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Historical Study of The Highlander Method: Honing Leadership for Social Justice

A dissertation
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

by
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May 2005

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Keywords: Leadership, Highlander, Civil Rights, Charismatic, Residency, Citizenship
Schools, Social Justice

ABSTRACT

Historical Study of The Highlander Method: Honing Leadership for Social Justice

by

Joyce Duncan

Waging war against economic, political and social inequity, Highlander, founded in 1932 in Monteagle, Tennessee, near Chattanooga, served as a community-training center for southern industrial labor and farmers' unions and as a major gathering place for black and white civil rights activists, even in those days when such activity was illegal.

Teachers at Highlander believed in the capacity of people to educate and to govern themselves. Humanitarians or communitarians, those working at Highlander were concerned with the interrelated systems of class and race, which, they felt, consistently enabled a small segment of the population to exploit, dominate and oppress others.

This work explores whether or not there was a factor in the Highlander pedagogy that encouraged activist involvement and delves into participant assessment of Myles Horton as a charismatic leader. Although a variety of sources mention Highlander School or Myles Horton, little material exists that examines the relationship, if any, between the pedagogy or methodology used at Highlander and the leadership that emerged from the workshops. This study endeavors to fill that gap by using historical records, interviews of participants and anecdotal evidence to reveal a connection between Highlander, activism and charismatic leadership.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to the staff of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at East Tennessee State University, specifically my committee, Dr. Louise MacKay, Dr. Nancy Dishner and Dr. Terry Tollefson, and to my cognate committee member, Dr. Dorothy Drinkard-Hawkshawe, who gave me grounding in Civil Rights, and to Teresa Brooks-Taylor, Auditor, and Jerry Nave, Peer Reviewer.

Special thanks goes to Dr. Jack Higgs, who read it when he did not have to, Guy and Candie Carawan and the staff of Highlander Research and Education Center, without whom this project could not have been completed, and the ETSU Cohort, my buddies, who “knew I could do it.”

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“A little rebellion now and then is a good thing ...”
... Thomas Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, January 30, 1787

Overview

The history of Highlander Folk School, renamed Highlander Research and Education Center, is inseparable in many ways from the history of Appalachia and the South. As a major catalyst for social change since the school’s founding in 1932, Highlander has never been the object of passive criticism or of lackluster praise. According to Glen (1989), “The name Highlander Folk School has rarely evoked a neutral response, even among Southerners who have heard of it only vaguely” (p. 127). Although there were chrysalis periods of quiet reflection between movements, Highlander was never far from the core of action whenever the underserved and oppressed peoples of the South cried out for aid.

Waging war against economic, political and social inequity, Highlander, founded in 1932 in Monteagle, Tennessee, near Chattanooga, served as a community-training center for southern industrial labor and farmers’ unions and as a major gathering place for black and white civil rights activists, even in those days when such activity was illegal. Initially chartered by Myles Horton, Jim Dombrowki and Don West, Highlander’s “central goal was to facilitate the empowerment of oppressed people at the bottom of society, so that they could wage the kind of struggle required for America to become a real democracy” (Morris, 1991, p. 2). Teachers at Highlander believed in the

capacity of people to educate and to govern themselves. Humanitarians or communitarians, those working at Highlander were concerned with the interrelated systems of class and race, which, they felt, consistently enabled a small segment of the population to exploit, dominate and oppress others.

Often under the guise of a lecture on a current topic of interest, the Folk School initiated workshops and invited persons who were previously identified as having the “right stuff” to become community leaders. Much to the chagrin of some of those participants, they discovered that they were often the featured speakers because staff members refused to impose their own values on a gathering. Highlander founders believed “education is what happens to the other person, not what comes out of the mouth of the educator” (Horton, M., 1990, pg. 131).

According to the Highlander Mission Statement, issued in November 1987, “The Highlander Center works with people struggling against oppression, supporting their effort to take collective action to shape their own destiny. It seeks to create educational experiences that empower people to take democratic leadership toward fundamental change” (Highlander Research and Education Center, 2004, np). It is an educational method that does not offer advice or present prepackaged solutions; it is a viable, growing, mutating, transformative entity that draws sustenance from the perplexities produced by society. Facilitators encourage the conversation to drift toward the everyday problems with which people live. Eventually, this became the Horton Method – the progeny of Highlander’s founder Myles Horton – to bring in community folk, ostensibly to hear discussion on a given topic, and then to let the conversation control the direction of the dialogue. The Mission Statement explained:

We bring people together to learn from each other. By sharing experience, we realize that we are not alone. We face common problems

caused by injustice. Together we develop the resources for collective action. By connecting communities and groups regionally, we are working to change unjust structures and to build a genuine and economic democracy (Highlander Resource and Education Center, 2004, np).

Although Highlander Folk School has been poked, prodded, rebuked, glorified, threatened, praised, censured, deified and denounced in literature, the media and the courts, little concrete evidence has been presented on whether or not the pedagogy used during the Highlander workshops truly led to activism or to sustainable change. This research is a historical qualitative study of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee and its role in motivating grassroots leadership, particularly during the era of Civil Rights.

Statement of the Problem

Couched in a historical framework, this research seeks the factors, if any, in the Highlander pedagogy that encouraged grassroots activist leadership and examines participant assessment of Myles Horton as a charismatic leader.

Research Questions

The following research questions control this study:

1. Did the pedagogy/methodology used at Highlander Folk School and/or Highlander Research and Education Center produce and/or tailor grassroots leadership and activism during the Civil Rights era?
2. Was Myles Horton a transformational and/or charismatic leader and, if so, does it take his brand of charisma to initiate and sustain this type of pedagogy?

Significance of the Study

Although a variety of sources mention Highlander School or Myles Horton and several works delineate the checkered history of the institution, little material exists that examines the relationship, if any, between the pedagogy or methodology used at Highlander and the leadership that emerged from the workshops. This study endeavors to fill that gap by investigating the connections among Horton, the man, the Highlander teaching method and the empowerment of grassroots leaders.

Limitations

Many of the limitations of the study were imposed by the focus of the work. When one undertakes a historical qualitative study, she is often confronted with a dearth of respondents due to the passage of time. A majority of those who were involved in Highlander activities during the Civil Rights Era of the 1950s and 1960s have died or have aged; thus, their memories of the events may be impaired or are certainly not as acute as they were once. However, “[i]n oral history sources, a researcher can find abundant evidence of the local genesis of the civil rights movement, the radicalism of the grass-roots rural base, and the changes in individual and collective consciousness that movement participation produced” (Rogers, September 1988, p. 568). Unfortunately, the primary person sought for interviews, Rosa Parks, was not well enough to participate in the research. Therefore, some of the revelatory information had to be unearthed in archival materials and secondary research.

The second limitation occurred in the attempt to prevent bias. Many of the Highlander detractors were either deceased or had left the area and were, thus,

unavailable for interviews; others refused participation. Consequently, the majority of the information regarding those who were not in agreement with Highlander's methodology was derived from archival records, including newspaper articles, and secondary sources.

Delimitations

The study is delimited by focusing on only one historical period in the timeline of Highlander Folk School. Earlier and later periods are excluded because the focus of the work is on the two decades in American history marked by the Civil Rights Movement.

Definitions

Any time one undertakes an explanation of a concept, it is imperative to have a common understanding of terminology used within that concept. Thus, for the purpose of this work, the following definitions will apply.

Critical or radical pedagogy is applying first person experience to the process of learning. According to Dewey (1938), in the more traditional pedagogical approach,

There was no demand that the teacher should become intimately acquainted with the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc., in order to utilize them as educational resources. [On the other hand, a] system of education based upon the necessary connection of education with experience must, on the contrary, if faithful to its principle, take these things constantly into account (p. 40).

Harvard professor Coles (1989) added, "The moral contradictions and inconsistencies in our personal lives more than resonate with those in our social order, our nation's politics, our culture" (p. 203). Current critical pedagogical models were

frequently employed in internships or service-learning courses or, more importantly for the purpose of this research, in programs catering to non-traditional students, most often adult students or underserved minorities, where “stories” are used as pedagogy. Knowles (1980) indicated that experience was integral to adult learning in his theory of andragogy and Kolb (1984) expounded that concrete experiences led to reflection and active experimentation. An adult learner was demographically defined as someone older than 21, although some say 25, who participated in adult education as a voluntary activity (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

According to Burns (2003), when discussing transformational leadership,

We must distinguish ... between the verbs “change” and “transform,” using exact definition change is to substitute one thing for another, to give and take, to exchange places, to pass from one place to another. These are the kinds of changes I attribute to transactional leadership. But to transform something cuts much more profoundly. It is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance, a radical change in outward form or inner character ... change of the breadth and depth ... is fostered by transforming leadership (p. 24).

Transformational leadership was often equated with charismatic leadership. The term charisma or charismatic was frequently employed “to describe someone who is flamboyant, who is a powerful speaker, and who can persuade others of the importance of his or her message” (Bryman, 1992, p. 22). Conger and Kanungo (1988) suggested that the primary indicator of charismatic leaders was their attempt to change the status quo. According to Owens (2001), “transforming leaders engage the aspirations of followers, tap their inner motivations, energize their mental and emotional resources, and involve them enthusiastically in the work to be done” (p. 245). Transformational educators tend to work with adult students on a grassroots, or community-based, level to

produce some type of activism, leading to empowerment and social justice. Burns (2003) stated, “Instead of exercising power over people, transforming leaders champion and inspire followers” (p. 26). Social justice afforded myriad definitions, encompassing equality of treatment for all human life and indicating a need for change. In social justice, “The belief that one should be actively involved in community change also rests on a vision of the need for change” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 158).

Procedures

This work employs the emergent research design of qualitative exploration. Respondents were selected from those still living who took part in Highlander workshops during the period from 1950 to 1970 and others who had first-hand contact with Highlander, Myles Horton or programs engineered through Highlander, either through proximity or relationship. As known respondents were contacted, they recommended others whom they indicated would add to this project. Initially, all respondents were contacted by letter and/or e-mail and asked if they were willing to participate. Each was presented with the concept behind the research and a copy of the questions to be asked. The majority was interviewed face-to-face to determine reaction cues, such as facial expressions and body language, in addition to verbal responses. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. Each respondent was asked to reply to the following questions, with allowances for additions he or she wished to divulge.

1. What does leadership mean to you? Do you consider yourself a leader?
How were your leadership skills developed?

2. How did you hear about Highlander Folk School? What did you expect to find there? Did those thoughts prove to be true?
3. What does the term charismatic leader mean to you? How would you describe the leadership style of Myles Horton?
4. Tell me about the Highlander teaching method. How would you describe its strengths and weaknesses?
5. Describe the role Highlander played in the Civil Rights Movement.
6. How did your time at Highlander influence your views?

A survey of Civil Rights era participants was intended but a list of names and addresses was unavailable. Interviews were compared and triangulated with archival materials, including correspondence, documents, newspaper articles, and government files, as well as secondary sources. Archival materials were obtained from the East Tennessee State University Archives of Appalachia, the University of Tennessee Archives, the Nashville Public Library, Tennessee State Archives, the Highlander Research and Education Center library and archives, and past issues of the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* and the *Nashville Tennessean*.

