry.

The third theme to emerge within individual reflections was the application of what had been learned. Participants reflected on applying knowledge in the industry,

community and career, advocacy, the use of skills such as reflection, increased communication and problem solving, and preparation. Participants noted the importance of using the information to promote their own industry in statements such as; "I plan to get my four points across to further my community, company, career and so on by making a positive impression" (Media Training, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012). Participants also committed to becoming more involved in their communities and applying skills that were learned to their daily lives. Participants pointed out that "reflecting at work is helping me to evaluate the main things we do; hopefully to improve, focus and get better results (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Improvement in communication, decision-making, problem solving and preparation were apparent within the findings. These were direct skills taught in programming activities. However, preparation was drawn from the media training reflection in asking about the benefits of the exercise, which gives indication that though these skills may not have been addressed in group reflection, they were in individual reflections because of the type, specificity and timeliness of the question. Problem solving and communication were drawn out of the final evaluation which asked about the process of reflection. This indicates that programming is reflected upon, whether the question is directly asked or not. Individuals are also pulling lessons from earlier programming to apply and build upon something, such as reflection which helps them build more on past lessons.

Agricultural advocacy was also a prevalent theme within both individual and group reflections. Within individual reflections, participants expressed concern of others

not knowing about agriculture, importance of advocacy, and how skills could aid them in becoming advocates. In one reflection, a participant addressed advocacy at the state level, but indicated that everyone could and should advocate by the use of “we” in the reflection which stated, “We need to increase our presence in Tallahassee and in DC so that we are more effective in getting the truth across to our legislature” (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Application was the third theme discovered within group reflection. Participants discussed the value of information, applying skills such as reflection, teaching others the lessons from the program, using information to become more involved, advocacy and embracing opportunity. Participants reported that they could apply what was learned in the program within their home and work environments. With that, an appreciation was established for the program. For example, one participant noted that his experience went beyond learning material, but how he could apply the skills. Of the skills discussed, the more common skill reported as being applied was that of reflection. Unlike the in the individual reflections, the use of reflection was not directly asked about in the group reflection. Within application, participants noted the importance of passing on information to others. This was similar to a subtheme within individual reflection. Similar to individual reflection, advocacy also emerged within application. This theme fell throughout several themes in the research, however, within application; participants noted how they would use the skills, knowledge and network to advocate for the industry. This was indicated through statements such as,

I think mine is, ‘the one voice.’ The one voice does matter whether it’s our voice as a group, as Wedgworth, or it’s my one voice as [name]. It does matter, it does make a difference and I am glad that I’ve learned to frame

that voice and be able to carry out the message about agriculture (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

In addition to advocacy participants also noted they would use the information learned to embrace opportunity. This subtheme emerged as several participants in the class had reported career changes as a result of what they had learned and networks established through the program.

The final theme to emerge within individual reflection was the responsibility of leadership. Within this theme, participants discussed personal responsibility, the passion of leaders, the identification of leadership, being innovative as a leader, serving others and personal growth. Personal responsibility included acknowledging obligations and service to others. This theme was drawn upon throughout the two years and appeared in different activities. This indicates that the theme resonated beyond one activity, but was identified as a general leadership skill. Personal responsibility was apparent in statement such as,

I was reminded of my own responsibility to serve others, my family, my community, state and nation. Reminded of the duty and opportunity each of us has to serve our God and each other. It reminded me how thankful I am to live in this country and for the freedoms that we enjoy (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

One of the larger subthemes in both the individual and group reflections was that of passion. Participants tended to connect presentations under the theme of passion, identify in the speakers and describe the term. In describing how passion was observed, one participant stated; "all leaders are passionate about their work.... Similar to passion, they are committed to their cause" (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011). Participants also reflected on other characteristics of leadership and identified these characteristics within others and themselves.

Participants identified themselves as opinion leaders in statement such as; “realizing that I too am an opinion leader” (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011), and provided descriptions of others having leadership characteristics in reflecting that “I am optimistic that [rancher] is an early adopter of a greater trend” (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

The final subtheme to emerge within the responsibility of leadership was personal growth. It was placed in the major subtheme of responsibility of leadership because of how participants reflected on how they saw themselves change and how they were obligated to improvement in the future. Personal growth was mainly addressed within the media training reflection. One participant wrote; “the experiences was tough and somewhat uncomfortable....it turned out to be a great learning experience” (Media Training, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

The second theme within group reflection was leader characteristics which, very similar to the individual theme of responsibility of leadership, included passion, self-identification of leadership, opinion leadership, decision making, responsibility and adaptability. In discussing passion, participants reflected on their own passion and the passion of others as displayed in statement such as “And the passion that we have for our own industry is equal to if not surpassed by the passion that somebody else has about their industry” (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal communication, August 9, 2012).

Similar to individual reflection participants also noted the importance of self-identification as a leader and opinion leadership. Participants noted that they learned

how to be an opinion leader and that as a result of this program, their opinion is important. This was evident in participants stating,

There are a lot of things I do or that I like that may be very visible. But there are a lot of times that I am not really sure in what I say. And when we were in [congressman] office, it made me realize we are valuable and I need to remind myself of that and the things that I do or the contributions I made are valuable (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

Within this theme, participants also addressed the characteristics of decision making and the importance of involvement, responsibility within the contexts of the industry and program, and the ability to adapt to different situations. Adaptability was discussed mostly in the international seminar reflection.

Finally, the remaining theme within group reflection was personal growth. This was the first theme to emerge within the group reflections as personal growth as a result of being accepted to the program was the topic of Seminar One's reflection. In that reflection, the program administrator asked the group about their feelings upon getting accepted to the program and how those feelings had changed over the course of a few days. This category included subthemes of participants emerging from comfort zones, coping with challenges, continued growth through involvement, gaining knowledge and anticipation of future programming. Personal growth was often gauged in retrospect as indicated in statement "I think back to signing up for the program...and what I have learned along the way to grow personally and professionally" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Personal growth was also acknowledged in activities outside of the program as indicated by participants acknowledging the importance of challenging themselves to become involved. Interestingly, this theme was also discussed with the last seminar as participant gauged

their growth over the last two years. This confirms the literature findings on outcomes of these programs in that personal growth is a consistent outcome of these programs (Diem & Nikola, 2005; Howell et al., 1979).

### **Objective Three- Levels of Reflection**

For the third objective, data were categorized into Mezirow's (1991) levels of reflection. Findings suggested that participants reflected at four of the six levels; introspection, content reflection, process reflection and premise reflection. Within individual activities, participants reflected at the introspection, content and process levels. Within group reflection activities, participants also reflected at the introspection, content and process levels but also reached the premise reflection level which was an indicator of critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991).

Within the individual reflection using introspection, participants reflected using the processes of using others experiences to convey observations, using observations to disclose goals or wants, conveying an opinion, observation of self, and conveying the lessons learned through experiences. In reflecting on others experiences, participants reflected on communicating with others and stating what others individuals had done for them, but did not connect prior learning or past experiences to the experience being reflected upon. In disclosing goals and wants, participants described the experience and desire to share with others, but did connect or compare the present knowledge to past experiences. For example, in reflecting on his desire to show his family what he had learned and their involvement in the process, one participant noted, "I wish that you and the girls could have been part of the experiences we had... it was so moving to see each person walk into that dining room hungry and wanting something to eat" (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011). Within the larger

context of the letter how the individual felt was discussed, but not how those feelings had developed.

When conveying an opinion, one participant noted her opinions on other individuals, but did not describe or explain how those opinions evolved or what was involved in forming the opinion. When offering observations of themselves, or discussing lessons learned through experiences, participants used introspection most commonly in response to questionnaires and offered short answers such as “trying to reflect more” and “it helps with time management” (Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Other short responses without detail came from the questionnaires during seminar three and seminar five which were distributed at the end of the day or as the last activity of the seminar.

Content reflection and Process reflection are considered Reflective Action by Mezirow (1991). Within individual reflection using content reflection, participants reflected using the processes of using others experiences to convey observations, using observations to disclose goals or wants, conveying an opinion, conveying an opinion, conveying personal obligation and responsibility, observation of self, conveying the lessons learned through experiences, and reflecting on change and transformation. In using others experiences to convey observations participants would use examples of others actions to reflect on what was perceived. This was most common within the reflection letters and photo journals and participants had opportunity to elaborate more than in the questionnaires. For example, when participants reflected using other's experiences, one participant stated;

That passion that [program speaker] talked about is what [business owner] has found with his winery, what [program speaker] has, and is the common

thread so far. [Program speaker] of the Coast Guard, [business owner] of the [business corporation], [hospital CEO] from [hospital] to the ag teacher at [High School] all have optimistic outlooks and are a powerful energy (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

In this statement the participant reflected on what they perceived, felt or acted upon and evidence is shown that meaning was created on a personal level. In disclosing goals and wants, self-observations, reflecting on what was learned and in reflecting on change and transformation, participants examined what they wanted, why and how they would act upon the new knowledge.

Within process reflection at the individual level, participants reflected on others experiences, obligations and responsibilities, and change and transformation. Within process reflection, participants indicated the examination of how they thought, felt or act as opposed to thinking and acting upon something. In these reflections participants showed the processes used to reflect and learn and implied their ability and confidence in conducting the acts of feeling, acting and perceiving. Participants used statement such as;

Lastly, I guess I simply felt. I could write volumes of feelings associated with each program... I felt, something I rarely do in my day to day enterprises. And, quite frankly that is nice to connect and not be so analytical (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Within group reflection, participants utilized introspection, content, process and premise reflection to reflect. Using introspection, participants utilized the processes of learning through shared experiences, connecting multiple experiences, direct observations, and conveying future action. Statements within introspection did not indicated reflective action and lacked description on how feelings developed within the reflection. For example, in the question for Seminar Nine's reflection was "How will we

keep the group together to avoid loss of involvement after graduation?" Suggestions were offered such as "we should keep an email system going," "the use of social media," "yearly reunions," and having a purpose as a class. Though there were some reflective statements made, most were suggestions which did not draw back to prior experience or suggest evidence of learning or change (Mezirow, 1991). Using content reflection, participants used personal experiences, shared experiences and direct observations in addition to connecting multiple class experiences and conveying future action. Similar to individual reflection, participants reflected on what they perceived and examined the issue to create meaning which was indicated in statements such as,

I was impressed by the 3500 growers and how they come together for product development and researching and bringing that into a private structure. Whereas in citrus we are very dependent on the university. The university does a good job but it certainly presents its challenges trying to have that public private partnership (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

Within process reflection, participants used the processes of using personal experiences, learning through shared experiences, and direct observation to describe processes used to reflect and examine their performance of perceiving, thinking and acting. In using personal experiences to convey understanding, participants reflected on how they perceive and acted, which was evident in statement such as, "I was doing for others.....what I should have been leading them to do for themselves. And that if I truly wanted to be a leader, I needed to do less for them but enable them to do it instead" (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Critical or premise reflection was only reached within group reflection. Participants used the processes of learning through shared experiences, using personal experiences and direct observation. Reflections included how individual or

organizations can change, indication of that change and why change took place. Some statements also offered assessments of consequences of change or reframing issues.

