Becoming a Manager in Nonprofit Human Service Organizations: Making the Transition from Specialist to Generalist

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ABSTRACT

The transition from direct service to management in human service organizations requires newly promoted managers to engage in significant role transformation that calls into question their self-concept and identity. Yet new managers are rarely provided training opportunities that address the formation of a managerial identity. This analysis draws upon the for-profit and nonprofit literature to construct a conceptual model of managerial identity formation. The model is then applied to a case vignette of a managerial leadership development training program developed by a regional network of nonprofit human service agency directors. The analysis concludes with implications for managerial training and leadership development in human service organizations.

Key words: Human service organizations, management, leadership, training.

INTRODUCTION

It is common for human service organizations to promote direct service practitioners into management positions, yet there is often little attention paid to the altered sense of identity and role changes that accompany this transition. While formal prior training and experience can be useful when direct service practitioners in human service organizations move into managerial roles, new managers often face challenges as they learn to exercise authority, negotiate competing interests, manage organizational politics, and move from their role as a technical specialist to becoming a managerial generalist (Austin, 1981; Donovan & Jackson, 1991; Lowe & Austin, 1997; Patti, Diedrick, Olson, & Crowell, 1979). Nonprofit and public sector training programs often do not adequately address these transition challenges and tend to focus more on managerial skills and case examples of leadership development.

The assumptions underlying most management certificate training programs for managers who have moved up through the ranks of human service organizations (often with little or no management training) include: 1) that participants enter with a relatively clear idea of their managerial responsibilities and seek primarily to improve their management skills, 2) that participants have broadened their client-focused identity to include an organizational and community focus, and 3) that participants have assumed a managerial role that fits their career interests. Observations derived from participants in a new managerial leadership training program made it apparent that the “managerial hat” neither “fit” nor “looked good” in the eyes of many current nonprofit managers (Austin, M.J., Regan, K., Samples, M., Schwartz, S., & Carnochan, S., 2011). The following paraphrases capture the perceptions of the training program participants (Austin, et al., 2011):

1) I miss the satisfaction of working with clients and I try to get similar satisfaction from working with staff; but, I really identify with the clients we serve.

2) I like the power and authority that comes with my manager role, but I find it difficult to be part of the administrative hierarchy of the agency or to actually use my power and authority.
3) When faced with new roles, like fundraising, I find it very difficult to envision myself attending fundraising events where I need to dress-up. I can't imagine liking this part of being a manager as talking to wealthy people puts me in conflict with who I am and what I believe about serving poor people.
4) I often feel like I'm under siege as a manager, making it difficult to see the big picture of my agency within its larger environment.
5) One of my biggest challenges is dealing with the negative projections of my staff now that I'm a manager, especially when I'm attempting to set or maintain accountability.
6) I have no clearly identified space to reflect and get feedback about how I'm doing as a manager, especially in my relationships with staff.

Based on these comments, it became clear that the concepts of identity and role required further investigation and future program adjustments.

We found that some of the issues observed in the program were addressed in the literature on the transition from technical specialist to first line manager. However, due to the limited research on nonprofit and public sector human service organizations related to the transition from direct service into management (e.g, there is no aggregate data in either sector to identify the number of people advancing each year up the managerial leadership ladder), this analysis builds upon the few empirical studies of becoming a manager in the for-profit sector in order to develop a new conceptual framework relevant to the experiences and needs of those becoming managers in human service organizations. This framework was used to modify a nonprofit leadership development program in order to address the issues of identity and role development that are described later in the case vignette section. This analysis begins with a review of the limited literature on becoming a manager by using key concepts to develop a conceptual framework that serves as a lens to examine a case vignette. The concluding section includes a discussion of the implications and recommendations for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In reflecting on the transition from specialist to generalist in for-profit organizations, McCall et al (1988) found that successful transitions are often built upon a history of on-the-job developmental work assignments (sometimes referred to as stretch assignments) where managerial capabilities are demonstrated through a variety of activities (e.g., first supervisory experience, project/task force experience, surviving difficult team leadership situations, and/or coping with an expanded scope of work that requires relying on others and thinking like a manager).