Organization

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the history of Highlander and its programs, charismatic leadership, transformational education, the motivating factors of Myles Horton and the Civil Rights Movement. Chapter 3 reveals the methodology behind the study, including the rationale for a qualitative dissertation. Chapter 4 offers the interview profiles, pertinent demographics of the respondents, the questionnaire results and materials garnered from archival investigation. The chapter also analyzes the responses

from both the face-to-face interviews and the questionnaire as related to the research questions. Chapter 5 presents the themes that emerged from the interviews as well as the implications of those responses. Additionally, recommendations for further study are included.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Leadership is really focused, being very much involved in major issues and not being distracted from them” ... Scott Bates, 2005

Introduction

Theories abound on leadership traits, styles and efficacy. Basically, “Leaders are change agents engaged in furthering the needs, wants, and goals of leaders and followers alike” (Johnson, 2001, p. 6). However, in most organizations, leaders were considered those who managed the corporation, while issuing orders to others involved in the business (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). Gardner (1999) added that leaders are skilled communicators, telling effective stories and understanding the needs of others. “They help audiences understand their own life situations, clarify their goals, and feel engaged in a meaningful quest” (Gardner, p. 128). Attributed to Major General William A. Cohen, a well-known quote revealed, “Great leaders are made, not born” (“The eight universal laws of leadership,” 1999, p. 8), but what types of leaders empowered others to become leaders themselves? Furthermore, what types of leaders illustrated the concept of shared power? And was this type of leadership exhibited at Highlander Folk School?

Transformational and Charismatic Leaders

“Leadership is typically defined in terms of a process of social influence whereby a leader steers members of a group towards a goal” (Bryman, 1992, p. 2). In transformational and charismatic leadership, that quality of steering became the vital part

of the definition and, in charismatic leadership, was frequently interpreted as manipulative. Bryman (1992) contended “the bearer of charisma seizes the task for which he is destined and demands that others obey and follow him by virtue of his mission” (p. 24). Originating in religion, *charismata* implied one who had been blessed with the gift of grace, bestowed by God; however, “a leader cannot be said to be charismatic unless his or her claim to charisma has been validated by others [who elect to follow that leadership]” (Bryman, p. 50).

According to Johnson (2001), “Transformational leaders ... focus on terminal values such as liberty, equality, and justice. They want to achieve significant goals and, in the process, help followers move into leadership roles” (p. 123). Further, [t]ransformation, after all, is neither authentic nor lasting until an honest admission of lingering injustices cleanses our practice [teaching]” (Quinnan, 1997, p. 5). In addition, transformational leaders were charismatic and offered inspiration to those they led (Johnson, p. 124). Owens (2001) affirmed, “transforming leaders engage the aspirations of followers, tap their inner motivations, energize their mental and emotional resources, and involve them enthusiastically in the work to be done” (p. 245). Thus, transformational leaders were visionary and “consumed with certain ideals and goals” (Church, Waclawski, & Burke, 1996, p. 3). That quality of vision illustrated the defining quality in both transformational and charismatic leadership.

Lashway (1995) noted that transformational leaders or teachers encouraged the involvement of all employees or students in decision-making or initiating programs or plans, thus, created shared power or empowerment. A transformational leader, therefore, could be equated with a servant leader, a concept posited by Greenleaf (1977) who noted,

“servant-leaders may stand alone, largely without the support of their culture, as a saving remnant of those who care for both persons and institutions, and who are determined to make their caring count” (p. 342). Interestingly, “servant leadership and charismatic leadership share common biblical roots” (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002, Fall, p. 62).

Charismatic leaders had been closely equated with transformational leaders. Nahavandi (1997) contended that charismatic leaders shared the following characteristics: 1) they demonstrated self-confidence in their own abilities; 2) they envisioned ways to do things better; 3) they possessed well developed communication skills with the ability to explain their vision; 4) they were energetic, enthusiastic and hard working; 5) they were committed and convinced about the correctness of their ideas; and 6) they served as role models to their followers. If one were truly a charismatic leader, “Their followers want to identify with them and to emulate them; they develop intense feelings about them, and above all they have unrelenting trust and confidence in them” (Gibson, Hannon, & Blackwell, 1998, p. 13). Furthermore, according to Gibson *et al.* (1998), charismatic leadership was often propelled by a situation, Bryman (1992) agreed that charismatic leaders arose in times of distress, while House (1992) added, “charisma matters most in startups, turnarounds, or whenever a business (or team) is going through rapid, unpredictable change” (p. 5).

On the other hand, the problems addressed by those leaders may have originated within the vision of charismatic leaders themselves; they may “gain a following by fitting their message or mission to the situation at hand ... they may draw attention to critical situations of which subsequent followers were only dimly aware at the outset (Bryman, 1992, p. 55). Harari (1991) concurred that, “Leadership means creating change, even

when colleagues within the organization don't quite see the need for it" (p. 63). On the other hand, Ross and Offermann (1997) cautioned that "[a]nother intriguing possibility is that transformational [and charismatic] leaders do not develop high follower performance but, rather, attract it" (p. 1092). This study investigated whether that phenomenon might have been evidenced at Highlander as a consequence of the heightened awareness of lack of social justice during the Civil Rights Movement. Keddy (2001) illustrated, "When leaders tap into their anger, they are also rediscovering their dignity. There is an intimate relationship between dignity and righteous anger. People who have a deep awareness of their own dignity are those with the greatest anger at injustice" (p. 49). Bryman (1992) added "eruptions of charisma are frequently associated with periods of social crisis" (p. 54). He asserted that the trigger for these eruptions could be social upheaval, economic distress or psychic dissonance. Interestingly, during the civil rights era, all three of these factors were in play.

Historical Context

In order to set the stage for this study, Highlander, its leaders and its methodology needed a historical context. To understand why, how and if the pedagogy worked, the styles employed in the Highlander workshops as well as the ideology behind the concept created by Highlander founder, Myles Horton, have been examined. Research indicated these ingredients were inseparable and, in many ways, provided the stock from which the civil rights movement was thickened.

Founded in 1932 by Myles Horton, Jim Dombrowki and Don West, Highlander Folk School sat atop a high plateau in Grundy County, halfway between Monteagle and

Tracey City, Tennessee. At the time Grundy County was “one of the poorest counties in the entire United States. It [was] a county whose economic existence virtually depended upon one industry ... [depleted coal mines]” (Clark, S., 1975, p. 123). The property was deeded to Highlander’s founders by Dr. Lilian Johnson, the daughter of a wealthy banker and the holder of a doctorate in history from Cornell University, who had retired to the county decades earlier to aid the people in economic and educational revival. According to S. Clark (1975), the local population – virtually homogeneous, economically exhausted, rural and Caucasian – was somewhat suspicious of Dr. Johnson because she was an outsider, educated and wealthy, but she was also appreciated for bringing in the first county agent, starting the first county fair, routing some of the local economic malaise and trying to establish a grape culture. The only monument to the latter endeavor is a shuttered and bolted winery, which currently decorates a hillside on the outskirts of modern Monteagle.

Once the property was officially in the hands of the educators, Horton and West decided on a name which derived from the people, the place, and the school’s purpose. In the 1930’s, Highland was the popular name for Appalachia. A Highlander was an Appalachian, and, for Horton, folk was a term that had both a positive anthropological and a political meaning. (Adams, 1972, November, pp. 502-503)

Almost from the beginning, Highlander’s activities were racially integrated and by the 1940s, several members of the Highlander Executive Council were African American, including Lewis Jones, a sociology professor from Fisk University in Nashville, who represented the American Federation of Teachers. As the only permanent black resident of Grundy County, Highlander Director of Education, S. Clark (1975) noted, “I know that a great many of the people of the community did not approve of our efforts, particularly

of our policy of integrating our students in workshop courses, but I am confident they did not personally dislike us” (p. 127).

Incorporating several hundred acres of land and six or so buildings, including the stone Harry Lasker Library, which contained over 3,000 volumes (Brinkley, 2000), the school became a magnet for black ministers, funeral home directors, beauticians, independent farmers and others in self-employed professions, where they could not be threatened with dismissal by an employer for their civil rights activities. In fact, “Few significant southern civil rights activists in the 1940s and 1950s did not have some contact with Highlander” (Payne, 1998, p. 102). Despite the edict of the Deep South and the State of Tennessee, Highlander compulsively ignored the laws against segregation, inviting whomever they wished to attend the workshops. Even after the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, private schools were required to maintain segregated facilities. Myles Horton said he was trying to teach people to perceive things differently; “the law and order people don’t always understand but they can be educated” (McCarthy, 1981).

Highlander Pedagogy

In order to attend a Highlander workshop, persons were identified as those having leadership potential and selected to receive an invitation, although drop-ins were often permitted to join the group. The majority was “recruited by former participants who, because they were enthusiastic about what they had gained from the workshop experience, encouraged others who might share the local leadership responsibilities” (Horton, A., 1989, p. 204). The invitation was simply worded and encompassed one sheet

of paper, which indicated the topic of the planned workshop and the dates of its occurrence. Those who were invited were always adult residents, living in the South. On average, individual workshop attendance was between 40 and 50 individuals, many of them on scholarship to cover the \$50.00 per week cost of housing and food. According to S. Clark (1975), the groups wasted little time on preliminaries, had no textbooks and no definite pattern of discussion. “The range of formal learning among ... participants is extensive, from Ph.D.’s [sic] with strings of other degrees after their names to those who cannot read or write” (Clark, S., p. 183). Yet, those with pedigreed credentials were not considered more credible than those who were illiterate; they worked together toward a final purpose, which was to formulate an action plan to address the dilemmas they had brought to the table. “In spite of the diversity of problems presented and the different kinds of people composing the typical Highlander workshop, a rapport is quickly evidenced, a unity demonstrated. Nowhere else, I truly believe, does one find democracy more in action” (Clark, S., p. 185).

According to M. Clark (1978), five central concepts and emphases could be identified as providing the direction for Highlander:

1. believing in democratic education and decision-making
2. working with groups or with individuals who are trying to build groups
3. assuming that political and economic conflict is an inevitable part of our society
4. emphasizing involving all participants in workshop discussions; and
5. using short-term residential workshops as a means of helping people solve their problems.

Placed in a circle, so no one person would have the unilateral power of sitting at the head of the table, workshop participants were asked to voice their opinions, which were listened to, in many cases, for the first time. The concept of student voice was central to the Highlander method, acknowledging that “an individual’s voice reflects and interacts with community voices” (Kordalewski, 1999, p. 3). In other words, the individuals who attended Highlander workshops mirrored the problems that had been raised by others in their individual communities and reflected the solutions gained from the workshops back to their collective predicament. Using dialogic pedagogy, the Highlander facilitators encouraged those in attendance to address the issues from their own experience, believing that “any emancipatory curriculum must emphasize student experience” (McLaren, 1989, p. 226). This “problem-posing approach views human beings, knowledge, and society as unfinished products in history, where various forces are still contending” (Shor, 1992, p.35).