This was evident in statements such as;

And it got to the point where not only has Wedgworth has taught me patience for a leadership standpoint because in my prior industry, all decisions made...[need] to be done five seconds . It's a knee jerk reaction and we've got to live with the consequences and figure out later and just keep going. This really allowed me to get a better understanding of sitting back and saying okay, now what is the issue, why do I need to think this way or why can't you accept my way? It's no longer that way, you've really got to open a box and make a better decision (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

In both individual and group reflection processes that were used to achieve reflective action were numerous. Premise or critical reflection was indicated in three codes. The large array of processes used to in reflective action could indicate that reflective action and critical reflection can be achieved through multiple processes. Within individual reflection activities, higher level reflection can be attained through reflective writing or questions can be specified to encourage participants to examine feelings and abilities and how those have developed. Within groups, facilitators can ask questions regarding the evolving of feelings and perceptions and probe to engage participants at higher levels of reflection.

### **Constructivist Grounded Theory of the Use of Reflection within Agricultural Leadership Programs**

To construct a grounded theory, the researcher moved beyond detailed description of the categories and codes to synthesize the data in order to generate a theory (Charmaz, 2006). The theory presented comprises of the categories in relation to each other to help explain the processes of reflection within an agricultural leadership program. The processes and themes were grounded in the data and through coding,

review and memo-ing, the researcher increased abstraction to fit the focused codes from the three objectives into the theoretical codes of conceptualizing, strategy, becoming, and social interaction. The researcher provided examples from the data that illustrate the properties of each theoretical code. In determining the theoretical codes, the researcher used findings from each of the objectives and differentiated the findings between individual and group reflection. Though the second objective draws specifically on the experience of one leadership program and the themes of what the participants discussed, the researcher uses them to provide example of when the processes utilized (objectives one and three) aid in achieving levels of critical reflection.

Theoretical coding follows the focused coding process and bypasses the need for axial coding (Charmaz, 2006). These codes were introduced by Glaser and allowed researchers to conceptualize “how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory” (p. 63). These codes specify relationships between the focused codes. Theoretical codes for this study were selected from the series of 26 coding families proposed by Glaser (1998). Codes were selected based on causes, strategy, cultural assumptions, theoretical assumptions, basic psychological processes, and representation. The four theoretical codes utilized were; conceptualizing, strategy, becoming, and social interaction.

Each code was explained by providing the researchers definition of the code, its properties, and evidence within the data. Codes were interconnected as the researcher found that data could fit in multiple codes. The model proposed (Figures 5-1 and 5-2) displays concepts in a sequential order, but as data could be related to multiple codes, overlap occurred. The processes of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were

used interchangeably throughout program processes and themes, therefore, are used throughout each of the four themes. By encouraging participants to reflect within situations, actions and courses can be altered to change outcomes. However, there is also benefit to learn lessons in retrospect. Therefore, both processes are seen as valuable and can be used in the reflection process throughout the four theoretical codes. Distinguishing traits or processes between individual and group processes were discussed and finally, the researcher provided recommendations to achieve reflective action or critical reflection using these processes.

### **Core Concept- Conceptualizing**

The first pattern indicated in the transcript data was conceptualizing. Conceptualizing encompasses participants' understanding of concepts and issues gained within the program. Participants recognized the need to learn about issues and themselves. Properties of the theoretical code included increased understanding of others and of self, changing perceptions and learning from locations in programming.

As participants increased their understanding, they conveyed how they learned or understood new concepts and reported changes in their mindsets. When a participant visited the Rotunda of the National Capitol, he used others experiences to reflect on his own feelings. As the participant reflected-in-action, he drew on the past, to understanding what was needed to face challenges today. In this, those needs and reality were an individual experience (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999)

As I stood there, I thought about great individuals like George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Ronald Reagan. ... I thought even with the challenges we face today, our country is still one of the greatest and stands for good (Photo Journal, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Reflections on increased understanding at the group level displayed both elements of constructivism and social constructionism. As a result of programming, learning new businesses and industry, one program participant disclosed how his thinking had changed because of the program. Understanding was further increased by his own actions to be more open. The reflection, though shared in a group shows elements of constructivism (Crotty, 2010). Social constructionism is displayed within context as global mindset may have correlated with discussions in prior seminars about understanding others and their communities.

Prior to getting involved in the program, I know I was very myopic in my thinking. You know, I was very focused in what my core business was all about and how we need to become better in our own businesses. And this has really allowed me to have a more global mindset (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

The following reflection also shows elements of social constructionism of meaning based on Seminar Two when a program speaker addressed the importance of understanding others. In his presentation, the presenter noted that most individuals are coming from what they believe to be right. The participant's statement shows evidence of the lesson.

In terms of awareness, it's both being aware of the other side of every issue, because there is always one and the people on the other side are not there, they are not generally out to get you. They are fighting for what they believe is right (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Within the theoretical code of conceptualization, data showed participants changing or building upon previously held perceptions. This could be through strengthening perceptions by applying them to a given situation or by the ability to relate one issue to another. When using the process of conveying an opinion on the individual level, participants confirmed a belief by applying it to a given situation. The following

observation gives an example of how this participant came to understanding further what she observed in the moment and also how her beliefs could apply to the situation. In this, the participant reflected back on initial impressions that were able to be applied to the present experience (Doolittle & Camp, 1999; Roberts, 2006).

When I took this photo in the Capitol, it reminded me of all the history and conflict the United States has gone through since its inception. Many people today like to invoke the “Founding Fathers”. But I believe most of them have absolutely no understanding of the thoughts of those leaders that actually make the basis of our government so great (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Within group reflections, participants also reported changing perceptions in that previous impressions were changed. In the following reflection, the participant offered his own perspective on the international experience and not only how impressions had changed but also how he could relate to something.

I think for me, I was really surprised how close this economy and all of France is to how it is in South Florida. It's amazing; I thought it was going to be like all your typical French people walking around. This was my mentality, and I was totally shocked when I got here. Like I can't tell who's a visitor and who's not a visitor. I mean we might see a typical French person, but not very many. So it was really surprising to me how welcoming they are and how very close they are to us and to everything they want to do (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

Participants were also able to gain understanding through lessons learned from different seminar locations. As indicated in the previous statement, participants gained understanding of a location and culture through the international travel experience. However, earlier in the program, participants observed differences and lessons from another location very different from their own homes. Seminar Two provided participants the opportunity to travel to Miami and experience and gain an impression of the economic drivers of the county including education, healthcare, transportation, and

trade. In the seminar, participants were also able to experience local culture. It was not only that the culture was different from their communities, but also the culture of an urban community.

There are so many stereotypes associated with Miami and the exposure WLIANR gave me really opened my eyes to the diversity and how they all mesh together to make for a very interesting city. We all tend to get wrapped up in our own little worlds of work, personal life and interests. This trip to Miami made me realize how important it is to continually expose myself to new people, interests and places near and far, never passing judgment, but rather to appreciate the differences and the impact they have in the bigger picture (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

Toward the end of the two year program, participants experienced different cultures through the international seminar. In visiting Rungis Market, one of the world's largest agriculture and food markets located outside of Paris, participants reflected on what they saw and how it compared to their previous knowledge. During the seminar reflection, participants reflected on the differences between the food systems of Europe and those in the United States. It appeared that the comparisons aided participants in gaining understanding of both systems. At this point in the reflection, as opposed to participants speaking one time, several participants engaged in a back and forth conversation. In that, knowledge was built through each participant contributing observations based on their own background (constructivism). Participants reflected on the differences found in the marketing food products, "It's amazing, the differences in the way we package these goods and how we sell them. What we saw today was beautifully packaged...for restaurants, individual people coming in and buying." Other participants offered, "I couldn't sell a product like that." Others offered observations about shipping, regulation and food safety. Within the conversation, other class participants gained understanding in food concerns within both countries. The

conversation was concluded with one participant observing that practices may look good on the surface, but through examination of the whole picture, impressions can change.

Because you know, at the 30,000 foot level of everything, we can all agree on, that sounds like a great idea. But the devil is in the details and that's when work gets really, really hard... And that's when all of the lessons that we learned of compromise and conflict resolution are important. The devil is all right here in trying to figure out and so dialog and exchange is a necessary part (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

The current study and the theoretical code connect to previous literature within agricultural leadership programs. Within these programs; understanding and conceptualizing were identified as key outcomes. In their inception, programs aimed to give perspective of the world, and increase understanding of economic, political, and social issues confronting society (Miller, 1976). Research indicates that these programs raise issue awareness and understanding (Abington-Cooper, 2005; Carter & Rudd, 2000) and can increase awareness of issues by participants (Carter & Rudd, 2000; Earnest, 1996).

### **Core Concept- Strategy**

Strategy consists of the processes used to reflect in addition to the skill development acquired from the program. Agricultural leadership programs offer information on issues to increase understanding, but programs also provide their participants skill development. Programs provide a strong connection between conceptualization (understanding) and strategy (skill). For example, within the media training participants were able to learn characteristics of media, but also participate in mock interviews to develop skills. This was indicated in statements such as, "I believe it was a great experience and felt like it gave me a good idea of what to expect and how

to prepare for such an experience (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal communication, February 23, 2012). Properties of the strategy code include leadership skill development, and the processes of reflecting.

In their reflections, participants reported on the benefits of gaining skill such as media training. Participants found this training useful as it would aid in developing skills that could be applied to real life issues (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). In discussing skill development on participant reported, “If we learn to use the media correctly, it can be a benefit to our industry. [It will] help us get our voices out in a positive way” (Media Training Questionnaire, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012). Another participant stated that, “I think that [media training] is a necessary part of being a leader in ag and the best way to improve is to practice” (Media Training Questionnaire, Seminar Eight, February 22, 2012). Other skills gained as a result of the program included conflict resolution, problem solving, preparation and reflection. Participants reported that they tend to reflect on daily interactions and issues more as a result of the program. One participant stated, “I focus more during my reflection. I evaluate decisions- could something have been improved?” (Individual Reflection, Final Evaluation, Personal Communication, August 9, 2013).

When learning about the legislative process, participants were able to learn from local lobbyists about issues and the policy making process. They also had the opportunity to learn how to effectively convey their message to policy makers through strategy. This was indicated in statements such as, “We need to increase our presence in Tallahassee and in DC so that we are more effective in getting the truth

across to our legislature" (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Strategy was also reflected on at the group level on the subject of decision making. When reflecting on changes personal changes that had occurred as a result of the program, one participant reported on his ability to examine issues more critically. In doing such, the participant reflected on the action of thinking things through in order to improve his situation (Hatton & Smith, 1995).

And it's got to the point where not only has Wedgworth taught me patience from a leadership standpoint. Because in my prior industry, all decision made you know, decision making needs to be done in five seconds. It's a knee jerk reaction and we've got to live with the consequences. And figure out later and just keep going. This really allowed me to get a better understanding of sitting back and saying, okay, now what's the issue? Why do I need to think this way or why can't you accept my way? It's no longer that way, you've got to open a box and make a better decision. I think that's really ingrained with Wedgworth (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

The essence of this theoretical code is the skills acquired in the program in addition to the processes program participants used as a strategy to reflect. Processes identified in the study as displayed in Table 5.1 can be used to reflect on program experiences. The study identified numerous processes utilized to reflect at the individual and group level. The large amount of processes could indicate that reflective action and critical reflection can be achieved through multiple processes. As a result of the study, the research contends that participants can reach reflective action and critical reflection through group and individual processes by examining the issue as well as the processes in developing ones perception toward the issue. Process reflection may be a good method to utilize to achieve reflective action in that this type of reflective practice

allows for participant to focus on examining how one approaches, reflect, and perceives what is happening, as opposed to only reflecting on what happened.