Successful transitions from specialist to generalist were found by McCall et al (1988) to reflect the following competencies: 1) *setting and implementing agendas* (e.g. taking responsibility, building and using organizational structures, thinking strategically and engaging in innovative problem-solving), 2) *handling relationships* (e.g. dealing with people over whom you have no authority, negotiating political situations, understanding other people's perspectives, dealing with conflict, directing-motivating-evaluating-developing subordinates, and managing up to senior management), and 3) *demonstrating core values rooted in self-awareness* (e.g. belief that one can not manage everything alone, importance of the human side of management, continuous acknowledgement of one's limits and blind spots, and recognizing and seizing opportunities by taking charge of one's career and maintaining balance between work and personal life).

The theme of self-awareness calls for a personal framework for self-reflective practice that, according to McCall et al (1988), involves identifying one's shortcomings (either reactively as a result of negative feedback or proactively by learning how to expand one's self-reflective capacities), accepting responsibility for one's shortcomings by searching for their sources, and addressing shortcomings (e.g., placing oneself in situations calling for new learning, accessing the expertise of others, hiring staff that compensate for one's weaknesses, and/or change the situation, and/or seeking coaching for use in developing personal change).

In more recent work, Charan and colleagues (2011) reflect on the transition from managing self to managing others (rather than relying exclusively on yourself) and giving up the tasks and responsibilities that provided the recognition needed to become a manager. They noted that the transition from specialist to generalist calls for different skills, use of time and work values. For example, the different skills include defining/assigning work to be done, monitoring/communicating/coaching/acquiring resources/problem-solving, and building relationships up/down/out). According to Charan et al (2011), the use of these skills should lead to less doing and more discussing, completing the role transition, hiring others who reflect the organization's work style and beliefs, maintaining availability to teach, sharing in the successes of staff, and continuously learning about the organization's expectations of managers. They also note that new managers need to move from the daily discipline of managing their own time to more annual planning (budgets/projects) and making time available for others (communications and team priority setting). And finally, with regard to work values, they observed that there needs to be a shift from valuing personal/technical proficiency to valuing the results of others and the successes of teamwork. In commenting on the transition from specialist to generalist, Charan et al (2011) noted that:

> When first-time managers lack the ability to delegate or coach, they'll schedule relatively little time for each activity, preferring to spend as much time as possible on what they're good at …They don't want to look foolish in front of their former peers and will therefore spend time on activities that make them appear competent. The also are avoiding the

> monumental shift of being responsible for the productivity, output, and expansion of individual capacity that comes with a manager's job (p.48).

Some observers of the transition process have sought to translate their findings into a comprehensive (and potentially overwhelming) set of success strategies to be used in the early phase of becoming a manager. For example, Watkins (2003) identified the following ten key strategies that are viewed as prescriptions for success: 1) promote yourself by making the mental break from specialist to generalist, 2) maintain a systematic focus on what needs to be learned and how to do it efficiently, 3) match strategy to situation by using diagnosis in order to develop action plan, 4) focus on early wins to build credibility and momentum, 5) negotiate success by building relationship with your boss through multiple conversations about expectations, 6) achieve alignment by bringing the organization's structure into alignment with its strategies, especially systems and skills, 7) build your team by evaluating current members and recruiting new members, 8) create coalitions, both internal and external, to identify those whose support is essential for success, 9) keep your balance between the personal and the professional with the use of an advice/counsel network (avoid getting isolated, making poor decision, and/or losing perspective), and 10) help others accelerate their own performance and transitions (p. 12-14)

As indicated by these highlights from the for-profit literature on transitions, the considerable change process involves: 1) developing a sense of self and interpersonal judgment, 2) gaining role clarity and learning how to transition into and out of role, and 3) learning how to learn on the job (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2003). These themes parallel the issues faced by new entry-level managers (supervisors) in the human services who experience substantial "social psychological discontinuity" in the areas of: 1) exercising authority, 2) guiding group decision making, 3) focusing on service effectiveness and outcomes, and 4) managing collegial relationships with former peers (Patti & Austin, 1977). In essence, a profound professional and psychological transformation takes place in the process of becoming a manager. As described in the next section, the process involves developing a sense of self, managing role transitions, and learning how to learn (Hill, 2003).