Although many participants were reticent to take part in the discussions at the outset of the sessions, it did not take long for them to realize that they were being validated and that even though they might not have all the answers, they certainly had examples worthy of sharing. “At the heart of Highlander’s programs was a belief in the power of education to change society” (Glen, 1996, p. 2). This belief was certainly consistent with the definition of transformational and/or charismatic leadership. According to Shor (1992), “education for empowerment is not something done by teachers to students for their own good but is something students codevelop for themselves, led by a critical and democratic teacher” (p. 20).

For some sessions, the Folk School brought in speakers to initiate or to facilitate workshop discussion, frequently those who had successfully implemented programs designed at previous Highlander sessions or occasionally an official from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), professors from The University of the South in nearby Sewanee or from Vanderbilt University in Nashville or national celebrities like Martin Luther King, Jr., Eleanor Roosevelt or Pete Seeger. Professional educators were not on the Highlander payroll, however, because that would have been contrary to the precept that the people must seek their own answers from their own experience, thus, not in keeping with critical pedagogy; in fact, Myles Horton stated that he thought his education might be a handicap but that he could overcome it (McCarthy, 1981). Thus, “[w]ith this kind of interactive approach to learning, every participant had the opportunity to function as both a learner and a teacher” (Horton, A., 1989, p. 206) and each had the opportunity of being the authority on his own community. Many who were incapable of thinking outside-the-box and who considered the apex of formal education as an expert who filled the void of the unlearned had trouble relating to the pedagogy and may have been later numbered among Highlander’s detractors. “Baffled by education without assignment or examination, without the learned doing the talking and the unlearned the listening, some critics have described Highlander’s residential workshops as anti-intellectual gatherings where the exchange of anecdote passes for education” (Adams, 1972, November, p. 520).

Historically, Highlander played a role in supporting or nurturing the development of movements, rather than in initiating them. The primary reason that the Highlander method worked was that the institution was a shape-shifter, molding itself to fit the

grassroots issues of the day. Fischman and McLaren (2000) indicated this method could be called democratic, or radical, pedagogy and defined the term as factors that produced motivation for “teachers and students, schools and communities to deliberate and shape the choices they make with the overarching purpose of contributing to increased social justice, equality, and improvement in the quality of life for all constituencies within the larger society” (p. 168). Giroux (2001) reinforced that “radical pedagogical work proposes that education is a form of political intervention in the world and is capable of creating the possibilities for social transformation” (p. xxvii). Although the methodology could be classed as democratic socialism, the aim was not the overthrow of capitalism but the reform of an outgrowth of capitalism, which was used as a vehicle for social and economic marginalization.

It was the philosophical construct of the school that empowering a few to alter society would trickle-down to others with whom those few had contact. In the hopes of creating a tidal wave to wash over oppression, the Folk School gathered potential community “leaders together to share experiences and to develop techniques that would, in the ideal cases, allow them to return home and develop the leadership potential of others. The emphasis on developing others was crucial to Highlander’s conception of leadership” (Payne, 1995, p. 71). Thus, for the Highlander staff, the final exam was “that *praxis* (informed actions) must be guided by *phronesis* (the disposition to act truly and rightly)” (McLaren, 1989, p. 182); however, ultimately, “[o]ne’s diploma from [Highlander] was the action performed upon return to the local community” (Morris, 1984, p. 145), in other words, their willingness to accept the role of teacher-leader. According to Freire (1970), this *praxis* was the primary reason for education because

"(f)reedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion" (p. 31). At the conclusion of the sessions, participants were asked to commit to some action when they returned to their communities. "And having said it out loud, having people react to it, the commitment is much more important" (Kennedy, Fall 1981, p. 115).

Residency and Cultural Programs

Integral to the pedagogical style and part of the reason for Highlander's success was that the workshops were residency programs of at least one week and that a cultural component, primarily group singing and dancing, was an ingredient in the curriculum. Morris (1984) labeled the Highlander residency program as a "movement halfway house ... an established group or organization that is only partially integrated into the larger society because its participants are actively involved in efforts to bring about a desired change in society" (p. 139). Halfway houses were valuable to emerging movements because they aided in creating networks and organization that lead to sustainability (Morris, 1984) and this was evidenced through the residency program at Highlander. "Many visitors [including Rosa Parks and Esau Jenkins] testified that the experience of egalitarian living in an interracial situation had greater impact on them than the courses and the workshops" (Payne, 1995, p. 70). According to A. Horton (1989), Royce Pitkin, President of Goddard College, pointed out that when adults reside in relatively small groups, a considerable degree of intimacy develops fairly quickly and that informality creates an optimal setting for participation.

Because all groups attending the workshops, black and white, educated and uneducated, students or workers, lived together, sharing meals and chores, “almost from the outset it becomes routine and commonplace. As integration should be” (Clark, S., 1975, p. 185). A reporter once asked Myles Horton how he got black and white people to sit at a common table and share a meal. Horton told him it was really very simple: first, you prepared the food; second, you put it on the table; and third, you rang the bell (Brown, C. 1999). According to C. Brown, Septima Clark noted that “eventually it [Highlander] became known as the only place in the South where the races could ‘tea and pee’ together” (p. 7).

Throughout its history, music had been an integral part of the Highlander ritual. Zilphia Horton, Myles Horton’s first wife, was the person largely responsible for developing the cultural program at Highlander. Zilphia was an accomplished musician, having majored in music at the College of the Ozarks, and was a virtuoso on seven different instruments as well as having a commanding singing voice. Her father, an Arkansas mine owner, must have been somewhat chagrined when his daughter became interested in labor movement activism. Hearing of her organizing work in Arkansas, Myles Horton invited her to Highlander on scholarship in 1935; the two were married soon after and Zilphia became Director of Music at Highlander. Morris (1984) pointed out that music and dance were important as social levelers and relaxing agents before entering the workshops and Myles Horton believed that people “need something to cultivate the spirit and the soul” (Oldendorf, 1990, p. 173). Consequently, Zilphia “enhanced the cultural pluralism of the school by developing a curriculum which

incorporated and elevated the importance of folk music, dance, and drama” (Carter, Spring 1994, p. 4).

According to Langston (1990), “While women in civil rights movements have central roles in all of these strategies, their involvement in cultural programs and education has been pivotal” (p.145); however,

at no time ... was Zilphia taken from the margins and put at the center where her work could be explored as standing on its own. In many ways, in fact, the literature of music history acclaimed her work more than the studies of Highlander did. (Carter, Spring 1994, P. 5)

As a memorial to her contributions, the Tennessee State Archives currently catalogs a 38-page listing of Zilphia’s folk song collection .

Some contend that Zilphia Horton was directly responsible for what came to be the theme song of the Civil Rights Movement, “We Shall Overcome,” which gained its popularity and significance through workshops at Highlander. In the fall of 1945, Zilphia was in Charleston, South Carolina, when the Negro Food and Tobacco Union workers walked out, striking against the American Tobacco Company. The union workers on the picket lines were singing a combination of a pre-Civil War hymn, “No More Auction Block for Me,” and an early twentieth century black spiritual, “I’ll Overcome Someday,” written by Charles Tindley in 1900 (Jordan, 2005, p. 115). Although there are several theories of the song’s final version, the Highlander version was that Zilphia reworked the lyrics and retitled the tune “We Will Overcome.” Although it was used on the picket line in 1945, the hallmark song did not gain acceptance as the Civil Rights battle cry until the phrasing and tempo were reworked by folk singers Pete Seeger and Guy Carawan, a

protégée of Seeger and subsequent Highlander Director of Music, in a Highlander workshop. Seeger amended the title to “We Shall Overcome” (Cagin & Dray, 1988).

Following his appearance at the 25th Anniversary celebration at Highlander and after hearing Seeger croon the tune, Martin Luther King, Jr. kept humming “We Shall Overcome” and recalled “There’s something about that song that haunts you” (Garrow, 1986, p. 98). Eventually, the song became the civil rights “full fledged anthem that by the late 1950s had been adopted by both SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] and SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference]” (Brinkley, 2000, p.92). The adaptable lyrics and the “simple strains and dogged sincerity made the hymn suitable for crisis, mourning, and celebration alike” (Branch, 1988, p. 310). According to Halberstam (1998), “We Shall Overcome”

was religious and gentle ... it not only emboldened those who were setting out on this dangerous path, but it helped affect and bring in those on the sidelines, those watching television at home who had seen young blacks, immaculately behaved and dressed, beaten up by white thugs or cops, thereupon sing this haunting song. It was an important moment: the students now had their anthem. (p. 232)

During one of the raids on Highlander, the electric lines to the building were cut, leaving the people inside alone in the dark. The group involved in the workshop was composed of a teenage choir from a Montgomery, Alabama, church and one of the young women added “We are not afraid” to the song as the workshop attendees sat in the blackened void, awaiting their fate. According to Bledsoe (1969), “We Shall Overcome” became a “theme song for a whole subculture of adolescents who are more or less aware of the freedom movement ... but few of those who sing are aware of Highlander or their debt to

it” (p. 8). Myles Horton added that “no one song has had such a universal impact” (McCarthy, 1981).

Carter (Spring 1994) noted “[m]usic developed student leadership, communication skills, a positive self-image, and contributed to the sense of solidarity and pride in their heritage; it provided inspiration and sustained hope” (18). Further, Zilphia Horton was the key person in creating and stabilizing that “powerful bond among Highlander’s students, friends, and sympathizers” (Carter, p. 21).

Civil Rights Era

Highlander was organized around the notion of people helping people; in other words, “Highlander did not set out to equip its students to succeed in the existing social order but rather to use education as an instrument to challenge and repair that order” (Woodside, Fall 1990, p. 17). Modeled on Danish Folk Schools of the eighteenth century, a residential adult education program to aid Danish peasants exploited under feudalism, Highlander first ran workshops to train organizers for unions. Because those unionizing work places were integrated and because African Americans were often in the sub-strata of the oppressed work force, the early meetings brought together blacks and whites, despite the prevailing Jim Crow laws shackling Southern progress.

Thus, by 1953, the Highlander Folk School had considerable experience as a center for integrated residential programs. More than that, by its very existence as a viable educational institution with a growing constituency of southern Negro and white farmer, labor and community leader students and an Executive Council of Negro and white regional leaders, it represented a kind of microcosm of the democratic society which the South could become. (Horton, A., 1989, p. 198)

Not only were the races congregated in the same location at the Highlander workshops, they lived together, ate together and shared the same facilities. Highlander founders asserted they could not have segregated even if they wanted to because of insufficient space, a dearth of financial resources and one bathroom (Horton, M., 1990). According to S. Clark (1975), her initial reaction was that the “atmosphere of Highlander, where living on an integrated basis eliminated stereotypes, broke down traditional barriers, and developed leaders, would prove refreshing and immensely stimulating” (p. 120).