Table 5.1- Processes of Reflection

Individual Reflection	Group Reflection
Using Other's Experiences	Using Personal Experiences
Disclosing Goals and Wants	Learning through Shared Experiences
Conveying an Opinion	Connecting Multiple Class Experiences
Personal Responsibility and Obligation	Direct Observations
Observation of Self	Conveying Future Action
Lessons Learned through Experience	
Reflection on Change and Transformation	

Strategies were also identified as key to leadership development within the literature. One of the original objectives of agricultural leadership programs was to develop leaders' competencies in speaking, logical inquiry, and critical thinking (Miller, 1976). Additionally, programs today are using a variety of learning processes and covering a range of topics. The theoretical code of strategy builds upon frameworks established by Hustedde and Woodward (1996). Program impacts on the individual level included increased skill development (Howell, et al., 1979), increased communication skills (Diem & Nikola, 2005).

### **Core Concept- Becoming**

Becoming is the theoretical code used to describe the reflection by participants on self-identifying and developing as a leader in order to assume future roles. Becoming was indicated in statements such as, "the thing that I have learned the most about so far this year... is really about me. Especially when I get outside my specific business or expertise. I am not a very good public speaker. I am going to get better at

it" (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Properties of this code include obligation and responsibility, personal growth, passion and opinion leadership.

Personal responsibility was never addressed in programming, but the large amount of data in this code indicates it was of strong value to participants. There was no indication of differences in the perception of responsibility within individual or group reflections so the value of responsibility was socially constructed as this knowledge was a product of the culture. Responsibility was also viewed as a leadership trait, therefore, held importance to future industry leaders. However it is indicated through individual's statements, that its personal meaning is evidence of social constructivism (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). For example, when reflecting on her experience at the Community Partnership for the Homeless in Miami, one participant was obligated to do something in her own community. The value of the experience at the homeless shelter was socially constructed, but as to what could be done at the local level or application of the lesson was an individualistic activity (constructivism) (Crotty, 2010). This participant reflected, "We need to serve our community in some way. We need to find an organization that we can contribute to, something that will make our community a better place for our kids and others to live, learn and labor" (Reflection Letter, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Within group reflections, the social construction of the value of responsibility was also addressed. Within the final reflection, when asked why they would remain involved in the program, some participants noted the obligation to stay involved. The program had been seen as a gift and it was their responsibility to continue the program for others

to benefit. This idea was first introduced within Seminar Three by an alumni member. When participants discussed the program and involvement throughout the two years, often, they would draw back on the alumni member's comments. In the final reflection, though the speaker was not directly acknowledged, his message was evident in the reflection.

Why I plan on being involved, I kind of do it as others have said. Its personal, it's the people in the room, it's the people who we have met along the way, it's the networking. But I also see it as you look as a parent, when we have a child we have a responsibility to teach that child and bring them into society and give them the ability to live on their own. I feel like that's kind of where we are now. We are now given the responsibility now of taking the knowledge we've gotten and pushing it forward to those that don't. And kind of continuing that process. Looking at some of those along the way, both in Tallahassee and DC and even at the cemeteries, it really hit me hard that a lot of folks have done lots of things in their lives to let us, let me, be where I am today. And so it is my duty to do the same (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

In reflecting on personal growth, participants reported how they saw themselves change as a result of experiences and how they could foresee improvement in the future. This was mainly addressed within the media training portion of Seminar Eight. This experience gave participants the opportunity to learn how to better prepare as a result of the experience. Several participants reflected on how the practice got them out of their comfort zone. In reflecting how he felt about the experience, one participant drew back on previous shared experiences within the program. Lessons learned in this situation were individually constructed as participants had different experiences.

I was still anxious after. It was as nerve racking as I thought it would be. But I guess I did realize, like jumping off a telephone pole that the first is the most challenging and then with practice I could improve and be less nervous (Media Training, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

Within the group setting personal growth was addressed in retrospect. Individuals tended to look back on program experiences to report change and acknowledge continued growth throughout the process. At the conclusion of the two year program, as participants were asked why they would stay involved, participants acknowledged that the program had helped them grow personally and professionally. In the final reflection, participants acknowledged that the program was just the first step in the process of personal growth. As one takes the second step, they would continue to grow in skill, development and within the network. Personal growth was also indicated in participant's responses earlier in the two years as well. Not only would it be of benefit to them, but also a benefit to others, "So for me, if someone asks about the program or if I am talking to someone about the program, someone thinking they'll want to be in Class IX, I would say do the program for personal development" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

Participants also acknowledged that as individuals get stronger, the unit would get stronger as well. This indicated a shared meaning and value of not only personal growth, but the value placed on the industry and community. One person stated, "[The program] makes you stronger as a person and I guess the big benefit is it makes agriculture stronger as a community. The more we go out and do, the stronger that gets" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

Passion was observed in program speakers and identified as a key leadership quality. Passion was first addressed by a speaker in the second seminar. For the remaining programming, it was addressed in both individual and group reflections. The value of passion as a part of becoming a leader was shared among the class and

socially constructed. In the individual reflections, participants observed; “it was clear that a key to great leadership is being passionate about what you are doing (Reflection Letter, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011). In defining a leader and key leadership qualities in Seminar Three a participant stated; “all the leaders are passionate about their work. They are also well informed about not only there area of expertise, but also things relevant or contrary to their area. Similar to passion, they are committed to their cause. There is no 80%, only 100% committed” (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

Within the group reflections, passion was more applied and not just seen as an abstract quality. Participants noted, “the passion we have for our own industry is equal to if not surpassed by the passion that somebody else has for their industry” (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Passion was also reported as something that drove people to do better or “have people understanding that agriculture is important to the US.” In reflecting on the passion of others and her own passion for her industry, another person noted the shared value within the group.

I actually presented this weekend at the small farms conference which is not always friends of the [State Agricultural Organization] and I had a small farmer come up to me afterwards and say to me “You can really tell you’re passionate about what you do.” And that just that just hit home..... I’m really getting a lot out of Wedgworth because that’s one of the things I’ve really taken away (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

Opinion Leadership was a concept that was introduced to the participants in the first seminar. This code indicates that programming is useful, applied and aids participants in identifying as a leader for future service. The meaning and value of opinion leadership was socially constructed within the program as it was a new concept

to the participants at the beginning of the program. Once opinion leadership was recognized, participants were surprised that they were identified as opinion leaders which was indicated by the knowledge and current involvement in the industry (Windham, 2009). Reflections indicated that participants saw themselves as opinion leaders outside the program and the concept was no longer abstract but applied.

In reflecting on sessions one and two, there are a few things that have really hit home with me. In session one I was learning or should I say realizing that I too am an opinion leader. I always knew you were, but I didn't feel I would ever be (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Within the group reflections, it was not only the identification of opinion leadership but how contributions could be made. This was indicated in statements such as; "I never saw myself as that- I never thought that I had influenced enough people, especially on things that I am not 100% comfortable on. I am not a farmer, I am not a grower, and I am not necessarily on that side of what I would consider agriculture (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal communication, July 20, 2011). Another individual stated; "I need to realize the things that I do or the contributions that I make are valuable" (Group Reflection, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 27, 2011).

The act of becoming is internal and individual to the participant, as adopting the characteristics of responsibility, passion, continued personal growth and opinion leadership are personal decisions. However, the expectation to become better leaders and adopt the characteristics is socially constructed. For example, in the statement, "we need to serve our community in some way," the value of responsibility was socially constructed as the knowledge about the homeless shelter and serving communities was

a product of culture, but as stated in participants reflections, the application was an individualistic activity (Crotty, 2010).

Passion was learned by example and participants strived to adopt the behavior as shown in statements such as, “the key to great leadership is being passionate.” However, in later seminars, participants began to identify the characteristics within themselves in “you can really tell you are passionate about what you do.” So the importance of passion was socially constructed among the group but how to show display that passion outside of the culture of the group was a product of constructivism. As with passion, opinion leadership placed an obligation for participants to become leaders because of the associated identity, but to become that leader was still something internal and personal. Once that identity is established, participants recognize what they can do in the role of leadership, and can apply the conspectus and strategies they have learned to become a leader in various environments.

The conceptual understanding behind the theme of Becoming was also a core concept identified within agricultural leadership literature. In agricultural leadership programs, adult leaders study issues facing their industries [conceptualizing] and prepare themselves for leadership roles (Diem & Nikola, 2005). One of the main objectives of these programs is to establish effective leadership for the agricultural industries and local communities (Mathews & Carter, 2008) by developing leaders through issue awareness, the development of skills and increased confidence to become involved in leadership roles (Diem & Nikola, 2005; Howell, et al., 1979).

### **Core Concept- Social Interaction**

Social Interaction was the fourth theoretical code to emerge from the data. Social Interaction’s importance was evident by the size of the focused codes classified

within this theoretical code. The code is used to describe reflection by participants on interacting with others and relationships. Relationships were the largest code in both individual and group reflection and many processes dealt with interacting with others or learning from others. The importance of social interaction was indicated in statements such as; "We understand that in order to lead and to enact change in our daily lives and for our industry, we will not be able to do so by ourselves" (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011). Another statement that represented the importance of social interaction was;

It takes several working parts, minds and people to make a masterpiece. No one person can do it on their own. We are outnumbered in voices and votes; however, we must reach out to our friends, neighbors and the general public to gain continued support for our food and fiber (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Properties of the code included; the importance of relationships at class, program and industry levels; advocacy; and recognizing and understanding differences and similarities among groups.

The class was an important network to all 30 individuals enrolled in the program as indicated by both individual and group reflections throughout the two years. The team came together at the beginning through team building exercises, and through working together through workshops, scenarios and new material. During Seminar Two, the director mentioned to the class that they "were now a team" as a result of working together to serve dinner at the homeless shelter. During Seminar Six evidence of deep connects were apparent in their reflections as the team came together to fill the absence of one program administrator and through multiple medical concerns of participants' family members. One person indicated in his photo journal; "This concept [working together] was evident through the ability of our class to really come together on

this trip. I am blessed to be part of a group that comes together and will always look to help others" (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Participants also alluded to the strength of the class network because of the network of individuals: "We are leaders with strong personalities that presumably would clash and yet we respect our differences, and I would even say, embrace them" (Photo Journals, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

In the following statement, a participant noted how relationships were more important and enduring than the issues the class was facing. Though the importance of issues are socially constructed by politics, priorities on the industry's agenda, and the class, this participant recognized that working together in the group was important and transcended other priorities.

To forecast, I will not likely remember the view of the hotel in DC, or a speakers name from a tour. But I promise you that each and every one of my classmates, our coordinators and the collective shared feelings in this experience will forever be engrained in my mind and heart. In other words, water is important, but we will likely resolve our issues. Immigration is equally important, but again, we will likely come to a sensible solution if we do our job well. But the relationships we foster along the way addressing these issues and all the new issues not yet on the radar screen are not interim. My feelings about my classmates and the privilege to share this experience will forever live with me. The issues may change, but the relationships, hopefully, will not (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, Personal Communication, September 29, 2011).

Within group reflection, participants also reflected upon the class network as both friendship and an advocacy network. The class brought value to the experience for many individuals. However, in the final reflection, one participant stated the uniqueness of the class network, recognizing the value of shared knowledge and the opportunities for future knowledge building (conceptualization) and leadership development (becoming) as a result of social interaction among the group.

Several people have already mentioned the network and obviously that network is very important, but I think it takes this network of 30 individuals to hold to that level, because we have so many different experiences, we have had together. It's kind of like your ex-college roommate. You've grown up together, you are buddies. You just have this experience; it takes this relationship to a whole new level. With that being said, I think so many of us or all of us want to be opinion leaders in our field... And because of these relationships and how thick they are, you are already allowed to look beyond just your own backyard to become a better opinion leader for your state, community, nation, etcetera. So definitely, we realize we need to build these relationships (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

This shared knowledge and the shared value that was developed over the two years is evidence of social constructionism. This contrast with the individual reflection in that there is more focus on the social aspect than individual cognitive processes (Crotty, 2010). Socio-cultural dynamics are also drawn into the statement (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) by the mention of opinion leadership and the importance of their future roles in the industry, but also within the context of the question; "Why would you stay involved in the program?"