Developing a Sense of Self

Learning to engage as a self-reflective practitioner is a key theme throughout the literature on becoming a manager. Hill (2003) notes that personal learning is often more demanding than task learning. Many of the managers in Hill's (2003) study had previously relied primarily on taking action rather than engaging in reflection and introspection and quickly discovered that this action-oriented approach was not sustainable in their new managerial role where developing a sense of self was critical. Watson (2001) notes that many components of managerial learning require self-awareness and include helping staff feel valued, recognizing hidden agendas, and navigating organizational politics. Interpersonal styles, attitudes, and mindsets that worked well at the line level may need to be modified to be effective at the managerial level (Hill, 2003; Hill, 2007). Leadership coaching has been shown to assist new managers in identifying their own interpersonal style and ways of adapting in order to develop a managerial style that is both comfortable and effective (Koonce, 2008). Additional examples of the process of developing self are located in Figure 1.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Managing Role Transitions

New managers need to learn how to shift from the role of specialist where they rely primarily on their own efforts to carry out their jobs to that of generalist where they rely on others to get things done (Hill, 2003). Yet, the satisfaction that new managers typically derive from excelling as a specialist may make it difficult for them to leave this role in order to manage a broader scope of work and acquire the wider lens needed for managerial work (Hill, 2003). Moreover, this transition requires that new managers move from a position of independence to one of organizational interdependence where they are called upon to integrate multiple agendas and build networks both internal and external to the organization (Hill, 2003). However, the conceptions of work and the responsibilities held by new managers often conflict with the notion of getting work done through others. (Hill, 2003). In addition, the increased interdependence that characterizes the role of manager heightens the sense of a loss of control (Hill, 2003). New managers are tempted to revert back to their specialist role when they feel most out of control and feedback from subordinates can help them resist this temptation and embrace the interdependent nature of the managerial role (Hill, 2003). Additional examples of the process of managing role transitions are located in Figure 2.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

<u>Learning How to Learn from Experiences and Training</u>

New managers need to learn from experiences in order to make a successful transition into management (Hill, 2003; Hill, 2004; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008; Watson, 2001). On-the-job learning requires active reflection and inquiry, asking the questions “What did I do?”, “What did I learn?” and “Why did I do it that way?” (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008; Watson, 2001). In order to engage in self-development, managers need to “adopt an explorer’s stance” by using introspection and reflection, incorporating diverse perspectives, and seeking out opportunities for life-long learning (Hill, 2004, p. 124). To help managers learn from their experiences, superiors need to offer coaching and multiple sources of feedback (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007). Research indicates that learning on the job is enhanced if the learner is able to access support from both peers and superiors (Hill, 2007). A person's natural curiosity and ability, desire, and drive to learn from her or his own experiences are often considered when assessing leadership potential (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007; Muson, 2008). McCall & Hollenbeck (2008) warn against moving people into leadership positions too quickly because sequential experiences with increasing responsibilities are necessary to grasp some leadership concepts related to one's own stage of development. Watson (2001) presents the concept of an "emergent manager," one whose on-the-job preparation and training for management can be understood in the context of a full life history of leadership development rather than simply the point at which a formal promotion occurs.

The responsibility to develop new managers rests on both the future manager and the organization (Hill, 2003; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008). Organizations need to provide prospective managers with: 1) an accurate portrayal of management, 2) resources and support throughout the transition 3) opportunities for stretch assignments to develop managerial competence, and 4) opportunities for post-training follow-up that reinforces new learning and allows discussion of challenges that arise from putting training principles into practice (Hill, 2003; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007; Pledger, 2007). Dubouloy (2004) notes that in order to develop managers who are comfortable innovating and able to use their talents, management training programs need to: 1) help participants examine and construct their identity, 2) allow time for experiences to be discussed, and 3) provide an emotionally safe environment.