At the dawn of the 1950s, the organizers at Highlander voiced the belief that “racism presented the greatest obstacle to the kind of economic and political order they envisioned” (Glen, 1996, p. 3). In combating racism, “the Highlander staff didn’t approach it theoretically or intellectually, they just decided to get the people together and trust the solution would arise from them” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 98). According to African American journalist C. T. Rowan (1952), “only a few white Southerners, like those at Highlander, were willing to ‘go further’ than the ‘Southern liberals, the freedom-for-you-sometime-soon’ gradualists and to say that racial segregation was the ‘root and perpetrator of all the evils’ facing the modern South” (pp. 205-206).

Months before the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) landmark decision on school desegregation, the Highlander staff conducted workshops to prepare leaders, both black and white, for the events they prophesied would follow. According to Mezirow (1991), “The existence of this uncertain, transitional state [in this case, the fledgling civil rights movement] gives discourse a powerful new role: those who can name ‘what is’ in new ways and can convince others of their naming acquire power” (p. 3). During that

period and throughout the next fifteen years, civil rights leaders, such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Septima Clark, Ella Baker, James Lawson, Stokely Carmichael, Marion Barry, Bernard Lafayette, Diane Nash, Andrew Young, Bernice Robinson, Julian Bond, Fanny Lou Hamer and others, attended workshops at the controversial East Tennessee school. In other words, the workshop rolls read like the history of the movement itself. “The civil rights movement gave the Highlander program a clear-cut purpose that had been largely elusive since the end of World War II” (Glen, 1985, p. 420).

Highlander was best known for its work in empowering leaders who took part in the civil rights movement; in fact, “to a great extent the focus and direction of the staff’s work came to depend upon the civil rights movement” (Glen, 1996, p. 154). Bledsoe (1969) commented,

The critical dates in the early years of the Freedom Movement were 1954 [*Brown v. Board of Education*], 1955 [the Montgomery bus boycott], and 1960 [student sit-ins beginning in Greensboro, North Carolina]. Most of the South, conservative, liberal, and radical, was not ready for any of them. Highlander was ready for them all (p. 215).

As cited by McNeil and Squibb (1989), in an interview with *Sojourner* magazine, Myles Horton reflected, “we finally came to the conclusion that we couldn’t go any further in terms of economic, political, or cultural changes until we dealt head-on with this business of racism” (p. 301). The staff began to identify persons in Southern communities who could become grassroots leaders in the movement more than a year before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was implemented. The highlight of 1955 was a two-week workshop on public school desegregation attended by 50 teachers, union members,

college students and civic leaders. According to Glen (1996), Highlander worked with over 200 leaders in that year alone.

The primary targets for the early workshops were black barbers, beauticians and seamstresses because they were usually owners of their own businesses and, thus, were not subject to economic constraints placed on others by employers who would not approve of their “stirring up trouble.” One such person was Rosa Parks, who became – several weeks after a Highlander workshop – “the lightning rod for an assault on the system” (Wigginton, 1991, p. 55). In 1955, Myles Horton, a “fellow architect of Rosa Park’s rebellion” (McWhorter, 2001, p. 92), asked Southern white activist and inveterate Highlander supporter Virginia Foster Durr to recommend someone, preferably someone African American, from Montgomery who might be interested in a two-week workshop. Durr suggested Rosa Parks (Olsen, 2001). Brinkley (2000) stated that Parks wanted to make the trip but could not afford the \$15.00 bus ticket to Chattanooga. In order to enable transportation, Durr contacted Aubrey Williams, the white editor of *Southern Farmer* magazine, who agreed to front the money for Parks. In addition, Durr penned in her autobiography that she loaned Parks a suitcase and a bathing suit; however, in *her* autobiography, Parks denied receiving either. Although Parks entered Civil Rights mythology as a simple seamstress whose single act of defiant courage launched the movement, she did not rise from the obscurity popular folk legend offered. She had served as the volunteer secretary for the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for over ten years and had been quietly involved in the work for equality. She did, however, fit the Highlander requirement that persons attending the workshops already be identified as potential leaders.

“For some years before the civil rights movement started, Highlander had been the only publicly known integrated residential center in the South” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 86). But even if that were true, Rosa Parks surely had trepidation about attending the workshop. Her encounters with white people in Montgomery had rarely been positive and her earliest memories were of her grandfather, a former slave, positioning himself in his rocking chair with a rifle to ward away Klansmen (Parks, 1992). Nevertheless, Virginia Durr had always been kind and Parks accepted the offer to travel to Tennessee. The ten-day workshop was a turning point, the first time she had tasted equality and her first meeting with Highlander trainer, Septima Clark, the originator of the Citizenship Schools, and Myles Horton, Highlander’s director, forming relationships that would be ongoing for decades. Parks told Brinkley (2000), “it was one of the few times in my life up to that point when I did not feel any hostility from white people [and] I felt I could express myself honestly” (p. 95). She also developed a deep admiration for Highlander staff member Septima Clark, hoping “that there is a possible chance that some of her great courage and dignity and wisdom has rubbed off on me” (Brinkley, 2000, p. 97).

After the summer workshop, the seamstress returned to Montgomery, calm and empowered; three months later, she refused to surrender her seat on the bus and the rest, as they say, is history. Some “[s]pokesmen for white Montgomery ... charged that her protest was part of an NAACP plot to destroy the city’s transportation system” (Glen, 1996, p. 162); however, Durr (1990) reported, “Myles [Horton] always has taken great pride in the fact that he thought Mrs. Parks’s stay at Highlander encouraged her in the boycott. Having known Mrs. Parks, I think it gave her a great lift. She loved it” (p. 279).

As the movement grew and took shape, others, such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) leaders, approached Highlander to initiate workshops on various topics. Speaking at Highlander in 1957, Martin Luther King, Jr. called those in attendance to be “maladjusted to the evils of segregation, to the madness of militarism, to the tragic inequalities of an economic system that take necessities from the many to give to the few” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 118). According to M. Horton (1990), King had come to believe by that time that it did little good to enter a segregated restaurant if one did not have the price of a hamburger. Horton must have loudly applauded King’s pronouncement for economic justice had been the centerpiece of Highlander philosophy since its inception. In his autobiography, Horton (1990) iterated, “The violence of poverty destroys families, twists minds, hurts in many ways beyond the pain of hunger” (p. 27).

Due, in part, to his involvement with Highlander, Martin Luther King, Jr. was surrounded by negative publicity. At one of the workshops, Highlander’s 25th anniversary in 1957, he was photographed seated next to a reporter from *The Daily Worker*, an infamous Communist paper. In an interview with Roy Harris, house speaker and chief strategist for Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge, Raines (1977) recorded that Harris had commissioned photographer Ed Friend to attend Highlander. During the session, Friend conspired with Abner Berry, the reporter, to stage the picture of King, Parks and Horton with Berry. Harris said, “we sent Friend up there to register as a delegate; he “kept his damn mouth shut, and made pictures, and they posed, and they were tickled to death to get their pictures made” (Raines, 1977, p. 396). The photograph

was widely distributed and even placed on billboards in a variety of Southern cities to link King to the Communist party, thus, to discredit his message (Horton, M., 1990). “Eventually, as King’s fame grew, billboards of the photograph would compete for highway shoulder space with the John Birch Society’s ‘Impeach Earl Warren’ signs (McWhorter, 2001, p. 123). Branch (1998) cited,

King described the pitfalls of trying to answer emotionally loaded propaganda about Highlander. ‘I haven’t done anything but give a speech there,’ he said, ‘but the minute I go to arguing about I wasn’t *trained* there, it looks like I’m trying to say there’s something wrong with the school’. (p. 189)

Septima Clark and the Citizenship Schools

Likely, the most successful Highlander campaign was the Citizenship Schools, initiated to teach literacy to blacks in order to make them eligible to vote. The Citizenship Schools were supported in part by an Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation grant, which lauded “of all the projects supported by the Emil Schwarzhaupt Foundation (EFS), the most far-reaching results were probably those achieved by, or under the aegis of, Highlander Folk School” (Tjerandsen, 1980, p. 139). As previously noted, it was not the aim of the Highlander workshops to create movements but to address problems brought to them by the people. Myles Horton believed in the traditional meaning of the word “educate,” which is to draw out, not to pour in (McNeil & Squibb, 1989). This trait was consistent with the pedagogical styles of a transformational leader.

Esau Jenkins inadvertently became the launching pad for the Citizenship Schools. Jenkins lived on Johns Island, South Carolina, the largest of the Sea Islands at 32 miles long and 30 miles wide. Although the island was only 15 or 20 miles south of Charleston, it might as well have been in another universe, considering its economic,

political and geographic disconnection from the mainland. The coastal islands were populated primarily by Southern blacks, specifically of Gullah descent, which once again added to their sense of isolation. The Gullah language was “composed of Standard English, archaic English, and corruptions of English words and African words” (Oldendorf, 1990, p. 170), which not only alienated them from mainland blacks but also from the African American population of Charleston who felt “the island folk are [sic] beneath them on the social ladder” (Clark, S.. 1975, p. 143). Although many of the John’s Island residents had owned their own land for generations, the median educational level was 7.5 years and illiteracy was prevalent.

A poor farmer with a wife and seven children, Jenkins supplemented his income by driving a bus route to transport workers from the island into Charleston. Consequently, he had daily contact with many of the folk on Johns Island and was intimately aware of the problems within the community. One of his regular passengers, Mrs. Alice Wine, “told him she had only been to the third grade but she’d like to register [to vote] if someone would teach her how to read and write. [Based on her request], Jenkins’s bus became a rolling school” (Payne, 1995, p. 73). From that point on, Jenkins’s consuming desire became to raise the economic bar in the region and to save his people from political as well as geographic isolation. In order to accomplish those goals, literacy was paramount because, at the time, persons, primarily African Americans, were required to read and interpret legal documents, usually portions of the federal or state constitutions, before they were allowed to register to vote.

Longtime Highlander facilitator, Septima Clark, “a miraculous balance between leathery zeal and infinite patience” (Branch, 1988, p. 264), had developed enormous

respect for Jenkins when she taught school for several years on Johns Island. Being aware of his leadership in the community, Clark invited him to attend a workshop at Highlander, where he ultimately requested Highlander's aid in literacy training to facilitate suffrage empowerment on the island. With Jenkins's aid and two years of planning, including prolonged time living in the community by Myles and Zilphia Horton and literal shouting matches between Clark and Horton over the best approach to take, Clark and Highlander initiated the Citizenship Schools in the South Carolina island community, a movement that spread rapidly throughout the South.

From the beginning, "Highlander's role on Johns Island, South Carolina, was that of a catalyst" (Adams, November 1972, p. 513) because Horton and Clark believed the movement should maintain black leadership to be successful. Aware that the uneducated blacks would likely have a negative response to a white instructor or even an educated black teacher, Clark selected her relative, Bernice Robinson, to design the curriculum and run the first sessions. M. Horton (1990), always the driving force behind change, pointed out "institutions such as schools and universities are not places where poor people feel comfortable. They can't be expected to make decisions in the presence of experts, since they are used to having experts make decisions for them" (p. 58). Highlander loaned the monies necessary to purchase an island building, which was fronted and, thus protected, by a grocery store with the school rooms in the windowless back portion of the building (Brown, C., 1999).