The self-imposed obligation and motivation to stay involved in the program was a socially constructed priority, first by the class, but also by the program culture itself. Participants viewed being part of the program as a privilege as membership was based on nomination and selection. Alumni members conveyed the honor, obligation and excitement about being part of the program network during various program activities. The challenge regarding identifying and being a viable member came in Seminar Three through an alumni member's challenge. In Seminar Eight, this challenge was drawn upon within reflection.

I think about two words. One would be inspired and the other is [name's] challenge to us; honor the family name. And so what will we do? What will I do? What will we do to honor the family name? (Group Reflection, Seminar Eight, Personal Communication, February 22, 2012).

Obligation to serve the program was also brought up during the final reflection as a response to involvement. The meaning and value of the program had again been shared as a class, but then became part of a larger group, the alumni network. The two definitions of the importance of the program merged as the program value merged with emotions of the experience (Crotty, 2010).

In order for my grove to give me the things I need, to be successful and that type of thing, I need to take care of it. And so in order for Wedgworth to continue to keep benefiting our industry, I need to try to take care of it. And so it is that when you have such a wonderful asset, in order for that asset to continue to be that wonderful, you have to take care of it and nurture it and grow it and that's really how I look at it. And that's my obligation to the program (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

The importance of the network also expanded to the industry. Industry became defined on a much larger scale as encompassing all agriculture and natural resource production, business, advocacy groups and others. Though not all members within the class came from a common background, they all identified with being part of the industry. In doing so, they felt need to serve the industry at large and remove the tendency to focus on their own industry.

Use my new connections to help promote the industry- this will be though aligning with other groups for a common goal (i. e. forage, seed, dairy association, all use the seed business) and provide information back to our company that may affect how we do business in Florida (Seminar Three Questionnaire, Seminar Three, Personal Communication, March 24, 2011).

The program also encouraged participants to learn about other industries. This was done through seminar briefings as well as though interaction among class members and the alumni network. Through this interaction, participants were able to learn more about the industry and how decisions or priorities in one area affected another segment of the industry.

I think it's gotten me out of my own little world in citrus. I was sort of stuck in and very involved in that... if you want to be involved in decision makings than I need to be educated in all of agriculture now and how those decisions effect all of ag instead of just citrus (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Network support came though statements such as; "if you want to improve your chances of success on an issue, you need to broaden your base of support to include as many viewpoints as possible" and "we have to work together in unison. We have to stand up for our neighbors issues even when they don't directly impact us." Through the context of industry networks, social interaction can be tied to the theoretical code of becoming in that by building themselves as individuals, the network becomes stronger. Additionally, participants challenged each other in being involved because "if you are not willing to be involved yourself, you cannot expect other people to change it for you" (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

Advocacy emerged as a role participants could play within the context of the industry. Like responsibility, agriculture advocacy was not directly addressed within the program curriculum. Speakers addressed the importance of advocacy, but it was not a formalized topic within the program. However, a shared knowledge and passion formed as a result of common membership in the industry and the ability to identify with one another's issues. This confirmed findings by Strickland (2011) on program impacts including participants educating others about agriculture and natural resource issues. Experiences and the value of advocacy were also built upon within programming as participants visited urban communities. Advocacy first surfaced in the reflection when program speakers in Seminar Two admitted to knowing little about the industry in statements such as, "It was interesting to hear how little some of the speakers were concerned with agriculture." This became shared knowledge and the necessity to

advocate for the industry became shared as well. As mentioned earlier, participants came from various sectors, but all identified with the socially constructed “unified voice” of advocacy for the industry. This shared value was indicated in both individual and group reflections.

We need to increase our presence in Tallahassee and in DC so that we are more effective in getting the truth across to our legislature. Think of the impact an ag leader from Florida could have on an ag committee member who is from across the country. By being visible and valuable for the industry, we could tell our story and have a changing impact on those members who are not affected by decisions but are crucial to the vote. We can be a voice and we can make an impact by telling our story, sharing the truth about the ag industry and reminding everyone about the lives we feed and save every day we go to work (Photo Journals, Seminar Six, September 29, 2011).

In the individual reflection, the speaker referred to the importance of everyone speaking up in the industry. This importance was socially constructed among the class and industry. This statement confirms that “individuals do not construct knowledge just on their own interpretation in isolation, but against the backdrop of shared understandings, practices, languages and so forth” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 197).

In the group reflection, participants not only talked about what “we need to do” but expressed it as an obligation or each member in the room. Each of their actions would play a role in the industries future.

The big take away I take is from everything that we have seen, our industry needs us. They need more people like us fighting within our industry but also really educating people outside of our industry. And it think that has become more and more apparent you know, as the different areas we’ve explored here but also what we see in our day to day life. And if we are not giving back to that, we are going to be hurt as a whole (Group Reflection, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012).

In addition to advocacy for the industry, other participants talked about getting involved within their communities or volunteer with youth programs as a result of programming. This was evidence in statements such as;

From this experience, I have decided to get more involved in my community. I have applied for volunteer boards, plan to join a service club in my community and have become more aware of issues and how I can help around my community (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Participants saw themselves as part of a larger group and part of the bigger picture of agriculture which was specified in statements such as; "Throughout the experience, I felt like a small spoke of a much larger operating where all parts are working on their own individual goals, yet together moving forward creating economic opportunity for all" (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Social Interaction also encompassed participants recognizing similarities and differences among the group and others they met with through programming. This was most evident in the reflections for Seminar Two (Miami) and Seminar Ten (International Travel). In the individual reflection, one participant stated; "As for the initial programming in Miami, I learned not to succumb to media stereotypes.... I learned that, for a large metropolitan area, there are pockets of really great people doing wonderful things" (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011). Through experiencing Miami and listening to speakers, prior knowledge structures were changed and built upon.

I also learned, or got a stronger appreciation for the inter-connectedness... of a city or region. All too often, I and I think society on the whole get caught up in our own little day to day minutia and activities and our segment of society and community. It was interesting to see the matrix, connections and correlations between governmental agencies, industry and seemingly unrelated cultures all intrinsically linked... whether they know it or not. This is something that no doubt will stick with me. What I do professionally and

personally, certainly affects others and I am equally effected by the actions of others. Reminding me to take a macro look at any given issue will certainly prove beneficial (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Understanding of others also increased through the class's experience at the Community Partnership for the Homeless. Perspectives were changed through seeing the larger picture of society; "They would have seen life from a different perspective and realized how much they have when they see families like the ones with nothing at all but the clothes on their backs" (Reflection Letters, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011). Within this statement, the participant reflects on the differences between two different groups. The differences between the two groups did not drive the interaction he reflects on as during the dinner service, this participant held conversations with the people that ate dinner that night. Through reflecting-in-action, this participant's perspectives were changed. This was also indicated in another participants observations of the same activity. Through the experience, perspectives on not only another population, but how their own lifestyles were viewed could be changed.

It was very rewarding and humbling for someone like myself who comes from a great family and helps us run a well-established business to be put in these peoples' shoes and to serve them... I completely rescinded the negative connotations in my head that I have always had toward the level of people enrolled in the facility (Reflection Letter, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 28, 2011).

In reflecting on that seminar later in the program, one participant reflected on what he had learned about working with and understanding others. By understanding others and then understanding ourselves, we can contribute to the end goal of good for all of society. Understanding that most are well intentioned expands the ability to work together.

I remember back to what [Program Speaker] said in Miami is that to remember that all people are coming from the place that they feel is right and I genuinely believe that about people. They are coming from their point of view is what they think is best that will get us to, you know, where we all want to be. So I think that is important (Group reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 20, 2011).

During the international seminar, participants also recognized differences between themselves and the cultures they were immersed in. Participants pointed out differences in policy and agriculture, language barriers and business practices. But the class also discussed how some perceptions were changed as a result of the experience. In doing so, participants became more open to other cultures and recognized where their own practices could change or be improved.

It's almost evident how ready they are. From our previous speakers, and the previous seminars, that they are making themselves ready for the world by knowing English and all these other languages where I feel like we are behind because we know what we are comfortable in and that's it. Even in the restaurants, some of the restaurants we've been to outside of our gatherings that if your own personal waiter or waitress doesn't speak great English, they are just calling someone over [snaps fingers] and they are on it (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 3, 2012).

With that, participants reached critical or premise reflection in that they recognized they could learn from other individuals and the culture. As GMO's had been discussed in a previous seminar, perceptions had changed about the use of GMO's but more importantly how members of the agricultural industry could learn from one another. This indicated a change in knowledge structures and a reframing of the topic.

The other thing is that I keep thinking about yesterday and the seed company when they were discussing the GMO's and how they pretty well have come to the conclusion that they have lost that battle. And so what can we learn from that in our own country related to whatever issues that we face? Whether it's framing the issues for the public or ... I'd like to learn about that, what they did differently, to change that public's perception (Group Reflection, Seminar Ten, Personal Communication, June 4, 2012).

Social Interaction is confirmed as a viable theoretical code by past research on agricultural leadership programs. One of the main objectives of the program is to develop leaders for service to their communities and industries (Kaufman & Carter, 2005). Additionally, studies found outcomes of these programs include increased networking and team building skills (Carter & Rudd, 2000; Diem & Nikola, 2005; Earnest, 1996; Whent & Leising, 1992), advocacy through participants educating others about agriculture and natural resource issues (Strickland, 2011), participants' increased involvement in community affairs (Howell, et al., 1979), and by participants interacting with their environment by encouraging others to become more involved in community issues (Earnest, 1996). Additionally, programs have given participants direct experience and interaction with environments different than their own in both domestic and international settings (Carter & Culbertson, 2012). This results in broadened perspectives on current issues (Abington-Cooper, 2005), and greater knowledge of others (Diem & Nikola, 2005).

Finally, Social Interaction can be tied to the theoretical code of Conceptualization as the interaction with speakers, fellow colleagues in the networks and members of different environments can contribute to learning and understanding. This is displayed through a reflection offered by a participant discussing how he had transformed as a result of meeting on individual. During Seminar Four, this particular program speaker addressed the hardships on his business and personal life as a result of a large disaster. The participant reflected how it had changed his view of business (Conceptualization), the importance of reflecting on an issue (Strategy) and the importance of understanding others' stories.

The a-ha moment came to me in the last trip in Apalachicola. It was when we were going to [Oyster Processing Operation]. And the owner was there talking about what happened with [Company] and he started breaking down and got really, really personal and how it really affected his family and how it is affected its potentially affected his businesses. And it was like, "I get it now." ... this really allowed me to get a better understanding of sitting back and saying okay, now what is the issue? Why do I need to think this way or why can't you accept my way? It's no longer that way, you've really got to open a box and make a better decision. And I think that's really ingrained with Wedgworth (Group Reflection, Seminar Five, Personal Communication, July 2011).

### **Relationships between Theoretical Codes**

The theoretical codes are interesting as isolated concepts. However, as part of a larger picture and arranged in relationship, each concept gains power. Additionally, it was evident in the data that reflections often encompassed two or more theoretical codes. For example, participants gained understanding (conceptualizing) from strategies they utilized in the program. In answer to a question, participants reflected on the value of the practice of reflection, placing the property in both conceptualizing and strategy. Participants stated; "as we reflected during session, it was nice to hear what others gleaned from an experience and that what they got out of it was totally different than what I got. It was nice to hear different perspectives" (Final Evaluation, Seminar Eleven, Personal Communication, August 9, 2012). Another tie between strategy and conceptualization was provided by another participant processing his experiences.