In essence, future managers need to engage in their own self-assessments to identify the fit between their skills, attitudes, strengths and interests and the managerial role itself, as well as substantial "self-development" throughout their first year on the job (Hill, 2003). Suggestions for new managers who make the transition include the need to: 1) be patient, 2) anticipate common pitfalls, 3) demonstrate an openness to criticism, 4) maintain integrity and honesty, 5) engage in ongoing training and development of yourself and your subordinates, and 6) develop a resource base for ongoing assistance (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2003).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As a way to synthesize the key concepts found in the literature, a conceptual framework has been developed and illustrated in Figure 3. It is designed to capture the professional and psychological transformations that accompany the transition from direct service to management in human service organizations, where new managers seek to renegotiate their professional role and adjust their own self-perceptions. The framework identifies four stages that characterize the transition: 1) Emerging, 2) Becoming, 3) Acting, and 4) Thriving. Organizations are called to plan for and provide adequate time and a safe space for reflection and learning during these stages (Dubouloy, 2004). An organization's culture and context, including the quality and quantity of training offered, affect the ease with which new managers form a managerial identity. This transformation requires the personal capacity to: 1) cope with increased stress, isolation, and emotion associated with the construction of a managerial identity, 2) engage in honest self-reflection and assessment, 3) recognize personal style, and 4) adjust style/approach in order meet the demands of the role. In addition, the ability to engage in experiential on-the-job learning is often critical to making a successful transition (Hill, 2003; Hill, 2004; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008; Watson, 2001).

[insert Figure 3 here]

The first stage, *Emerging*, marks the period in which a specialist is identified as a prospective generalist for a role in management. Emerging managers, as well as their supervisors, often use this time to assess the fit between managerial work and the potential manager's knowledge, attitudes, skills, and interests (Gaynor, 2004; Hill, 2003) An "emergent manager" is one who is encouraged to: 1) reflect on past experiences and future goals, 2) seek stretch assignments, 3) ask questions and observe to get an accurate picture of managerial work, and 4) actively develop professional and support networks (Watson, 2001; Hill, 2003).

The second phase, *Becoming a manager*, often begins at the point of promotion and is marked by negotiating the role and re-constructing elements of identity. The five substantial identity-related shifts that characterize this phase include what Hill (2003) describes as: 1) moving away from technical or clinical mastery and toward generalist competencies, 2) shifting from the role of a specialist or an independent practitioner to that of an interdependent manager, 3) learning to adjust one's locus of responsibility from individual-level task completion to team-level success, 4) shifting from building credibility primarily with clients or customers to learning how to develop credibility with ones staff,, and 5) letting go of the need to be personally *liked* and moving toward reliance on being respected in role, a shift that is often associated with the loss of peer camaraderie and a well-defined reference group (Barnes, 1981; Cohen, 2005).

As new managers gain role clarity and begin *Acting* in role, they are often confronted with competing demands. New managers continue to construct their managerial identity as they learn to balance the processes of: 1) managing individuals as well as an overall team (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2004; Hill, 2007); 2) offering support while developing an ability to effectively confront problematic behavior; 3) setting high expectations for performance as well as opportunities for growth and development; 4) acknowledging managerial authority while striving to empower team autonomy (Hill, 2003), 5) relying on personal power while recognizing their new positional power (Hitt, Black, and Porter, 2005), and 6) managing up and down, as well as out (both in the agency and the community) (Austin, 1981, 1988, 2002).

While this model depicts a linear framework, new managers often learn to “become” and “act” as managers simultaneously by thriving in one area and continuing to construct a managerial identity in another. New managers find themselves *Thriving* as they begin to move away from crisis management toward managerial leadership, marked by comfort and competence in planning ahead while effectively managing the present. In order to thrive as leaders in human service organizations new managers are called upon to engage in the following managerial roles: 1) analytic roles that include leveraging resources, managing resources, creating and influencing policy, and evaluating outcomes, 2) leadership roles that include boundary spanning, future planning, aligning process and structure, team building and management, and coalition building, and 3) interactional roles that include facilitating, communicating, advocating, and supervising (Austin & Kruzich, 2004; Menefee & Thompson, 1994,). In order to maintain and renew their ability to thrive, managers need to engage in an ongoing process of self-reflection and continuous on-the-job learning (Hill, 2003; Hill, 2004; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2007; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008; Watson, 2001).

In order to explore the application of the concepts underlying identity formation and managerial roles that are highlighted in the conceptual framework (e.g. emerging, becoming, acting, and thriving), a case vignette is noted in the next section to highlight the experiences of twenty-seven managers who participated in a managerial leadership development program for middle and senior managers in human service organizations located in the San Francisco Bay Area (Austin, et al., 2010).