After protesting that she had no training as a teacher and being told that was precisely why she was selected, Robinson organized her thoughts and invited persons, her neighbors, to attend. She began her classes by assuring those attending that she was

not a teacher and that they were there to learn together. Her methodology was really quite simple but effective. The people would tell her a story that she would write down. Since it was their story, in their own words, those attending had little trouble reading the material back to her until the written words assumed meaning on their own (Horton, M., 1990). Although the method was elementary, Horton was cited in the *Soujourner* interview as noting,

some people credit[ed] the citizenship school program for being one of the bases of the civil rights movement. It was simply black people teaching black people in a system of adult education ... based on the fact that if you know just a little bit more than the people you're teaching, you are closer to them and you can help them. You don't need to have expertise to do it, but you have to respect the people you're dealing with (McNeil & Squibb, 1990, p. 302).

Another facet of the curriculum was the kinesthetic method or teaching by tracing. Obviously, a pressing need of the people was the ability to create their signatures. Based on a method designed by Miss Wil Lou Gray, a white teacher who had been state supervisor for adult education in South Carolina, Bernice Robinson wrote each of her student's names on large pieces of cardboard and had that student trace the letters until the movement became natural. Much of the curricular design encompassed practical activities the students wanted to know, such as how to fill out a money order or write a letter (Clark, S., 1975). Eventually, as the students became comfortable with their mastery, Robinson added readings from both the state and national constitutions and asked Horton for a copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, known as Eleanor Roosevelt's greatest contribution to world history (Glendon, 2001). As Robinson read the Declaration to her students, self-esteem rose and they began to see themselves in a new glow of full brotherhood. A sheet entitled "The Purpose of The

Citizenship Schools,” uncovered in the Highlander archives, stated that other subjects, such as “safe driving, social security, cooperatives, the income tax, and an understanding of tax supported resources, such as water testing for wells and aid for handicapped children,” (Record Group #1, Series II: Program Files) were covered in the sessions.

According to S. Clark (1975), the most profound contribution of the Citizenship Schools was

the enabling of a man to raise his head a little higher; knowing how to sign their names, many of those men and women told me after they had learned, made them *feel* different. Suddenly they had become a part of the community; they were on their way toward first-class citizenship. (p. 149)

Langston (1990) listed many of the leaders of the era, including Fannie Lou Hamer, who were students of the Citizenship Schools. Most returned home and became active organizers in their community, and the “final exam” was that “[a]fter three months of instruction, fourteen students took the voting test and eight of them passed and were registered” (Langston, 1990, p. 156). Morris (1984) concluded, “activists of various persuasions stated repeatedly that the Citizenship Schools were one of the most effective organizing tools of the movement” (p. 239). The students were empowered to question authority and their lot, look critically at their culture and to take part in the political process; in other words, they were transformed into transformational leaders. According to the Schwarzhaupt Foundation files, “A letter from Jenkins to Horton, dated April 28, 1955, stated: ‘My ideas of community leadership have changed in many ways. I have found that giving others something to do in helping make better citizens in the

community is very important. My old way of doing was slow” (Tjerandsen, 1980, p. 155).

As the Citizenship Schools expanded, Septima Clark became the director of Education for Highlander and responsible for spreading the pedagogy throughout the South. For her work she was honored as one of the outstanding women of the Civil Rights movement, along with Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer and Ella Baker. S. Clark (1968) stated, “I have no idea whatsoever that I will ever try to be anything more than one dedicated person working for freedom” (p. 12). Ironically, Rosa Parks shared much the same vision. She often stated she had not intended to become a symbol of the Civil Rights Movement in refusing to surrender her seat to a white man on Thursday, December 1, 1955; she was merely “tired of giving in” (Parks, 1992, p. 116).

According to M. Horton (1990), the objective of the schools was to make the people understand they could play a role at home but also change their world, which illustrated characteristics of a charismatic leadership style.

Along with becoming literate, they learned to organize, they learned to protest, they learned to demand their rights, because they also learned that you couldn’t just read and write yourself into freedom. You had to fight for that and you had to do it as part of a group, not as an individual (Horton, M., p. 104).

As cited in Min (1995), Rosa Parks, at 82, echoed that sentiment by asserting that “It takes more than one person to bring about peace – it takes all of us” (p. 57).

The Citizenship Schools produced radical changes in the South. Some have asserted that the schools launched the Civil Rights Movement. From their Johns Island beginnings, the Schools mushroomed to Wadmalaw, where teachers spent one entire evening showing two people how to hold a pencil, to Edisto, which initiated an each-

man-get-a-man to vote campaign (Clark, S., 1975), and to Daufuskie Island with other cities and communities in the South requesting the same type of aid. The program was growing too large for the Highlander staff to administer, thus, they undertook the role of educating the educators, bringing in dozens of people to be trained as Citizenship School teachers. At the same time the program was growing, the turmoil surrounding the school and the persistent label of communist training ground was swirling in the background and Horton was convinced the Citizenship Schools must survive, even if Highlander did not. According to Branch (1988), NAACP activist, Ella Baker visited Highlander in the fall of 1958, hoping to couple Clark's program with the Crusade for Citizenship. She was particularly interested in employing women as teachers because she considered black women an underused resource. After examining the premise of the schools, however, she became discouraged because the classes were predicated on the ignorance of those attending and she felt that approach would create a negative image. Baker promised further investigation but did not recommend the merger.

Ironically, perhaps, Martin Luther King later asked Horton for an education program to forward the work of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). By that time the Citizenship Schools were fully capable of standing on their own merit. The "project eventually became too big for us; in fact, it became bigger than all the rest of Highlander put together. When it gets to that stage, other people can take it over and operate it" (Horton, M., 1990, p. 107). In February of 1961, Horton presented the program to King, along with Septima Clark and Andrew Young as administrators (McNeil & Squibb, 1989). M. Horton (1990) asserted, "The job of Highlander was to multiply leadership for radical social change" (p. 115) and the Citizenship Schools

became the sum of that multiplication and an indicator of transformational or charismatic leadership. More than one hundred thousand people were reached through the program.

Student Activists

In 1960 the growing unrest among black college students and other young activists reached a boiling point and spilled over onto a lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. Other youth sit-in and protests groups were forming all over the South, particularly in nearby Nashville; thus, in addition to community organizing, “Highlander quickly became the place where student leaders could come to discuss the ideology, goals and tactics of their protest” (Glen, 1996, p. 173). For several years before student sit-ins and the official beginnings of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC),

Highlander had been holding four-day workshops for high school and college students over Easter weekend. They were primarily for black students, but white students came too. The students ran [the workshops] themselves. They decided what they wanted to do and whom they wanted there as consultants and advisors. Each year they’d plan their future programs in advance. They’d talk about interracial dating and fraternities, college exchange students and things like that (Horton, M., 1990, pp. 184-185).

But by the beginning of the 1960s, those topics had become too tame for the students, who had organized to form SNCC under the guidance of Ella Baker, two weeks after a student workshop at Highlander. According to McAdam (1988), “SNCC benefited from the resources and ideological direction afforded by ... Highlander Folk School” (p. 236), and the students began to plot their plans of attack at the School. Highlander was the perfect forum for the students as they waded through the ideology of voter registration campaigns versus direct action to reach a compromise. The Seventh

Annual College Workshop held April 1-3, 1960 was attended by 75 students and “marked a new relationship of Highlander to the students as it marked a new relationship of the students to their society” (Horton, A., 1989, p. 243). The list of students who attended those early workshops, begat from the furor of youth to launch a second-line of attack on racial discrimination, included names familiar to students of history and to many modern political aficionados – Marion Barry, Diane Nash, James Bevel, James Lawson, Bernard Lafayette, Candie Anderson [Carawan] and John Lewis, among others. “When young people confronted their own powerlessness and, at the same time, the inequities and brutalities of the system they were expected to serve [...], they were outraged (Jacobs, 2003, p. 236).

Some critics of the student movement, including former President Harry Truman, had accused the students of being Communist-inspired. [However, the first SNCC President Marion] Barry responded to their charges. “To label our goals, methods and presuppositions ‘Communitic’ is to credit Communism with an attempt to remove tyranny and to create an atmosphere where genuine communication can occur. Communism seeks power, ignores people and thrives on social conflict (Sellers, 1990, p. 40).

When the Mississippi Freedom Summer was in the planning stages, organizer Bob Moses approached Horton to create a workshop. Myles Horton declined on the basis that the leadership was already in place; Highlander only aided in the creation of leaders and he felt that SNCC was beyond the need of such elemental structure. Having been thus rejected, Moses constructed his own workshop that, of course, became one of SNCC’s most important (Horton, M., 1990).

Powledge (1991) illustrated,

Voter registration did not begin in Hattiesburg with marches down to the courthouse, but with citizenship education classes. SNCC and other Movement [sic] groups active in the vote drive had learned by now [sic]

that such classes were an important way to prepare people intellectually for the grueling process of trying to register, to minimize their well-placed fear. (p. 472)

And that the students had learned at Highlander.

Under Attack

Due to its intense involvement on the forefront of civil rights, Highlander became the object of attack by the conservative Southern establishment. The Governor of Georgia, Herman Talmadge, for example, called the school a “cancerous growth spreading across the South” (Higgs, Manning, & Miller, 1995, p. 155) and Mississippi Senator James Eastland “let it be known that he considered Highlander freakish, mongrelized and basically Communist” (Branch, 1988, p. 122). According to Zinn (1980), “The Communist party was known to pay special attention to the problem of race and equality” (p. 438), so it may have been a perfectly natural conclusion to those opposed to both that Highlander and communism were bedfellows.

As early as 1940, the staff at Highlander had to maintain an around-the-clock guard to ward away threatened assaults from a band of local vigilantes, the Grundy County Crusaders. Calling themselves “One Hundred Per Cent Americans,” the Crusaders were formed by Tracy City coal company bookkeeper, C. H. Kilby, possibly as a reaction to Highlander’s earlier union organizing activities. “The Crusaders told the press they were ‘working night and day’ to send Highlander packing, not just from Grundy, but from Tennessee ... adopting as their slogan, ‘no ism but Americanism’ ” (Adams, 1975, p. 106). In addition, Kilby became a regular correspondent with J. Edgar Hoover, requesting that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) look into the

Highlander activities and supplying that office with mountains of “evidence” he gathered over a period of several years. In 1941, Paul Crouch, Communist party head for Tennessee and known paid informer for red-baiting, testified that Highlander had at least 25 Communist members (Parker & Parker, 1991), which testimony was later used in the state hearings. During the fall of 1950, Horton was informed that area residents were being asked about Highlander’s interracial activities by FBI agents and that the agents were reportedly implying that the policy “would be considered communistic by a majority of Southern people” (Glen, 1996, p. 146). This was substantiated in the FBI files on Highlander but evidently that investigation was conducted locally through the Knoxville office without federal sanction. One must wonder, however, if the communism label came first from the local population or from the FBI agents.