Lastly, I guess I simply felt. I would write volumes of feelings associated with each program. The young coast guard specialists made me nearly tear with pride as they described plainly and matter of factly how they protect our coastal borders and those trying to reach them.... But again, I felt, something I rarely do in my day to day enterprises. And quite frankly, that is nice to connect and not be so analytical (Reflection Letters, Seminar Two, Personal Communication, January 29, 2011).

Becoming could also be tied to social interaction in networks playing a role in identity development. Through increased involvement, participants were forming a network at the same time coming into the roles of leadership.

Talk about networking.... I got to talking to her a little bit and she said, "well, we would really like to have you at our next board meeting." So that turned into filling out an application to be a board member. So I am not meeting with them on the economic council....I thought it was neat to share based on how networking works (Group Reflection, Seminar Nine, Personal Communication, April 18, 2012).

As participants move through the four theoretical codes, they begin by conceptualizing material learning in the program. This can be similar to the initial experience within the experiential learning process (Roberts, 2006). Participants reflect through the series of processes found in strategy. In this, concepts learned can be built upon by using strategies of reflection, skills taught in programs or processes used to reflect. Additionally, though becoming, participants gain leadership skills within the program setting that can later be applied in future leadership roles. As understanding is increased, skills are developed, and the leadership program progresses through the two year experience, participants begin to identify as a leader within their industry and community which is evident in the code of becoming. Finally, leadership becomes contextualized and practiced by applying skills and knowledge to problems and environments. Contexts can include personal, work, industry or those environments in which one interacts. As the last stage of experiential learning is to apply information, with this model reflection can be deepened by applying information and the participants' identity or abilities into context. Effective leadership within an environment requires a leader to understand the environment and the people of interest. Critical reflection can be achieved by examining issues in context, reframing problems and acknowledging

change. In acknowledging change, the participant can question assumptions, approach problems differently, and assess their own change and growth in understanding. This cycle is displayed in Figure 5-1.

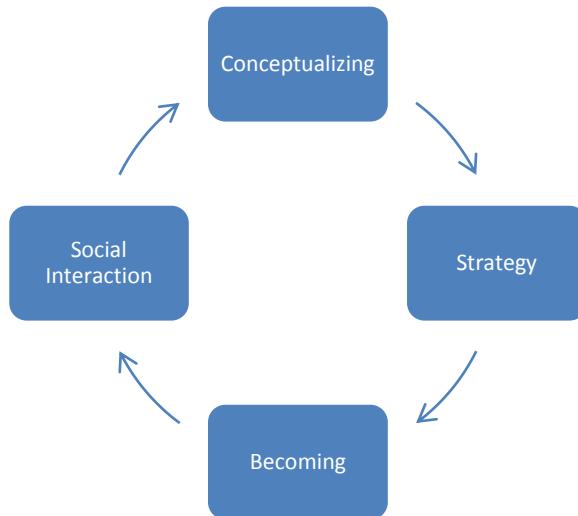


Figure 5-1. Theoretical Codes for the Use of Reflection within an Agricultural Leadership Program

## Theory

Conceptual modeling was used to display the processes of reflection within an agricultural leadership program, which displays the process utilizing the four theoretical codes of conceptualizing, strategy, becoming, and social interaction. There is mutual support among the terms grounded in the data and confirmed in previous literature. The properties and literature allow the four theoretical codes to fit together within the contexts of individual and group reflection, agricultural leadership programs using the experiential learning framework and within a given context such as industry. The theory of reflection within an agricultural leadership program is displayed in Figure 5-2.

The model starts out by assuming that participants are enrolled in the program, therefore understand the objectives of the program. Participants are open to learning

and levels of disclosures. The model also assumes that participants hold knowledge as a result of prior experience and program experiences. Individuals participate in both individual and group reflections.

The first step of reflection within the process within an agricultural leadership program focuses on understanding adult learners focus on problem solving. Within the step of conceptualization, participants try to gain understanding of concepts taught in the program. Participants reflect on the content of the program to gain this understanding. Strategy provides allowance for reflections focused on skills and processes, but also how to utilize those processes of reflection. The Becoming stage recognizes as leaders gain knowledge and skill, it becomes a matter of answering the questions “why are we here?” “why did I enroll in the program?” and “what can I do?” As participants identify as leaders, they will perform the roles of leadership in a given situation. From there, the problem (or what is being reflected upon), can be placed into a context, which is described by social interaction. Social interaction includes acknowledgment of social values and an awareness settings and context. Participants reflect on how what they understand, how to perform the skills and their identity interacts with a given context; be it relationships, organizations, or industry. This is displayed in the relationships between codes in Figure 5-1. This relationship makes up the core of the theory as displayed in Figure 5-2.

Each concept can overlap and relate to one another. However in moving through the four steps, one can reach critical reflection by identifying a problem (content reflection), finding a way to think about it and the skills to solve it (process reflection), identify their place within the problem and understand the given context (premise

reflection) (Mezirow, 1991). Reflection-in-Action and Reflection-On-Action can play a role in encouraging participants to reflect during the action or experience and also be able continue to learn from past experiences.

Reflection within an agricultural leadership program can be most effective by administrators laying out the groundwork and preparing participants before they formally reflect. Opportunities should be available for participants to reflect within group and individual settings as some concept observations emerge within each setting. This makes up the primary environment for reflection and application of the four theoretical codes. Additionally, understanding can be increased through social constructionism and which can then be translated into individual knowledge or social constructivism (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). This also provides more understanding to the facilitator as to where individuals are within the leadership progress. In addition to this negotiation of learning between individual and group, individual activities can play a role in gaining understanding to specific questions and providing participants to reflect on their own. This provides the allowance of personal feelings to incorporate into the concept of cognition which brings about transformative learning where the individual can act upon his or her feelings (Mezirow, 1991).

The experiential learning process (Roberts, 2006), provides structure for the processes of reflection and the learning processes within an agricultural leadership program (Strickland, 2011). Reflection should not only be encompassed by group and individual reflection activities but as part of an entire learning experience within a specific structure.

Reflection provides the opportunity to enable one to make inferences, evaluate and potentially change beliefs and establish new conceptualizations (Kember, 1999) within a structured environment and a context in which conceptualizations, skills, and identity can be applied within context. Context within agricultural leadership programs is encompassed as industry. The model of reflection within an agricultural leadership program is displayed within Figure 5-2.

Critical reflection occurs through all steps, but program facilitators can encourage reflective action and more critical reflection through asking questions and guiding discussion from increasing understanding, to discussing becoming (goals, identity development) to strategies of leadership. Strategies of leadership can be achieved or laid out in the context of social interaction and social values

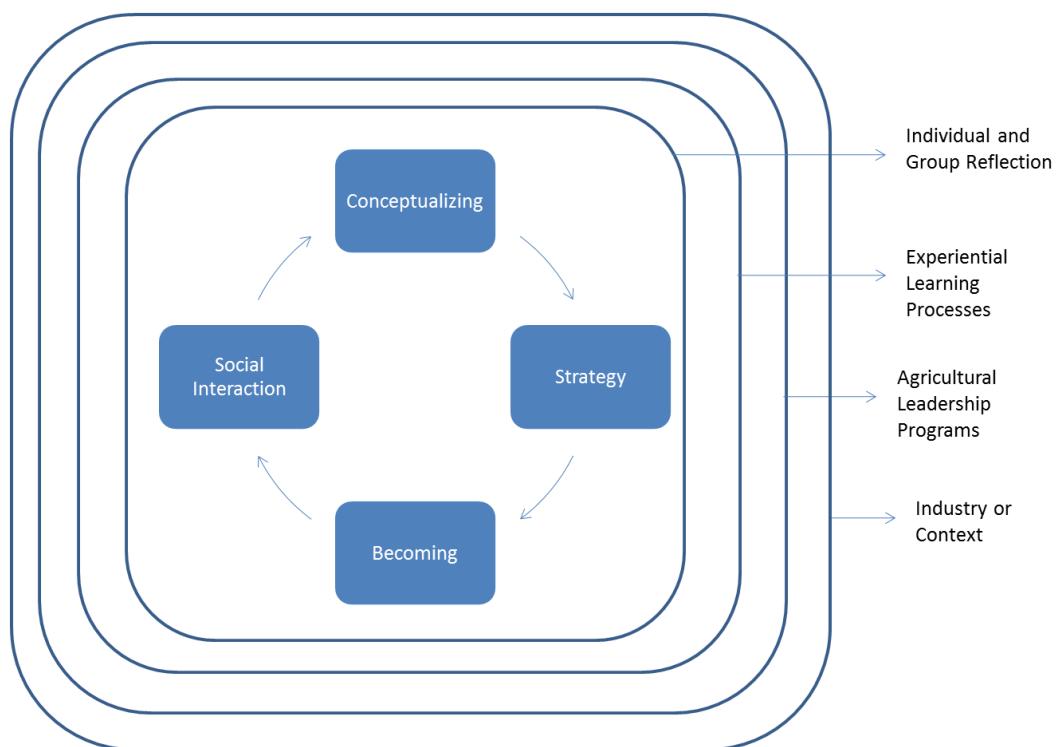


Figure 5-2. The use of reflection within an agricultural leadership program

## **Quality Measures of Theory Construction**

Charmaz (2006) provided guidelines for evaluating grounded theory research and developed criteria of credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness when reflecting on the research. By using these standards, the researcher can make a claim for the study and the theoretical codes of conceptualizing, strategies, becoming and social interaction to build the theory.

**Credibility.** The first of Charmaz's (2006) criteria is credibility. This criterion encompasses the trustworthiness of data collection and analysis ensuring the final presentation is understandable, logical and ties back to the data. Elements to take into consideration in this area are the researcher's familiarity with the topic and setting, the number and depth of observations, comparisons between the observations and the categories of processes and themes, and the links between the data, analysis and final argument. In this study, the researcher collected data from one agricultural leadership class of 30 participants which extended over a two year program. Within those two years, the researcher spent time with the participants during all eleven seminars. Data from each seminar and each participant was used in the analysis. In sum, over 140 pages of data from individual and group reflections was recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

Results were reported in Chapter Four within each objective, but in constructing the grounded theory, the researcher based the work on the four theoretical codes of conceptualizing, strategy, becoming and social interaction. The codes came directly from the data, but could then be confirmed by prior research. In reporting the theory, the researcher reported data and analysis within results pertaining to each objective. However, data from each objective was then incorporated into theoretical codes and

was no longer cataloged as how participants reflect themes of reflection and levels or reflection. However, all objectives were addressed in each theoretical code. This was conducted through the processes of memo writing and sorting memos into the coding structure. In this process, the researcher was able to integrate the data and make inferences to where the parts began to serve the whole of one functioning core category. Inferences made were documented within memos.

As with beginning grounded theory studies, a weakness may lie in that additionally collected data could influence the applicability and thoroughness of the theory. Programs may differ on how reflection is utilized and as indicated in this study, reflection is influenced by programming and topics discussed. With that, as research continues on reflection within agricultural leadership programs, themes and codes may change as a result of other participants reflections. Additionally, for the purposes of this research, only one class in one agricultural leadership program was utilized. Examining how other programs conduct reflection activities can have a role on future research within the area of study.