CASE VIGNETTE

Emerging

Despite the fact that many of the training program participants had been in managerial positions for over five years, they had not yet acquired the time and/or support to engage in focused reflection on their identities and managerial roles. As noted in Figure 3, the importance of assessing the fit between a managerial role and a future manager's existing knowledge, attitudes, skills, and interests (prior to movement into a managerial role) is a key element in the *Emerging* stage. The responsibility for such an assessment rests with the future manager as well as the organization (Gaynor, 2004; Hill, 2003; McCall & Hollenbeck, 2008). While the training participants had been promoted to managerial positions prior to the training program, it became clear that they were not comfortable in the role, despite the fact that they were selected for the training based on their motivation, learning readiness, natural talent, and self-starting initiative.

The clash in expectations between those who had done the promoting and those who were promoted was evident in the training goals identified by agency directors and program participants. The primary training goals identified by agency directors included: 1) expanding the professional identities of participants to include leadership roles within their organizations, 2) helping participants build upon their personal identity and interpersonal skills in order to manage staff and develop the ability to step in and out of appropriate managerial roles, and 3) developing the perspectives needed to promote systems management (e.g. financial, information and human resources). The array of training goals identified by the participants included improving work/life balance, increasing their managerial competence, developing confidence and capacity in leadership roles needed to address organizational challenges, developing time management and prioritization skills, acquiring the tools to manage resources while maintaining staff morale, and increasing their capacity to look and plan ahead while managing day-to-day issues and commitments. While the training program sought to address the goals of the agency directors and the program participants, it was clear that the learning needs of the participants needed to be given priority despite the wide range of themes calling for attention. It became necessary to revisit the area of managerial identity despite the years of experience acquired by the participants. It also became apparent that making the shift from developing credibility with clients to developing credibility with staff was the foundation for exploring managerial identity formation. Through the use of a self-shadowing exercise participants indicated that they were not always comfortable in their management role. By monitoring/recording their use of time for various activities on a typical day, participants were able to see how they spent their time, especially in the areas of crisis management and counseling with staff. Participants found themselves re-creating client experiences with their staff such as devoting extensive amounts of time to counseling them. While this may seem like an effective strategy to develop credibility among staff, participants were able to identify the ways in which this approach made it difficult for them to then step into their managerial leadership roles when called upon to do so. These managers came to recognize the need to balance both support and confrontation when working with staff in order to manage effectively.

As participants admitted that they missed working with clients and had recreated their client experience in their approach to managing staff, they came to recognize their ambivalence about the managerial role. Although they liked the power and authority that came with managing, they found it difficult to be part of the administrative "hierarchy" and to make use of the related power and authority. Participants associated activities related to the organization's health (e.g. pitching the organization's mission to donors) as conflicting with their client-centered identity. As they recognized how this role conflict inhibited them from taking on organizational leadership responsibilities, they became more aware of the process of consciously stepping in and out of leadership roles while building upon their client-centered identities.

The self-shadowing exercise also helped participants to focus on the other roles involved in organizational leadership (the fundraiser, the financial manager, the public speaker, the human resource manager, the staff motivator and the program evaluator), and assess the barriers they faced when new roles conflicted with the identity that they had formed as human service workers. It helped them recognize the strain that they experienced from continuing to resist various aspects of the manager's role. For example, a participant asked one of the instructors who was a veteran executive director how she handled the demands of "dressing-up, putting on heels and going to a cocktail party" to raise funds? With disbelief etched across her face she asked, "Do you like it? How can you do it? Doesn't that put you in conflict with who you are and what you believe about serving poor people?"

Becoming

Participants began to experiment with the practice of stepping into and out of role during a group simulation exercise. This learning experience provided a perspective that helped participants realize that their values connected to delivering services did not need to be compromised by taking up a management role. The learning lab simulation helped participants further explored organizational roles that featured aspects of: 1) their current workplace, 2) their organization's relationship to the community, 3) the involvement of other stakeholders in human service work, 4) the ways of responding to the impact of systems and organizational structures on role, and 5) the perceptions of their role and how others perceived their role.