By 1954, partially as a reaction to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Senator James Eastland, a Democrat from Mississippi and head of the Senate’s Internal Security Subcommittee, that body’s version of the House’s Committee on Un-American Activities, convened a session to examine several institutions and personages in the South. According to Parker and Parker (1991), Eastland was convinced that communists promoted racial equality in order to disrupt and take over the U. S., in addition to his presentation on the Senate floor implying that both races in the South supported harmonious segregation. Myles Horton, Virginia Durr and others were called before the Subcommittee and Durr, who had known Eastland for many years, remarked that he was “just as common as pig tracks” (Barnard, 1985, p. 256). Having a rather honed sense of the ironic, Myles Horton laughed throughout the proceedings and the hearings ended with his being physically dragged from the room (Parker & Parker, 1991).

Pressure was applied to the State of Tennessee to close the school. “The 1959 session of the Tennessee General Assembly had sought to revoke Highlander’s tax-free charter after an investigation by a legislative committee which reported that it found the school ‘engaged in a very questionable activity’ ” (Clark, S., 1968, p. 10), and the Internal Revenue Service revoked the School’s tax-exempt status three times during the period.

Furthermore, based in part on evidence collected by the Georgia Commission on Education, which had also censured the President of the United States and attempted to convince Congress to void the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, Bruce Bennett, the attorney general of Arkansas, insisted that the State of Tennessee aid his instigation of hearings on organizations in the South that were working for integration. Tennessee folded under external pressure; thus, it was antagonism from other states, not from local residents, that eventually closed the school (Langston, 1990). Bennett demanded that Myles Horton be brought to testify.

During the hearings, Bennett wrote the names of known radicals in the movement on a chalkboard. Using Horton’s name in a center circle, the attorney general drew radiating lines, showing that all the names led back to Horton. When his drawing was completed, the committee chairman asked Horton, “‘Will you deny that you’re not the center of the Communist network in the South?’ None of the people or organizations [on the board] were [known] Communists, but they were all against racism” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 108). Horton replied that he had no comment but when asked what he thought it proved, he quipped, “ ‘It proves that you can write a name and write other names and draw lines between them’ ” (Horton, M., p. 108). Following those hearings and amid

allegations of subversion, periodic raids were conducted of the facilities at Highlander and threats were made, but nothing proving a communist connection was unearthed except for a few ragged copies of Marxist philosophy on the library shelves.

In the library of the new Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, Tennessee, there are sections of really old books, dark tomes with fading titles, in a separate section of the library. According to the note attached to the shelves, “these are the volumes from the original library, from the Highlander Folk School, salvaged after the revocation of its charter by the State of Tennessee in 1961.” In other words these were the books the officers and lawmakers used to justify the label of “commie school.” The note pointed out: these books will give you an idea of what was important during the early days of Highlander. There were works on labor, socialism, Sacco and Vanzetti, Lenin, Marx, Stalin, Samuel Gompers, Andrew Jackson, John Dewey and Adam Smith. It was rather amazing that they survived; given the climate of the time, it is a miracle they were not burned. According to Michael (2000), the “Highlander library has one of the most extensive collections on popular education in the world and is completely online with a searchable catalog” (p. 9).

In February 1959, “A resolution was introduced in Tennessee Central Assembly ... to investigate the subversive activities of HFS. It passed both houses without opposition and was signed by Governor Buford Ellington (Langston, 1990, p. 159), who dispatched Grundy County District Attorney, Ab Sloan, to shut down the school because it was in violation of state laws on integration, a law that had been on the books since 1901. *Brown v. Board of Education* had only eliminated racial segregation in tax-

supported schools, thus, “[t]echnically, Highlander was still in violation of a Tennessee law prohibiting integrated private schools” (Glen, 1996, p. 157).

The raids continued. Purposely, while Horton was in Europe representing the Residential Adult Education section of the Adult Education Association at the American-European Folk School conference, the final barrage was launched. By that time, Sloan had decided that other offenses would be easier to prove than integration and according to Septima Clark (1968), the police interrupted a workshop with a search warrant for alcohol. Although no alcohol was found, she was arrested for public drunkenness, even if she were not in the public and not drunk. She was subsequently charged with possessing more than one quart of whiskey and denied a blood test when she protested her innocence. The *Knoxville News-Sentinel* reported on August 1, 1959, “Raiders found bottles of gin and rum and a keg containing whisky in the home of Horton” (p. 1). Although his home was separated from the educational facility, it was on the same property.

On the other hand, in an article in *The Nashville Tennessean* on August 2, two days after the raid, Ab Sloan admitted the foray was for the purpose of closing the school. He also confessed the possession charge was easier to prove than other allegations. Three of the young men attending the workshop, including Guy Carawan, were also arrested when they protested the treatment of Clark. She was released later in the evening on a \$500 bond but the authorities would not release the three young men. They were detained for eight hours, until they “sobered up.” Myles Horton was also charged, even though he was in Europe at the time, and Highlander was padlocked. State law [Tennessee Code Annotated 4864-105] provided for the revocation of a charter if legal

action were brought against an organization by the State; “[i]t was the first time in Tennessee history a corporate charter had been revoked” (Langston, 1990, p. 161).

The trial began on November 3. Highlander and Horton were accused of selling beer and sundries without a license; permitting blacks and whites to attend school together and cohabit; and Horton alone with receiving monies and property with a not for profit charter. All told, there were 18 charges placed against the school. Part of the evidence presented at the trial included materials and affidavits collected by Kilby and the Grundy County Crusaders and the photographs taken for Roy Harris by Ed Friend. The trial lasted only four days with a returned verdict of guilty. Bledsoe (1969) remarked the proceedings “made the Scopes trial look like a model of due process” (p. 124), while Harris later bragged that “as a result of those pictures that we took, Tennessee legislature did away with that thing [Highlander]. They absolutely abolished it” (Raines, 1977, p. 396). Ironically, the closure brought increased financial support, instead of negative publicity.

Following the closing, the school became, for a time, a tourist attraction as the locals and others drove by to look at the “commie school.” Calm as always, Horton sat on the front porch of his home and waved at passersby. “Highlander didn’t exist anymore, either physically or legally. Within two months of [the closing], all the buildings [mysteriously] burned” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 110). Court proceedings dragged on through two appeals until, eventually, the Tennessee State Supreme Court upheld the lower court’s finding on operating for profit, while throwing out the integration violation (Langston, 1990). According to Myles Horton, Highlander had a unique method of bookkeeping, wherein personnel were paid on the basis of the size of

their family; in other words, “they took what they needed” (McCarthy, 1981); he continued that the judge thought Horton was “growing a melon and getting ready to cut it” (McCarthy, 1981). Unfortunately, this marked the School’s last avenue of recourse; because there was then no longer an issue of constitutional violation on the segregation issue, the United States Supreme Court would have no reason to review the case.

Highlander Folk School

was placed in receivership and the school property was confiscated. It had taken the state more than two years to close HFS. On Saturday, December 16, 1961, HFS property was sold at auction. HFS had assets of about \$175,000, including 200 acres of land, a dozen buildings, a library containing several thousand volumes. The state netted \$10,000 from the sale of property and an additional \$43,700 from the sale of the land ... several prosecuting lawyers bought some of the land ... HFS never received any remuneration (Langston, 1990, p. 162).

Halberstam (1998) pointed out that the land changed hands several times after the original sale, with one of the more recent advertisements offering the property as a historic landmark, the place “where the New South was born” (p. 708)

Giving in but not up, Horton changed the name from Highlander Folk School to Highlander Research and Education Center, applied for and received a new charter and moved the school initially to a black community in Knoxville and then to New Market, Tennessee, where it still operates. Paradoxically, in 1982, the Center was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for its historic role on behalf of human rights.

Myles Horton

Just as the history of Highlander is enmeshed with the history of a place so is it representative of and inseparable from the philosophical leanings of its founder and

primary apologist, Myles Horton. Horton was born in Savannah, Tennessee in 1905. He was graduated from Cumberland College in Lebanon, Tennessee, and studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and at the University of Chicago. In 1932, he toured the Scandinavian folk schools begun in the eighteenth century by Bishop Nikolai S. F. Grundtvig. Higgs, Manning and Miller (1995) called Horton a “die-hard populist, a man who believed in the essential dignity of all humans and was willing to push for that dignity against any forces marshaled against him” (p. 154). In other words he demonstrated the characteristics of a transformational or charismatic leader.

Highlander and Horton were shaped in his youth by the strong Appalachian values dispensed to him by his parents – the dignity of the individual, social justice, and necessity of work incorporated with the equal values of service and education. Horton was often fond of quoting his father, Mordecai Pinkney Horton (1859-1934), whose profundity was drawn from his background as, variously, a teacher, a factory worker and a sharecropper. According to the elder Horton, “you can hitch your wagon to the stars but you can’t haul corn or hay in it if its wheels aren’t on the ground” (epigraph to *The Long Haul*). Myles Horton’s mother, Elsie, taught the young man that religious doctrine was grounded in one phrase, “Love your neighbor, that’s all it’s all about” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 7).

Because money was frequently at a premium, the young man went to work in his early teens. He and other young boys worked together in a factory, making crates used to ship tomatoes. Realizing they were exceeding the production expectations of the factory owner, Horton organized the boys, asked for a raise and threatened to quit if the monies were not forthcoming. Although he was unaware at the time that it was his first

experience with social justice and unionization, Horton won the raise and the respect of his employer (Horton, M., 1990). In his autobiography, *The Long Haul*, Horton (1990) reflects his family belief that, “We didn’t think of ourselves as working-class, or poor, we just thought of ourselves as being conventional people who didn’t have any money” (p. 1).

From that homespun grounding, Horton went to college and to seminary and became an inveterate reader and explorer of ideas. “I probably profited by going to a small college where I didn’t have many good teachers. The college had a fairly good library, so I learned to educate myself. If I had to spend time with good teachers, I probably wouldn’t have come out as well educated as I did” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 13).

By 1929, Horton was no longer interested in organized religion. If religion and love were equated, as his mother believed, he could not “understand how love can exist in a society that exploits people” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 27). Throughout his spiritual quest, however, he held fast to his familial values and his belief in the tenets – if not the practice – of Christianity, while adding a measure of Marxism, an exploration of Utopian and Fabian societies, an immersion in the poetry of Percy Bysshe Shelley and the lectures of professor Reinhold Niebuhr, his mentor and an avowed socialist. At the end of his soul’s journey, Horton knew his mission was to return to the South and present the boon of education to the oppressed people of Appalachia. In his words, “You have to do the best you can in an unjust society. Sometimes that means that the laws you go by are moral laws instead of book laws” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 7). He also realized that the poor and working people were their own best teachers and envisioned a style of transformational methodology that would lead to empowering those people. Mezirow

(1991) affirmed in transformative learning theory, assumptions must be looked at anew, reflected upon and changed.