As stated in the limitations of the study, theoretical sampling of the purposive sample was not conducted as the study was designed after data was collected. A modified theoretical sampling was conducted in the study by the researcher sifting through the data and revisiting each reflection activity after theoretical codes began to develop. As data was collected, the researcher was concerned with collecting data to inform the study of the use of reflection within an agricultural leadership program. Participants provided rich information and in depth descriptions as they were taught early in the program how to reflect and throughout the two years were given multiple

opportunities to reflect at both individual and group levels. Participants in the program, and therefore the study, were selected based on common criteria, however, their experience, personal interpretations of experiences (constructivism), and demographics varied. This aided in the adequacy of the theoretical sample as it “is judged on the basis of how widely and diversely the analyst chose [her] groups from saturating categories according to the type of theory [she] wished to develop” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 63).

The development of the theoretical categories carried the weight of the analysis (Charmaz, 2006). As the theoretical categories emerged from the data, neither data nor theories were discovered, but were instead “constructed through past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (p. 10). As with beginning grounded theory studies, a weakness may lie in that additionally collected data could influence the applicability and thoroughness of the theory (Charmaz, 2006). Future theoretical sampling to check and distill the theoretical categories developed in this study can continue as data from multiple populations and contexts are collected for future studies.

**Originality.** The second of Charmaz’s (2006) criteria is originality. This criterion includes both the creation of new insights while providing an extension of current research on reflection. It is a strength of the study that the focused and theoretical codes offer both confirmation of other research and new conceptualization of reflection within adult leadership programs.

To increase abstraction necessary for theoretical construction, the researcher made links between the data and theoretical codes. In addition to time in the field and

data collection, credibility also has to be built on through thoroughness of analysis and integration in the final product. In addition to the two years spent collecting data, the researcher also transcribed data and took time analyzing the final product. The researcher immersed herself in the data for nearly six months before constructing the theory.

**Resonance.** The third criterion is resonance. Resonance indicates if the theory portrays the experiences of participants, reveals implicit knowledge, links individuals to larger collectives, and makes sense to the research participants. This was achieved through revisiting data and field notes from both collection and analysis after the analysis, revisiting the purpose of the study and working closely with the program director for the agricultural leadership program studied. The program director provided insight to both the specific program and agricultural leadership programs at an international level. In that, this constructivist grounded theory study was concerned with a “real life” problem that pertains to others within practice and research.

This study is immediately relevant to both program administrators and participants of adult agriculture leadership programs. Additionally, the information can be applied to other adult leadership training outside of the agricultural leadership program sphere. Future program participants and emerging leaders within the industry will also find this research relevant.

Program administrators can also use it in terms of program planning, seminar structure, planning and carrying out reflection activities, identification of processes used to achieve reflective action and critical reflection. Likewise it matters to program administrators that participants not only are exposed to and learn program material, but

also retain, understand, reinterpret, and apply the information provided. This skill, in addition to the knowledge can aid in future leadership endeavors as it was indicated by participants that reflected became a practice. Additionally, in terms of group reflection, awareness can take place in how to drive the conversation to build socially constructed meanings and allow participants the opportunity to reflect using multiple processes. Program directors can also ensure more in-depth discussion by allowing ample time within the seminars to reflect. It is also recommended to hold seminar reflections throughout programming as opposed to a reflection activity at the end of the seminar. This will increase responses, and time and commitment devoted by both the program administrator and the participant. On the individual level, program administrators can also ensure a level of reflective action and critical reflection is reached by asking in depth questions and allowing time for journaling and questionnaires.

This study portrays the main processes of reflecting and themes of the participants' experiences by emphasizing their conceptualization and understanding of program material and current issues, self-identification as a leader, strategies in reflection and interpretation and understanding of communities or contextual values to improve interaction. However, it does not portray the fullness of the participants' experiences, which is one of Charmaz's (2006) criteria for resonance because of limited time and room. In developing concepts and categories, the researcher attempted to include the breadth of each and process. However, issues such as individual preferences or behavior and the influences of gender, age, and career were not explored. This provides an advantage of clarity and focus in the study, but it acknowledges that there are many future research opportunities that still exist.

**Usefulness.** The fourth category presented by Charmaz (2006) is usefulness which is indicated by generalizing implications for future research and practice. Creswell (2003) also proposes that theories should describe, explain and predict phenomena in an organized and understandable process. The theory developed served the descriptive and heuristic functions. However, the theory does not presently serve to predict outcomes. This may be a function after future use, experimentation and refinement of the theory. The theory provides instruction and direction for program administrators to conduct reflection within their adult agricultural leadership programs and further understand the processes that are used by participants. The theory also provides a way to determine what outcomes can be expected through individual and group reflections. Additionally, it may provide definitions, indicators and practice in achieving critical reflection and ensure reflective action. This will allow planning on part of the administrator to reach particular outcomes within a given context.

### **Implications**

Participants reflected on the same topics within individual and group reflections which were directly tied to the program curriculum. In participants achieving reflective action (content, process and premise) in most of their reflections, this indicates the program experiences are to be reflected on and applied by participants. Even if participants were reflecting on personal experiences, program knowledge was still applied to the reflection.

As a result of this study, more time was devoted to reflection for Class VIII than for past classes. Past classes reflected at the group level during each seminar, but individual reflections were exclusive to this class and this study. As such, participants were able to further understand reflection and utilize different methods of reflection

beyond the introduction of the concept in the first seminar and the group reflections. Group reflections were also led by program administrators and participants throughout the two years. This had not changed from years past. Differences were not found so much in quality of reflection as a result of who led the reflection, participant or program administrator. However, differences were found in depth and quality depending upon the questions posed to probe participants. In depth reflections emerged in the international trip (Seminar Ten) and the pre national seminar (Seminar Five). Content and process levels of reflection were found throughout all group reflections, including those that were timed or at the end of the seminar. However, through timed reflections participants did not go into great depth and answers were planned and succinct.

Within the individual reflections it was important to note that participants were still communicating with someone outside of their own selves. Participants knew that each reflection would be used for the purposes of research and that as participants in the program, they communicated through these mediums with program administration, the researcher, or to those whom the reflection letters addressed. Though learning was identified as constructivist in nature, it was important to point out that learning and meaning making took place among the backdrops of the leadership program, the industry's expectations for participants to grow as leaders, and the self-identification of participants as leaders. Also, the sender and receiver shared that knowledge that they were a leader. Reality was defined as they having to address their leadership growth and potential to the researcher and that even though they were reflecting on an individual level, they were communicating with the researcher. This provides evidence of transformational dialogue. Within social constructionism, through transformative

dialogue, conversations or reflections submitted between two parties constituted meaningful forms of interaction (Puig, Koro-Ljungberg, & Echevarria-Doan, 2008). Through the dialogue within individual reflections, participants created reality “by engaging in continual dialogue that, layer by layer, fashions a cloth we wrap around our lives” (p. 141). These exchanges could transform individuals and the negotiation of meaning led to stronger relationships and richer communication between participants and the program. Within the research, the researcher did not aim to discuss the transformation overtime, but it is acknowledged that as participants gained knowledge and constructed meaning on importance of becoming involved or skill development (social constructionism), transformation in the dialogue between participants among the group or participant and researcher changed over time. Additionally, the transformative dialogue that took place over time led to stronger relationships and therefore richer communications between the two parties (Puig, Koro-Ljungberg, & Echevarria-Doan, 2008).

On the individual level, more detail was offered within reflection journals (Reflection Letters and Photo Journals) as opposed to short answer questionnaires. This could be influenced by the time allowed for the activity as well as when the instructions for the activity were distributed and reflections were collected. For example, for both the photo journals and reflection letters, which were assigned early on in the program, participants had more time to complete the assignment as these reflections could also completed outside of programming. More detail was offered as some participants also used reflection-in-action within these activities. Questionnaires were distributed at the end of the day or at the end of programming.

Reflection-in-Action aids in leadership development in that growth is apparent because they are reporting what happened within their actions (Schon, 1983). Participants reflected in action less than they reflected on action. In doing so, they learned more from past experiences as opposed to learning within the moment. By encouraging more reflection-in-action, participants can potentially change behaviors in the midst of an experience to guide an outcome or learning opportunity (Schon, 1983). This can be achieved through preparing participants to reflect before experiences take place.

When participants reflected-in-action at the individual level, they tended to use others' experiences to convey an observation rather than their own experiences. This did not happen at the group level or reflection-in-action nor did it occur when participants reflected-on-action, at the individual or group level. This implies that when participants framed their situations using the experiences of others, they were able to understand better their own obligations and responsibilities. The social construction created by others' actions, which were well known by the culture, aided the participant in constructing his own knowledge. Additionally, the process of using others' experiences to reflect occurred in the photo journaling reflection activity. Using this activity can provide participants the opportunity to understand an experience by examining its context and not just the participant's reaction to it.

Premise reflection, or critical reflection, was achieved at the group level. At this level, participants reframed problems and questioned presuppositions. This occurred mainly within the international seminar reflection when participants compared two cultures and took the further step of applying lessons learned from the experiences of others to their

own situations. Premise reflection also occurred when were also able to remove themselves from an issue, so the problem could be redefined.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

In this section, the researcher focused on practice recommendations for program administrators as they are the ones planning, facilitating, and teaching reflection to participants within an agricultural leadership program. To begin the practice of reflection within an agricultural leadership program, program administration should have an individual with knowledge of experiential learning, reflection and the program to introduce the topic of reflection and guide participants through a reflection activity. As this was done in the program studied, participants referred back to both presenters throughout the two years and indicated understanding of reflection because of this introduction.

Within programming, administrators should also evaluate where to place reflection activities within a seminar. Common practice dictates that these activities should be held at the conclusion of a seminar in order to reflect on all seminar topics. However, to achieve more in depth reflection and encourage more interaction with ample time, administrators should place reflection activities throughout programming. This will allow for more time and attention given by the participants and will allow for them to reflect on issues throughout the seminar as it encourages reflection in action. In doing so, participants can reflect during the seminar address any unresolved issues through reflection in order to understand or change course if necessary (Schon, 1983). Additionally, social constructionism has the opportunity to occur when participants can interact in a longer reflection as opposed to just taking turns reflecting.

Program administrators can also offer both individual and group reflection activities within the programs. Administrators should plan questions out in advance to address the theoretical codes of conceptualizing, becoming, strategies, and social values and interaction. Also, ask questions that both ask them to reflect back (Reflection-on-Action), but also take them back to the interaction (reflection-in-action) to assess changes in future behavior or further understanding of the issue being reflected upon.

Reflection-in-Action can also be increased by administrators preparing participants for their experiences so they can reflect while in the experience and report after the experience. Strategies to encourage reflection-in-action can include individual photo journaling, questionnaires or journaling activities asking participants to reflect on specific experiences. The instructions for reflection need to include specific questions such as “how did you feel during a specific situation?” and “what did you think at the time?” However, these recommendations only provide a way for researchers to gauge reflection in action. Reflection-in-action can also be encouraged and set up through program administrators preparing participants for each experience within the program. This goes beyond providing an agenda, but also includes a discussion (verbal or written) regarding participant’s initial impressions of what they will be doing and what they should anticipate. This can be facilitated during prelection activities where program administration can ask participant to think about what they will experience while also asking them to think about how they will interpret and later apply the information during the experience. In doing so, program administrators can encourage

participants to reflect-in-action as well as change their course of thinking during the experience (Schon, 1983) if necessary.

Preflection creates an opportunity for participants to reflect-in-action. Prefelction can also aid participants in achieving more in depth reflection during timed reflections. By preparing participants with the reflection question through a preflection session, participants are given more time to reflect on their own before presenting information, written or spoken.