Throughout the exercise, the training facilitator sought to shift the group's focus from a "person in role" to an "organization in environment" perspective. For example, in the systems analysis component, one participant was able to move from seeing herself as a manager "under siege" to recognizing that a shift in funding priorities was placing her program in a favorable spotlight as innovators and direction-setters for new programs. She then linked this "organization in environment" perspective to the experiences of participants in the simulation exercise. By picturing themselves outside of their roles in their own organization, participants were better able to view their organizations with a big-picture lens.

As Hill (2003) indicates, it is a significant transition when a manager can shift from the perspective of an individual contributor to one who is responsible for the department/organization as a whole.

Acting

New managers in the Acting stage of development often struggle with balancing their personal and positional power, especially exercising their authority as a leader with the need for team autonomy. The training program participants realized that they had mixed feelings about their positional power. While they liked the increase in authority, they did not feel comfortable being part of a hierarchy and found it difficult to know how and when to use their power. The training simulation helped participants to expand their understanding of how groups generate role expectations and that it is through the use of personal power that one can choose to accept or reject particular roles and expectations.

Once a manager begins to make decisions and take action to serve the organization's mission and not just individual staff members, it is inevitable that that there will be a combination of positive and negative responses. This is the moment when a manager will have to give up the desire to be liked. Participants realized that as managers they needed to earn the respect of others in their new professional role since they cannot rely on peer camaraderie or old friendships to become effective managers. Participants noted their struggle in assuming managerial leadership roles when staff members hold negative attitudes about senior management. For example, one manager in the training program was called upon by senior management to communicate the decision about salary cuts to her staff and was met with negative responses, especially from a staff member who was also a long-time friend. Following her development of greater role clarity, this manager was able to engage in a conversation with the employee/friend as a way of developing stronger professional boundaries as well as preserving both their professional and personal relationships.

The discussions of personal identity and leadership roles helped to identify three major challenges confronting managers who seek to both manage and lead: 1) developing the capacity to carry the negative projections of staff members about the manager (often associated with creating and maintaining organizational boundaries) in a manner that does not damage the manager's self perception (e.g. when a manager must establish program standards that need to be consistently enforced despite the resistance staff), 2) developing a capacity to work with negative projections (not always being liked by staff) when assuming a managerial leadership role (e.g. delivering the news about salaries cuts), and 3) developing a capacity to work with these negative projections in order to build bridges/alliances within the organization by helping staff understand organizational realities while remaining open to hearing their perceptions.

Through the use of the simulation and subsequent group and individual coaching, participants came to realize that in order to engage in effective managerial leadership, they needed to understand the roles they play within their own organizations and the ways in which others perceive those roles. Program participants who benefited most from the program were those most willing to explore their occupational identity in relationship to the organizational roles of managing and leading.

Thriving

As highlighted in Figure 3, the "Personal Capacity" arrow runs through each of the stages in the framework, indicating the interaction between personal capacity (i.e. for self reflection, coping with stress and emotion, and understanding personal style) and the transition into the manager role. By learning how to adapt their managerial leadership styles, participants found that they could increase their capacities to maintain boundaries and develop professional relationships. Participants recognized the need to allocate additional on-the-job time for reflection and identified the following outcomes from their experience in the training program: 1) increased self-confidence in assuming a leadership role, especially in groups, 2) greater willingness to step outside of their comfort zone, 3) increased ability to depersonalize experiences related to the managerial role, and 4) expanded capacities in achieving a healthier work/life balance.

Participants also engaged in facilitated group and individual coaching that created a safe space for feedback and reflection needed for participants to engage in honest and candid self-assessment. Through peer learning and sharing, managers came to understand: 1) the many roles they take on in their organizations; 2) the roles that complement and conflict with their own sense of identity; and 3) the different ways to pull from and, at times, compensate for certain aspects of their identity in order to assume the managerial role needed to improve their leadership within the organization. For example, one of the participants, who initially identified with her staff in rebellion against the existing organizational structures ultimately came to build upon the existing organizational structure in order to make dramatic changes in her department.

While this act increased her status as a leader, the participant also had to revisit aspects of her former managerial identity (that of a manager allied with her staff) and renew the relationships she had developed in her old role within a new set of boundaries. The clarity about this process and the willingness to find support both within the organization and from outside coaches reflected her beginning efforts to maintain the managerial role with less strain than she had experienced in the past. Two years later, this manager remains at her organization, clearly thriving in role. She has restructured her department and gained greater responsibility within the organization. She was able to reflect on her experience, recognize what she has learned, assess how far she has come, and demonstrate the capacity to articulate and share her experiences with others.