In addition to rejecting organized religion, the young visionary also held governments and service providers in rather low esteem, especially for the seeming total lack of regard for the people they were hired to serve. As a college student, Horton became involved with the YMCA as a program leader. The organization was supposedly working for racial equality but the workers would not sit nor eat together with their black peers for whom they proclaimed equality. The young activist considered this counterproductive and acquired an early attraction to civil disobedience. According to his assessment, “I knew I might have to violate those laws [Jim Crow] that were unjust, and I made up my mind never to do something wrong just because it was legal. My conscience would help me decide what was right and wrong, not the law” (Horton, M., 1990, p. 16).

Hall (1971) asserted,

It has been assumed that anyone who is civilly disobedient, in the proper sense of the phrase, is a loyal citizen; he is neither a rebel against the state nor a criminal. He acknowledges ... moral obligations to the state and to his fellow citizens in addition to the moral duty which leads him to break the law. [...] It is because he continues to maintain his sense of social responsibility that he should not be considered a rebel, a criminal or a misfit (p. 76).

Ironically, Horton took the knowledge he gained from reading and turned it into a pedagogical method that employed dialogue. Before Highlander was founded, he used his connections with the church to talk about the experiences of the people whom he served. He invited persons from the economically deprived communities surrounding the church to talk about “vacation bible school,” for example, but once they arrived he encouraged them to discuss the problems within their communities. The community

leaders quickly realized that if they pooled resources and experience, they had the capacity to create solutions. Later, in applying this methodology to Highlander, M.

Horton (1990) asserted the school

brings people together, developing a circle of learners who share the same problems. Together people share their experiences, analyze their problems and learn how to work toward basic changes in society. The goal is not reform or adjustment to an unjust society but the transformation of society (Introduction, p. xxi).

Through his visit to the Danish Folk Schools, discussions with Hull House founder Jane Addams and his prolific reading, Horton designed his methodology for Highlander. His conclusions were that the school must feature:

- Students and teachers living together
- Peer learning
- Group singing
- Freedom from state regulation
- Nonvocational education
- Freedom from examinations
- Social interaction in a nonformal setting
- A highly motivating purpose, and
- Clarity in what it stood for and what it stood against (Horton, M., 1990, pp. 52-53).

The vision and the subsequent methodology became the Horton style, a transformational, egalitarian, charismatic and servant-leader pedagogy that was employed to empower grassroots leadership. As Jacobs (2003) summarized, “Resolving a crisis demands dissent ... however, it must be blended with folk knowledge and non academic concepts in tackling immediate problems. Solutions cannot be apart from the culture of the people concerned” (p. 220).

Modern History

As the new millenium dawned, current issues were not burning with the white hot intensity of labor unrest or the Civil Rights Movement, but the research center waited, knowing that activists arise, Phoenix-like from the ashes, when people have had enough of whatever situation had been forced upon them.

As cited in McNeil and Squibb (1989), Horton noted, “what you do is build little cells of decency, little cells of democracy, little experiences of people making decisions for themselves, little philosophical discussions about civil rights and human rights” (p. 307); “Highlander is a myth ... it’s a poem, too, it’s a picture ... it’s not anything that any of us here have done, but the people have come here have made a mosaic out of Highlander” (Higgs, et al., 1995, p. 160).

Myles Horton died in 1991 of cancer, but Highlander “remains committed to popular education; empowering cultural work; collective leadership; grassroots organizational power; and a bottom-up vision of economic justice and participatory democracy” (Highlander Research and Education Center, 2002). In 2004, the staff worked with migrants (primarily Latino), against environmental racism (rezoning, redistricting), against hate crimes, police profiling and anti-affirmative action. Unfortunately, the more things change, the more they stay the same but, fortunately, places like Highlander continue to fight for the rights of the disempowered and the marginalized. According to Colby, Erhlick, Beaumont and Stephens (2003),

reaching this group of students [the disempowered] – awakening in them broader concerns and giving them a sense that they can grasp and contribute to the complicated realities of civic and political life – is at least as important as reaching those who are more immediately receptive. (p. 167)

Summary

Taking the history of Highlander and the precepts of its pedagogy into consideration, this research asks whether or not a factor in the Horton Method, the pedagogy of Highlander, empowered grassroots leaders and whether or not that empowerment was due, primarily, to the transformational or charismatic leadership of Myles Horton. This chapter reviewed the current literature on Highlander, Myles Horton and the history of the Civil Rights Movement. Chapter 3 reveals the methodology behind the study, including the rationale for a qualitative dissertation. Chapter 4 offers the interview profiles, pertinent demographics of the respondents, the questionnaire results and materials garnered from archival investigation. The chapter also analyzes the responses from both the face-to-face interviews and the survey as related to the research questions. Chapter 5 presents the themes that emerged from the interviews as well as the implications of those responses. Additionally, recommendations for further study are included.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

“You’ve got to know what you’re walking into” ... Bernard Lafayette, on the importance of research

Overview

This research was undertaken to assess the impact of the pedagogy of Highlander Folk School and to ascertain the leadership style of the founder, Myles Horton. Although literature exists on both Highlander and Horton, little has been contributed concerning the leadership empowerment of grassroots activists. According to Chafe (1980),

Journalists have described flash points of conflict such as Selma and Birmingham. Public opinion analysts have measured popular attitudes toward race. And scholars have traced the history of the civil rights organizations, the impact of federal legislation, and the significance of leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., yet most of these studies have been written from a national perspective, distant from the day-to-day life of the local people most affected by the movement. [...] While all these studies contribute to our understanding, very few have examined the story of social change from the point of view of people in local communities” (3).

It was the aim of this work to discover if connections existed between pedagogy and empowerment of local leaders and to determine if Myles Horton employed transformational and/or charismatic leadership styles.

Design

In order to create a qualitative historical study, many avenues must be explored and the design must be emergent. According to Patton (2002), emergent designs require flexibility, “adapting inquiry as understanding deepens and/or situations change” (p. 40)

and Riehl (2001) added “qualitative research continues to generate rich, contextualized, process-sensitive understandings of phenomena that have sociological import” (p. 128). The study included face-to-face and telephone interviews, which were audio taped, with a purposeful sample of informants who attended Highlander workshops between 1950 and 1970 and became leaders in the Civil Rights Movement as well as those who had first-hand knowledge of the school, either through proxemics or as part of litigation. “It is through oral narratives that we can discover the voices of the actors and better understand the ‘genesis and sustenance of social movements’” (Irons, December 1998, p. 695); however, Rogers (September 1988) pointed out that “[p]rotest movements are difficult to incorporate into the narrative framework of our national history” (p. 567). A purposeful sample marked the rationale for a qualitative study; the informants were “selected purposefully to permit inquiry into and understanding of a phenomenon in depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). Beginning with names supplied through secondary sources, key informants were contacted, initially by letter and e-mail, to determine if they would participate in the study. Unfortunately, many of those who made the greatest contributions to the Civil Rights movement were either deceased or elderly. However, as initial informants were contacted, they suggested others who met the parameters of the research and might be willing to participate. All in all, six participants agreed to take part in the study and were interviewed personally.

Each interview consisted of the following questions:

1. What does leadership mean to you? Do you consider yourself a leader?
How were your leadership skills developed?
2. How did you hear about Highlander Folk School? What did you expect to find there? Did those thoughts prove to be true?
3. What does the term charismatic leader mean to you? How would you describe the leadership style of Myles Horton?

4. Tell me about the Highlander teaching method. How would you describe its strengths and weaknesses?
5. Describe the role Highlander played in the Civil Rights Movement.
6. How did your time at Highlander influence your views?

Riehl (2001) defines qualitative research as “methods of gathering observational, communicative ... or documentary data derived from natural settings. Qualitative researchers analyze their data in nonmathematical ways to understand the world on its own terms” (p. 116). In order to determine the mindset of a group within a historical framework, qualitative research or narrative analysis was, thus, not only a desired method but also required to obtain rich, thick descriptive responses. Further, Patton (2002) asserted, “Qualitative methods permit inquiry into selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail, context and nuance” (p. 227), and Riehl (2001) added “the methods of data collection, analysis and reporting are intended to help uncover and interpret meaning” (p. 117).

Instrumentation

The responses from the purposeful sample respondents who were interviewed face-to-face or by telephone and audio taped, were interwoven and triangulated with archival materials, including correspondence and autobiography, government documents and newspaper articles. Archival materials were obtained from the East Tennessee State University Archives of Appalachia, the University of Tennessee Archives, the Nashville Public Library, Tennessee State Archives, the Highlander Research and Education Center

library and archives, and past issues of the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* and the *Nashville Tennessean*. Additional information was derived from secondary research on Highlander, Myles Horton and the Civil Rights Movement.

Lincoln and Guba (1986) pointed out that qualitative research is credible, transferable, and dependable and Riehl (2001) concluded “[m]aintaining the objectivity of the researcher is especially important in this tradition, to prevent bias from creeping into the research process” (p. 116). Grouped together, these attributes lend trustworthiness to the methodology. Patton (2002) added that rigorous methodology, the training of the researcher and the philosophical belief in the value of the inquiry equaled credibility. Additionally, Riehl (2001) asserted, “Qualitative researchers tend not to hold themselves to *a priori* theoretical or analytic perspectives in seeking to understand the phenomena they study” (pg. 117), thus, indicating an absence of bias or preconceptions. In other words, if researchers were trustworthy and honest and had no bias or preconceptions, the findings of the study would be valid.

Data Analysis

Each personal interview was recorded and transcribed. The data were analyzed both by visual scanning and by member-checking. Archival, biographical and autobiographical works and secondary sources were cross-referenced and triangulated with the interview analysis. This process assured the trustworthiness of the findings.

After the material was judged to be trustworthy, the auditor, Teresa Brooks-Taylor, Assistant Director of Service-Learning at East Tennessee State University, reviewed the interview transcripts and tapes and the notes on the archival materials. The auditor compared her conclusions to the conclusions drawn from the triangulation

process. In addition to the auditor, the results were evaluated by peer reviewer, Associate Professor of Surveying and Mapping Jerry Nave, and by Dr. Jack Higgs, Professor Emeritus, Department of English, East Tennessee State University.

Summary

This chapter presented a description of the process used in collecting and analyzing data for this study. Chapter 4 offers the interview profiles, pertinent demographics of the respondents, and materials garnered from archival investigation. The chapter also analyzes the responses from the face-to-face interviews, the telephone interviews and the historic materials as related to the research questions. Chapter 5 presents the themes that emerged from the interviews as well as the implications of those responses. Additionally, recommendations for further study are included.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

“If we teach a change model, people will change [things]” ... Candie Carawan

Introduction

This study was undertaken with two controlling questions. The first of the two queried whether or not Highlander Folk School was instrumental in honing leadership for the Civil Rights Movement. According to the *American Heritage Dictionary* (1985), to hone is to give a “keen cutting edge ... [or] to perfect or make more intense or effective” (p. 620). The second question examined whether or not Myles Horton, Highlander’s founder, was a charismatic leader. In other words, was charismatic leadership essential to empowering others to become leaders and/or were those already assessed as having leadership ability encouraged by the Highlander message to become activists?