Program administrators can set up multiple opportunities to reflect throughout program seminars. These opportunities can also take place at the individual or group level. Opportunities for reflection can take place to discuss general seminar topics or after particularly challenging or heavy programming. Opportunities can be taken in between sessions or can be prescheduled. With this, it is important to allow participants to process information on their own as well as within a group.

Specific reflection questions allowed for specific codes to emerge as indicated in the questionnaires for media training and state legislative processes. Practitioners and researchers can further study specific codes related to leadership or the context in which participants are serving to gauge what participants perceive, think, feel and will possibly apply. As responsibility of leadership and advocacy were large codes, practitioners can have participants reflect more on these concepts by gearing reflections toward these two topics. In doing so, participants can learn more about their own perceptions of the two topics and assess how to apply the two concepts in their own lives and leadership journeys.

Reflection activities were moderated by either a program administrator or a participant. It was beneficial to have participants lead reflections as they gained further understanding of reflection and led discussions. However, the researcher recommends that participants be taught how to facilitate reflection. This would include thinking and asking questions that may increase depth in responses, encouraging participants to evaluate content and processes (Mezirow, 1991), and be able to incorporate previous knowledge to new experiences thereby expanding learning structures (Roberts, 2006). Critical reflection can be achieved through planning question or by the facilitator (program administrator or participant) continuing to probe participants to increase depth in their responses.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This research can provide multiple opportunities for future research. The first recommendation would be to continue to develop the theory through further theoretical sampling of other populations. As the study has only been done with one class, outcomes and processes can be different depending on the structure of the program, topics addressed and current use of the practice of reflection. It would be of interest to the researcher to examine other leadership programs, their reflection practices and their outcomes. It would also be of interest to examine if themes of reflection have an influence on the processes of reflection and hence levels of reflection. Additionally, there are research opportunities in both this data set and future data collections to examining changes over a period of time in how a participant reflects at both individual and group settings and how their reflect practices may evolve over the course of the program.

Two of the larger subthemes were personal responsibility and advocacy. As neither personal responsibility nor advocacy were never directly addressed in programming, the large amount of data in codes, group and individual, indicates they were of strong value to participants. Practitioners and researchers can gain much from understanding the origins of the responsibility and advocacy codes, how they developed and how they are applied throughout leadership programming and within participants' lives outside of programming.

Upon further examination, the theory does not have to be limited to agricultural leadership programs. This theory can be applied to adult leadership and adult learning programs using the processes of experiential learning and reflection. It can be used in programs already implementing reflection and also serve as a framework for those wanting to implement the practice. In terms of research, assessing the theory within different contexts can provide more data and further theoretical saturation in the use of reflection in adult learning and leadership programming to provide further connections between the practices and outcomes of adult learning (Merriam, Cafferella & Baumgartner, 2007).

As the study addressed learning strategies within a leadership program, it did not address a specific leadership framework within the construction of the study. However in examining the theoretical codes of conceptualizing, strategy, becoming and social interaction, the proposed theory can relate to Authentic Leadership (Northouse, 2013). The four components of Authentic Leadership of self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing and relational transparency can related to the four proposed theory codes. Self-awareness and internalized moral perspective can align

with becoming in that authentic leaders understand themselves and others including their impact on others, strengths and weaknesses and the moral standards that guide their behavior. Balanced processing can align both with strategy and conceptualizing in that authentic leaders can objectively explore others view points and use strategies to objectively examine new information. Finally, authentic leaders are concerned with being transparent to others in order to facilitate genuine and open communication. This can align with the importance of reflecting on social interactions (Northouse, 2013). Additionally, research has found that an authentic leader operates within the context that is socially constructed and in doing so authentic leaders concern themselves with their feelings and reactions displayed to others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Future research on reflection practices within the context of authentic leadership can provide insight into how the proposed theory can connect to a specific leadership framework and its behaviors. Additionally, future research can examine how leaders that self-identify with a particular framework reflect on concepts and their development as a leader within a socially constructed reality.

The research presented examined one class in one leadership program. As mentioned previously, it did not examine the reflection of specific individuals or examine the traits of the individuals that participated in the study. Participants in the leadership program studied examined their own personality through assessments such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. Future research on this set of data can provide information on how certain personality types reflected. The research can go beyond preferences for group and individual reflection methods by extraverts and introverts to examine how participants with specific personality traits reflect and the depth of reflect

of each personality type. For example, differences in structure (judgment versus perceiving) may yield different results on the processes used to reflect. Decision making may include different processes utilized between feeling and thinking tendencies. Finally, how participants process information (sensing versus intuition) may be indicated in the types of reflection and the themes that participants identify in their reflective statements.

As part of the current study, participants submitted journals in reaction to photos that were chosen from an experience. The researcher only analyzed the journal and did not analyze the photos that were selected for the activity. Several of the photos submitted for the journaling activity are provided in Appendix C. Future research can provide opportunity to expand the study of photo journaling as a method of reflection in agricultural leadership programs by examining both the journal and analyzing the photo selected. Visual images can describe what is important to individuals and can evoke emotions, abstract ideas, perceptions, self-identification, and experiences (Harrison, 2002; Hodges, Keeley & Grier, 2000; White, Sasser, Borgren & Morgan, 2009). Additionally, photographs can “evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words” (Harper, 2002, p. 13). Within the context of reflecting in agricultural leadership programs, connecting pictures and words can provide facilitators with insight into participants’ interpretations of the social world. Connecting pictures to words can also give insight into participants’ feelings about and potential application of the interpretation.

As mentioned in the practice recommendations, prefection can provide opportunity for participants to reflect-in-action and also give time for participants to

reflect before meeting as a group. In doing so, participants can self-reflect and articulate what they have reflected on within the program seminar. Researchers can examine the differences in programs that use prelection activities verses those that do not also for prelection. Outcomes can be assessed in how participants reflect (reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action), themes of reflection, and the levels of critical reflection that are achieved in both settings.

The current study focused on how participants reflected on an individual level and how they reflected amongst a group of their fellow participants. However, the study did not examine how leadership program participants “unpack” the information to others outside of the program. Many of these participants have family and community support and/ or are sponsored by companies to actively participate in these programs. Now that the research has examined how participants reflect within the program, it would be interesting to examine how leadership program participants reflect with others that do not take part in the program experience.

Finally, one of the most significant findings in the present study was that of participants using others experiences when reflecting-in-action at the individual level. In doing so they did not refer to their own experiences as was done when reflecting-in-action amongst the group or reflecting-on-action at the group or individual level. As there were very few statements of participants reflecting-in-action at the individual level, this finding should be reexamined in future studies. Researchers can also gain much from studying the contexts and influences in which participants use others experiences. In this study, the participant reflected using others experiences while examining a photo of monuments of other leaders. The influence of others reminded the individual of his

own responsibility. It would be interesting to research other characteristics that can be drawn from examining others experiences. Additionally, it would be beneficial to study if this phenomenon is also found within reflecting-in-action or if participants use others experiences while reflecting-on-action.

### **Researcher Reflection**

In a constructionist study, a researcher is part of the dialogue (Crotty, 2010). However, as it is important that though the researcher played a role in the transformative dialogue (Puig, Koro-Ljungberg, & Echevarria-Doan, 2008), it is also important to give voice to the participants of the study. In this final section, I articulate both my biases and observations in order to incorporate them into the reflexivity of the study (Charmaz, 2006).

The research objective of examining reflection within an agricultural leadership program has been of interest to me for the last ten years. I was introduced to the concept of reflection while directing a leadership program in New Mexico. While I did not understand the theoretical framework behind reflection, I was always interested in how leadership program participants made information meaningful. Information became “real” when participants could understand it and apply it to their own life. As I began my PhD work, I delved into the theoretical frameworks of adult learning, agricultural leadership programs, experiential learning and reflection. From this, I was able to more understand the theory behind the phenomenon of reflection.

While working on this grounded theory study, I learned to examine what I observed in the data collection as not something I enjoyed, as much as something to research. Not that I didn’t enjoy what I was studying, but I tended to take it more

seriously and began making connections to theory as opposed to just observing what participants were learning.

In collecting the data for the study, the questions were not guided with the intent of using theoretical sampling. The questions I did put forth were based on program experiences, agricultural leadership program outcomes and the theoretical frameworks of experiential learning and reflection. I did not facilitate but two group reflections so the reflections that came out of the group context were not so much guided by theory, but they also did not incorporate any bias on my part. The strong outcomes that were observed within group reflections were of the data and participants themselves and not by my bias or planning.

In observing group reflections, I noticed several different phenomenon. As mentioned in the data, several group reflections were timed and took place at the end of a program seminar. Other reflections took place at the midpoint of the seminar and allowed more time for participants to reflect and exchange dialogue. In the timed reflections, each individual was presented a question and given a specific amount of time to reflect. In longer reflections, participants were given a question but the conversation moved and transformed through discussion. Though this allowed for deeper reflection, it was also interesting to observe those individual that tended to participate more than others. Program facilitators had to be conscious to allow and encourage everyone to participate. Those participants who were more introverted tended to be quieter and had to be asked to participate as opposed to those that were more extraverted tended to participate in the discussion at a greater level. However, it is important to note that when the quieter participants were asked to participate, they

offered profound insight and appeared to participate freely. Additionally, through transformative dialogue reflections that were untimed appeared to transcend into multiple topics and raise more questions as opposed to those reflections that were timed and asked one specific question.

Additionally, participants in this class and past classes have noted that reflections do not only take place during specific reflection activities. Participants stated that reflection took place while the class got together after formal activities ended and on the bus rides in between field visits. While it would have been interesting to collect data during this “down time,” I also think it was important that participants have this time to have conversations amongst themselves and not as a formal activity. As mentioned earlier negotiation of meaning took place within group and individual reflections because as they were viewed as formal activities each participant was addressing the group or addressing program administration. In that, participants assumed the role of the leader addressing the construction of the reality of leadership development in the program (Puig, Koro-Ljungberg, & Echevarria-Doan, 2008).

In analyzing the data for this study, I had to separate myself as much as I could from the data. To do so, I spent time apart from the data between collection and analysis to avoid letting individuals voices play a role in the analysis. By doing so, I began to see the data as one large picture and not the contributions of specific individuals. To stay true to the data and the objective of studying constructivism and social constructionism, I separated individual and group reflections. To avoid crossover and any bias, I chose to analyze each type of reflection separately. I began with analyzing individual reflections first and sought out how participants reflected, what they

reflected on and the levels of reflection within individual reflection activities. After I finished with this set of data, I took time off before analyzing the group reflections in order to not bias my findings. It was only after analyzing both did I find similarities in both themes and processes of reflection.

As mentioned in the findings and discussion, both advocacy and passion were two topics that were not addressed in programming but were prominent themes and processes reflected on by participants. However, upon further reflection, it can be noted that these themes are very prominent in the recruitment and selection processes for this program. Participants are identified as passionate leaders for the industry that have shown prior leadership responsibilities and qualities.

### **Chapter Summary**

Chapter Five discussed the key findings of the study, provided a constructivist theory on the use of reflection within an adult agricultural leadership program, discussed the theory using Charmaz's criteria for substantive theory and provided implications and recommendations for both future research and practice within agricultural leadership programs. This study provides research on one agricultural leadership program's use of reflection and guidelines for program administration to implement reflection within other programs agricultural leadership program. The study provides recommendations for future research and future practice of reflection.

This study proposed a constructivist grounded theory for reflection within an agricultural leadership program. Though the examination of the processes of how participants reflected and the depth of reflection in addition to the themes of participants reflected upon, the resulting theory bases reflection on four theoretical codes; conceptualizing, strategy, becoming, and social interaction.