DISCUSSION

The experiences of participants in the managerial leadership training program described above illustrate the dynamics of role transition with in the framework of becoming a manager as outlined in Figure 3. The framework identifies key steps in establishing the organizational role identity of a manager.

The evidence presented in the case vignette suggests that nonprofit managers (similar to their counterparts in the for-profit sector) must deal with an array of challenges when stepping into the role of a manager. What is not addressed in the literature, however, is the relationship between one's personal identity and managerial role identity as well as the ultimate integration of both identities. This is a significant gap because those who work within nonprofit organizations have often chosen their career paths based on a personal value system around which they have formed their personal identities. When they step into a managerial position and join the hierarchy of the organization, those personal values are often challenged (e.g. the manager who had trouble going to the cocktail party to raise money, or the manager who so easily slipped into leading her staff in a rebellion against the top management of her nonprofit). Some nonprofit managers must exert continuous effort to hold their personal identity in tact as they utilize their authority and leverage power in their managerial roles and this effort may contribute to a high rate of burnout. In contrast, new for-profit managers may "fail" in their role as managers but do not tend to burn out. However, in the case of the nonprofit manager, it is highly likely that the clash between personal identity and role identity makes a significant contribution to burnout. Clearly, more research is needed on this relationship.

Given the potential for tension between personal and role identities, management training programs for practicing managers need to acknowledge the loss of a reference group that supports personal identity when making the transition to a managerial role. In addition, peer feedback within educational programs can help to develop a new reference group to explore the tension between previous and current roles. While the shift from technical or clinical mastery to generalist management practice is a central feature of assuming managerial roles, it is important to recognize situations when technical mastery remains relevant (e.g. providing clinical supervision). Finally, while managerial style is an important ingredient in making the transition from technical to generalist practice, it needs to be expanded to include: 1) strategies for developing leadership styles, and 2) the skills needed to assess the fit between leadership style and organizational culture and mission.

From this analysis, it is clear that more research is needed in the area of nonprofit managerial leadership, especially since most of the research focuses on the for-profit sector. Additional research in the nonprofit sector is necessary in order to: 1) identify the managerial experiences that are unique to nonprofit human service agencies, as well as those that are similar to the findings related to the for-profit experience, 2) identify the nature of both career burnout and advancement among middle managers, 3) identify and evaluate training models that address the development of a managerial identity, 4) identify strategies to help managers make the transition from reactive crisis management to proactive leadership in nonprofit human service organizations, and 5) build upon the current research on leadership identify formation in order to identify the critical elements in making the transition from becoming a manager to becoming a leaders in human service organizations.

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Figure 1: Developing a Sense of Self in the Transition from Specialist to Generalist

I. Assessing One's Emotional Intelligence

- Acquiring the additional human relations skills within the context of adult learning styles to effectively supervise others (Patton & Pratt, 2002) using Goleman's (2002) five domains of emotional intelligence: 1) knowing one's emotions, 2) managing emotions, 3) motivating oneself, 4) recognizing emotions in others, and 5) handling relationships

II. Assessing One's Sense of Vulnerability and Isolation

- Identifying and addressing one's sense of vulnerability as new managers as well as identifying and building on one's strengths (Fleming, 2008) in order to acquire the five major qualities that are critical in developing a managerial style: 1) self-confidence, 2) a willingness to accept responsibility, 3) patience, 4) empathy, and 5) an ability to live with imperfect solutions (Hill, 2003).
- Dealing with a sense of isolation and the loss of their former specialist status (e.g., the technical challenge, the explicit goals, the clear standards of comparison, and the regular recognition) (Hill, 2003), new managers need: 1) a new *reference group* by which to identify norms, values, and standards for success (Barnes, 1981), and 2) a way to re-conceptualize their past achievements and discover new ways to measure their contributions to the organization (e.g. informal peer feedback) (Hill, 2003).