APPENDIX A  
INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION QUESTIONNAIRES AND JOURNALING ACTIVITIES

**Seminar Two**

As part of the reflection process, please compose a letter detailing your experiences in the Wedgworth Leadership Institute up to this point. This letter can be addressed to a friend, family member, or to someone with an interest or stake in your participation in the program. The purpose of this letter is to reflect within writing. Think back to what you have experienced or seen so far.

What did you learn from this experience?

How did you feel about what you saw?

How will you apply the information presented?

**Seminar Three**  
**Class VIII- Seminar Three**  
**March 21-24, 2011**  
**Reflection Questionnaire**

1. What about the legislative process has changed your impressions of Tallahassee?
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What happened during Seminar III that contradicted or confirmed prior beliefs about the legislative process?
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Describe how you can be involved in the policy making process. Which sources of information have helped your understanding of policy making?
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How can you use what you have learned during Seminar III to support your industry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How do issues such as immigration and water effect Florida specifically?
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Think about the shadowing process and the different leaders you met. How were they effective in representing their industry? What can be learned about being effective in this arena from observing others in the policy making process?

7. What are the consequences of the proposed merger of the Departments of Consumer Affairs, Environmental Protection and Transportation? What do you believe some of the effects will be on the department structure and the people that work for each department? With the conclusions you draw, how can these concepts be applied to your personal lives and business?
8. How will you utilize the contacts you have made during Seminar III?
9. After observing people in Tallahassee, and after learning about different leadership styles, what types of leadership styles do you feel are most effective in the legislative process?
10. After meeting with leaders in Gainesville, Miami, and Tallahassee, do you recognize any patterns in the types of leadership you have seen?

\*Question Seven was not utilized in the data analysis

## **Seminar Six**

### **Photo Journaling Exercise**

Photos can stimulate emotions, memory, imagination, and communication, not to mention reflection for the photographer or viewer. Photos and their accompanied discussion, known as photo language, facilitate concrete expressions of feelings, embedded assumptions, realities, memories, aspirations and ideas.

During your experience on the WLI national trip, please take or select a photo that helps describe a moment or lesson learned during the experience. Once your photo is chosen, provide a short reflection (one-half to one page typed or hand written) describing the experience and reflection or reaction the photo evokes. Why did you choose this photo? How does this photo describe what you learned during the experience? What does the photo suggest about your thoughts, values or assumptions?

Please submit the photo and write-up during or within one week following the national trip. You can provide this in hard copy or digital copy.

## **Seminar Eight**

### **Media Training Reflection Questionnaire**

**Seminar Eleven**  
**Final Evaluation**

Describe three ways your use of reflection has changed because of your WLIANR experience.

## APPENDIX B GROUP REFLECTION PROMPTS

### Seminar One

How did you feel when you got to the seminar?  
Did anything change when you got to the seminar?  
What are some major things you have learned in the program?

### Seminar Four

For this area, Apalachicola, the oil spill was a game changer. What would you do if there was a game changer in your industry or business?

### Seminar Five

What have you learned in the program to make you a better opinion leader?  
What are some of the points of views you might not have agreed with or seen from a different point of view?

### Seminar Six

Pick one of the following quotes and elaborate on it.  
“We raise everything but our voices”  
“Always do the things in front of you”  
“We should remain valuable, viable, and visible”

### Seminar Eight

You have come through eight seminars. We have had a lot of experiences. And this week, [speaker] said, “What’s your message?” So the idea is, in a word or phrase, if you could share with us your message about your personal leadership experience.

### Seminar Nine

What are you going to do to make sure that we do not have 10% of the class go away.  
How do you plan to stay involved in the program?

### Seminar Ten

What do you think so far?

### Seminar Eleven

Why will you stay involved in the program?

APPENDIX C  
PHOTO JOURNAL EXAMPLES

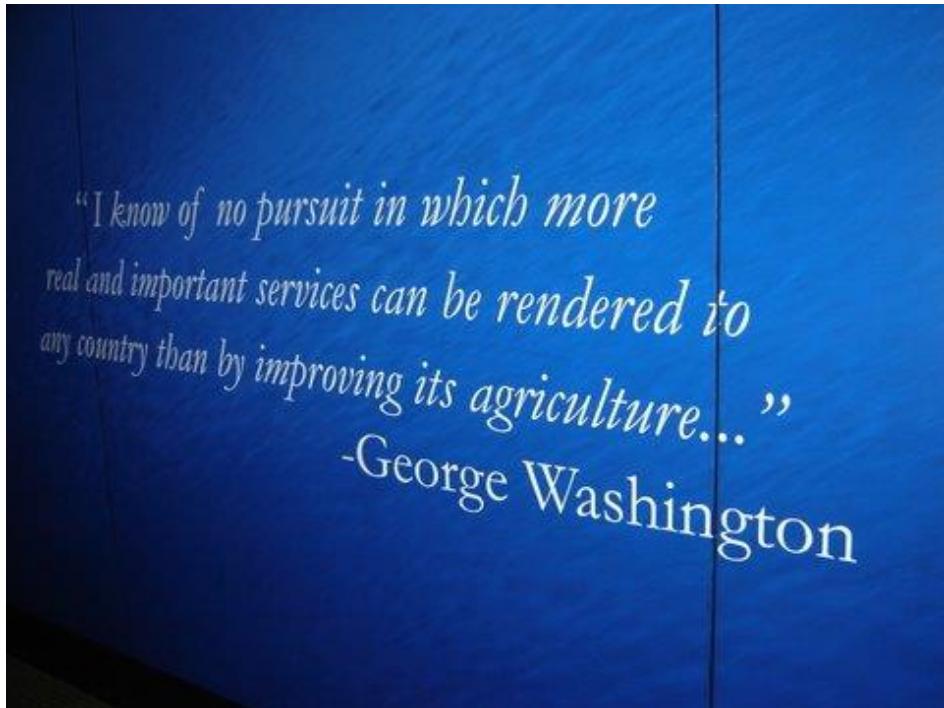


Photo Courtesy of Class Participant



Photo Courtesy of Class Participant



Photo Courtesy of Class Participant



Photo Courtesy of Class Participant

**APPENDIX D**  
**SAMPLE OF CODED TEXT**

Group Reflection  
 Seminar Ten

Reflection Question: So what do you all think so far?

Text	Initial Codes	Focused Codes
Participant 1- Well a couple of things, first of all, when we got here to the airport it's really strange to feel like a minority in a place. It's a little scary even though we found out that people are willing to help and do whatever they can to understand you, and you can get around so just that initial feeling of "I really don't know how to speak French" that you had to cope. The other thing is that I keep thinking about yesterday and the seed company when they were discussing the GMO's and how they pretty well have come to the conclusion that they have lost that battle. And so what can we learn from that in our own country related to whatever issues that we face? Whether it's framing the issues for the public or ... I'd like to learn about that, what they did differently, to change that public's perception.	Being outside of a comfort zone  Dealing with Challenges	Value in Understanding
Participant 2- I think that people helping us our like the tour guides and our bus drivers what they are doing for us and their own personal lives. Hearing [Bus Driver's] story today really got to me. And "okay, he's the bus driver and now all of a sudden he's a bus driver and he's a motorcyclist tour guide in Thailand. I mean just so many different chapters in that life and every time he said something it was just like wow. He started out as a bus driver and ended up as somebody that is just amazing.	Learning from others  Advocacy  Communication	Value in Understanding  Application of what has been learned
Participant 3- I've rather been surprised at one of the things that I've noticed is how we have been able to disconnect from our life as easy as we could. I mean in our local seminars, I mean everybody's rushing out to take phone calls and	Understanding backgrounds, others	Shared Experiences  Value in Understanding
	Adapting to situations  Increasing understanding	Leader Characteristics  Value in Understanding

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do this and that. And our loved ones. I've been really surprised, you know, I called work yesterday and they were like don't worry, we've got it taken care of, quit calling. You know, I mean, it's been a different feeling. Then from the other aspect, just, you know the same problems we deal with here or in the US are the same here. That's been really enlightening.	Humility Finding Commonalities	Leader Characteristics Value in Understanding
Participant 4- I think yesterday, the a-ha moment or the feeling that we are all connected and that this is connected to our other trips was when [speaker] said, "You've got to make sure that we are heard" not just in Florida but across the world. And that took me right back to New Mexico when [Legislator] said "Farmers raise everything but their voices." And so it was one of the a-has because it shows that its connected and connected all this together. This is why we are in this program; this is why we are here.	Reflection-In-Action Connecting Multiple Class Experiences	Connecting Multiple Class Experiences Value in Understanding
Participant 5- Mine was Monday, talking with [speaker] and [speaker] and with the assistance of [speaker]. How they don't even think in a regional perspective. Everything they do is with Asia, Europe and the United States. Their region is 10s of thousands of miles. And we just haven't caught that yet. So it was pretty impressive.	The bigger picture WLI Network	Value in Understanding
Participant 6- Speaking of [Seed Company]. I guess it was Monday we went to [Seed Plant] and the US are probably a lot more alike than we think. When GMOs came up, [classmate] and I were talking about it and that it's a contentious issue here. Because of the food safety programs and the fresh fruit and I was surprised that they were interested in potentially using that as a tool in orange production.	Finding Commonalities Surprises	Value in Understanding
Participant 7- I think for me I was really surprised how close this economy is and all of France is to how it is in south Florida. It's amazing, I thought it was going to be like all your typical French people walking around/ this	Different practices Dispelling myths Perceptions	Value in Understanding

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<p>was my mentality, and I was totally shocked when I got here. Like I can't tell who's a visitor and who's not a visitor. I mean we might see a typical French person, but not very many. So it was really surprising to me how welcoming they are and how very close they are to us and to everything they want to do.</p>	<p>Finding commonalities</p>	
<p>Participant 8- I really appreciated the tip we received from the French alumnus that you should greet people when you go in [people saying yes to confirm] and that came to me today when I was walking in these shops. It goes a long way to acknowledge that person, and I think with most of us are from the south and we sort of pride ourselves on acknowledging people and say 'hello, how are you?' And think it's universal that people appreciate that.</p>	<p>Building a relationship</p>	<p>Relationships and Networking</p>
	<p>Understanding a culture</p>	<p>Value in Understanding</p>
	<p>Appreciating a culture</p>	
<p>Participant 9- I'd like to add to that it's a series of things for me. The first thing the realization of how simple it is to not have ice. How much I miss ice. I know that sounds really small but today, I've asked two people, [classmate] got me ice this morning and [classmate] got me ice this evening. That made, "oh my God" it made things more comfortable for me, and I feel a little bit out of my comfort zone, but that, if you merge that into what [classmate] just said, its all of us taking care of each other on this trip. That we may be in and out of our comfort zones but we all try to put each other back into our comfort zones. And then you take the alumni who give a little tidbit of information here. Everybody in this organization is taking care of each other. So, like I said, it started out small, but it says about us as a whole.</p>	<p>Getting out of a comfort zone</p>	<p>Leader Characteristics</p>
	<p>Relationships within the class</p>	<p>Relationships and Networking</p>
	<p>Personal Growth</p>	<p>Personal Growth</p>
	<p>Program network</p>	<p>Relationships and Networking</p>

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Avery Culbertson received her B.S. and M. A. from New Mexico State University. She was the Director for the New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program until 2010, when she began her Ph. D. in Agricultural Leadership at the University of Florida. While working on her Ph. D. she worked for the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources. Her research focuses on experiential learning and reflection within adult leadership programming.