III. Utilizing the Perceptions of Others in the Assessment Process

- Experiencing the threat of failure, often for the first time can heighten the stress and loss of control associated with the transition (e.g. psychological and/or physical symptoms) combined with a reluctance to discuss the emotional impact leading to feelings of being overwhelmed, trapped in the present, and often unable to plan ahead (Hill, 2003). Heightened by the pace and type of work, new abilities are needed quickly shift priorities, accept imperfection, deal with ignorance, manage contradictions, negotiate conflicts, manage risk, put egos on the line, and come to terms with the power they hold (Hill, 2003).
- Given the new manager's reluctance to ask for support or guidance, current bosses are rarely seen as resources based on a fear of being penalized if insecurities, mistakes, or challenges are disclosed (Hill, 2003, 2007). The resources needed to maintain a work-life balance and time for self-care can be found in executive coaching (Koonce, 2008).

Figure 2: Managing Role Transitions in the Transition from Specialist to Generalist

I. Seeking Role Clarity

- New managerial role needs to be defined, as well as "clarified," "communicated," and "understood" throughout the organization, especially for former peers or when replacing a poorly performing manager (Cohen, 2005; Fleming, 2008).
- Increased clarity about roles and responsibilities relate to: 1) the purpose of the work group, 2) upper management's expectations of the group, 3) the group's competencies, 4) the level of expected inter-organizational collaboration, 5) expectations for accountability and responsibility, 6) budgetary parameters, 7) organizational philosophy, 8) protocols for formal communication, 9) opportunities for training and ongoing learning, and 10) limits of formal authority (Gaynor, 2004).
- Discrepancies between the expectations of the constituencies and those of a new manager requires negotiating relationships with superiors, peers, or external stakeholders, especially the reliance of subordinates on the support of their manager and the reliance of senior managers on the new manager's ability to protect the organization and demonstrate leadership by building relationships, communicating effectively, motivating and gaining commitment from others (e.g. managing people, not tasks) (Hill, 2003).

II. Managing Ambiguity

- As new managers gain role clarity, they need to: "Embrace individual differences, while embracing a collective identity and goals; they must foster support and at the same time foster confrontation; they need to focus on performance, while focusing on learning and development; and they try to balance managerial authority with relying on their team members' discretion and autonomy." (Hill, 2003, p. 297).
- By demonstrating comfort with role ambiguity, new managers need the ability to make decisions about difficult trade-offs, a capacity to look ahead while managing the present, and a commitment to people, not just the work itself (Hill, 2003).
- In recognizing network building responsibilities, new managers can become overwhelmed and stressed by: 1) their own uncertainty about how to simultaneously develop relationships with subordinates, peers, superiors, and external stakeholders, and 2) their place on the bottom rungs of the management hierarchy (e.g dealing with office politics as well as external relations) (Hill, 2007).

III. Managing Down and Managing Up

- Demonstrating the ability to delegate responsibility, authority, and accountability by learning how to manage the needs of a group (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2003) in order to utilize its collective strength and sense of empowerment in order for teams to exercise their own authority to make decisions that reflect a commitment to team goals (Fleming, 2008; Hill, 2004; Hill, 2007).
- Demonstrating the capacity to manage up as active change initiators, displaying the capacities to generate ideas *and* develop the skills to implement those ideas using the following change management principles: 1) recognize need, 2) establish goals, 3) diagnosis, 4) selection of change technique, 5) planning for implementation, 6)

implementation, and 7) evaluation and action (Watson, 2001; Hill, 2007; Fleming, 2008).

IV. Balancing Managing with Leading

- Developing leadership strategies beyond the use of formal authority (e.g. use of expert power over positional power) relies on building inter-dependent relationships based on trust at the team and organizational levels in order to develop the influence needed to get things done (Hill, 2007)
- Establishing credibility based on the perceptions of others regarding motives, character, competence, and the ability of a manager to deliver the right thing at the right time calls for the capacity to control one's response to criticism by relinquishing the need to know everything, refrain from interpreting disagreement with a subordinate as a challenge to their authority, develop "thick-skin" and deliver both positive and negative news effectively (e.g. differentiating between being *respected* and being *liked* and between *trust* in the professional role and fostering *friendship*) (Hill, 2003; Crampton, Hodge, & Mishra, 1998)

Figure 1 The Transition From Direct Service to Management