According to Burns (1978), “Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers” (p. 18). Bryman (1992) added those with power have authority, usually expressed as one of three types: 1) rational, based on the enforcement of legal rules; 2) traditional, given to masters who are owed personal allegiance; and 3) charismatic, devoted to those who serve as examples or heroes.

Because I have been interviewing and writing professionally for several years, I was conscious of my ability to manipulate the outcome of this research by selecting only those persons from whom I could expect a positive response and by phrasing my research

questions to elicit biased answers. It was my goal, however, to treat all views fairly and to present information as it was found, not as it might have been manipulated. Under the watchful eyes of my auditor, Teresa Brooks-Taylor, and my peer reviewer, Assistant Professor Jerry Nave, I attempted to collect information that would reveal the Monteagle community's and the State of Tennessee's perspective on Highlander Folk School to balance the affirmations I garnered from secondary research and from interviews with those who had been closely associated with Highlander.

When this expedition into the past began, I expected to unearth information from the historical record, both the laudatory praise for the work of Highlander Folk School and the negative mystique that still surrounds it. I knew from the outset that the view was polarized and frequently volatile on both ends of the spectrum. I did not, however, expect to be so completely shut down by the reticence or flat refusal of members of the community to discuss their views. Scott Bates, University of the South professor and Highlander Board member, stated, Highlander "was called communist but everybody associated with blacks in those days was called communist. There's still a lot of people who believe it was communist" (personal communication, March 1, 2005).

On Labor Day weekend, 2004, I drove to Monteagle, Tennessee with high anticipation of finding among the local populace, those who would fill my notebooks with remembrances of Highlander – the good, the bad and the ugly. For me, at the end of three years' research, this was a pilgrimage, a quest, a mission to sacred land. Near the top of the ascent up the Cumberland Plateau on Interstate 24, I crossed into Grundy County and exited at Monteagle. It was Sunday morning and all the businesses along the street were closed. The only people visible were entering the Methodist church,

diagonally across from a country and western honky tonk. I traversed the entire length of Main Street, about ten blocks, and then returned to the combination fire hall, meeting room and police station. The police dispatcher, a portly brunette in her mid-40s, was friendly and in between taking phone calls from her family members, she gave me directions to the Highlander property. I asked if she knew anyone who might have been around during the school's tenure at Monteagle but she said no.

After becoming completely lost, being redirected by an elderly farmer in overalls and driving in circles, I finally arrived at the original site of Highlander Folk School, which is now home to a recently constructed log church of modest proportions. Since the service was still in session, I walked around the building to the manmade lake, picturing as I went a time in the 1950s when the neighbors would have been shocked to see blacks and whites swimming together. When the service let out, I stopped a few passers-by to inquire about the original Highlander but they claimed to have no information and walked past me to their cars or to congregate with others on the church steps. I asked one gentleman if I could speak to the preacher and he called inside the church for the pastor to appear. When I asked for a moment of his time, the reverend ushered me into his private office and closed the door, assuming, I suppose, that my purpose was confession. After I revealed my quest, he promptly showed me out and introduced me to his wife, whom he was sure would know more than he. She also claimed to have little knowledge but suggested that I might want to contact the Tracy City historian, William Ray Turner. I later wrote to Turner, asking permission to interview him; when he responded, he stated, "I do not wish to be interviewed about Highlander Folk School" (personal correspondence, December 27, 2004). He did, however, suggest I contact John Kilby of

Tracy City, who may be a relative of C. H. Kilby, the person largely responsible for the FBI file on Highlander. Kilby did not respond. Turner also recommended talking to Scott Bates, a retired Sewanee professor who served on the Highlander board. Bates responded and his interview is included.

This frustration was added to the previous lack of response from a variety of contacts: James Bevel and Diane Nash, members of the Nashville student activist group who attended organizing workshops at Highlander; Dorothy Cotton, representative of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who with Septima Clark and Andrew Young took over the administration of the Citizenship Schools; Bill Saunders, who was a protégé of Esau Jenkins and, of course, Rosa Parks who was no longer well enough to engage in interviews. It was also my intent to create a questionnaire to send to workshop participants from the Civil Rights era but I was told by the Highlander staff that such a list was unavailable.

Document research was more productive. At the Appalachian Archives in Sherrod Library at East Tennessee State University, I discovered a wealth of information on Highlander's early involvement with labor as well as several secondary volumes that were otherwise out of print. At the University of Tennessee library, I retrieved the complete Federal Bureau of Investigation file on Highlander Folk School, released under the Freedom of Information Act. On one trip to Nashville, I visited the Tennessee State Archives and spent hours poring over the transcripts from the hearings at Tracy City and the court proceedings against the school and the librarians at the Nashville Public Library were most helpful in obtaining addresses and contact information for several of those I interviewed. I retrieved some material from the Wisconsin State Archives, Civil Rights

Collection, where the Highlander Folk School's materials were sent when it was deemed unsafe to store them publicly in Tennessee. And at the current Highlander Research and Education Center, I was given free reign to explore both the library and the archived papers that had not been sent to Wisconsin.

On my first, rather naïve, trip to the Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market, it was my assumption that getting into Highlander would be difficult. There must be some inherent distrust of strangers, especially academic-researcher types, and some vestigial paranoia left over from the days when Highlander was branded a “commie school” and under constant attack. I could not have been more wrong. When I called to ask permission to visit, the person I talked to, Casey Fox, was extremely accommodating. She even offered to arrange an interview with Guy and Candie Carawan, the couple involved with Highlander since the Civil Rights days. When Candie returned my call, she was enthusiastic on the phone, seemed genuinely interested in my research and gave me driving directions. Thrilled, I set up the appointment and spent the weekend doing some interview-specific reading on the Carawans.

On the scheduled day, I was anxious, vacillating between feeling as if I were treading into unwelcoming territory and simultaneously making a side trip to Mecca. I had invested a great deal of time in devouring materials on Highlander, Myles Horton and his South American counterpart, Paulo Freire, teachers I have modeled because they were inspirations to their students. I was not sure how all this inspiration worked – Horton called it Learning Circles; Freire called it *conscientization*; I called it sitting in a circle and talking – the bottom line is that all three are dialogic pedagogical methods, wherein students arrive at their own answers from the raw material of their own

experience. Freire offered, “All these different moments indicate ... going around the problem of dignity of human beings – the question of freedom, the dreams of the people, the respect for the people, in which education ... is shaped” (Horton & Freire, 1990, pp. 235-236).

The Highlander Research and Education Center was located in a residential area, farm country, with hairpin twists and turns and broken asphalt in the road. After locating the Highlander sign, I turned into a long driveway and the car began to climb through a dark and deeply wooded section of property. Maples and oaks, caressed by vines, dwarfed tiny dogwoods and infant evergreens. When I emerged on top of the rise, I was overwhelmed; the vista was magnificent and the horizon, infinite. The property sat on a knoll in the middle of verdant farm-like fields of tall ochre-colored grasses and from there, rolling hills stretched all the way to the purplish gray outline of the Smoky Mountains framed against the cerulean blue of the sky. It was absolutely beautiful, pastoral and elegiac.

After checking in at the main building and being told that the librarians were expecting me, I was directed back to my car toward another curving, rocked road. The cleared driving path was narrow and my car brushed against the tall, almost oat-like, grasses on the left. The drive wound upward and a sign informed me that the library and bookstore were to the right, while the Center was on the left. The buildings were roundettes, like those available in time share locations or inexpensive vacation homes, prefabricated wood dyed red to simulate redwood. At the larger roundette, I spied a sign noting the Harry Lasko Memorial Library. I learned later that Lasko was affiliated with Highlander during the labor activity period and that he was a strong voice for racial

equality. After he was killed in World War II, the library, constructed on the original property in 1948, was dedicated to his memory.

As I entered the building, three women looked at me inquisitively. The young woman, wearing jeans and a stained t-shirt covered with drawings of South Carolina seashells, invited me to look around. She escorted me to another well lighted room at the far end of the roundette, a room overflowing with books, files and videotapes, the library proper. Three walls of the room were filled with floor to ceiling pine bookshelves, while the fourth wall contained posters and photographs. The books were catalogued by subject matter, ranging from adult education to women's issues, mining to civil rights, labor to economics and environment.

After looking through the book collection, I browsed through the file folder boxes. One folder was labeled "Leadership Recruitment" and I wondered if the hand labeling was Myles Horton's writing. Included were rules for motivating people, rather simple rules really – get to know the person, see the person as an individual, identify the issues and concerns, connect how those concerns can be addressed and know that motivation comes from two things – values and self-interest and that self-interest usually wins out.

On my subsequent trips to Highlander, my search was much more concentrated and I was permitted to enter the archives, stacks and shelves of boxes filled to overflowing with correspondence and documents, dating from the earliest days of the school's founding through the Civil Rights Movement to current information. The files contained a potpourri of information on the Citizenship Schools, Rosa Parks and the student workshops among other tidbits.

Demographic Profiles

In addition to historical documents, newspaper accounts and secondary interviews conducted by others, I interviewed six people, all of whom had some direct contact with both Highlander Folk School and with Myles Horton. Those people are: Guy Carawan, who served as a Highlander staff person and Director of Music; Candie Carawan, who came to Highlander as a student activist and is now involved in the educational workshops; Bernard Lafayette, who was involved in the Nashville sit-ins, where he studied under James Lawson, was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and participated in the Freedom Rides; Fay Bellamy-Powell, who was a member of SNCC and present on the Pettus Bridge during the Selma march; Cecil Branstetter, Nashville attorney, who represented Highlander during the state trial prior to closure; and Scott Bates, retired University of the South professor, and former Highlander board member. In order to complete the research, it was necessary to make two prolonged trips to Nashville, one to Knoxville, one to Monteagle and Tracy City, one to Sewanee and several to the Highlander Research and Education Center in New Market.

With some latitude for their individual involvement, each interviewed participant was asked the following questions:

1. What does leadership mean to you? Do you consider yourself a leader? How were your leadership skills developed?
2. How did you hear about Highlander Folk School? What did you expect to find there? Did those thoughts prove to be true?

3. What does the term charismatic leader mean to you? How would you describe the leadership style of Myles Horton?
4. Tell me about the Highlander teaching method. How would you describe its strengths and weaknesses?
5. Describe the role Highlander played in the Civil Rights Movement.
6. How did your time at Highlander influence your views?

Each participant was audio taped with permission. After the tapes were transcribed, they were submitted to the auditor for review and each person interviewed was sent a copy of the transcription for additions or deletions. All materials connected with this study are permanently stored in the Appalachian Archives of Sherrod Library and may be accessed by the public.

Guy and Candie Carawan were interviewed on two separate occasions at their private residence on the back of the current Highlander property. After my initial foray to the library, I met the Carawans at the main office. They suggested that we talk at their home, accessed by another sparkling rock passageway running past a gray-weathered wooden barn. Past the barn the road turned sharply to the right and became more narrow and rutted. Near the bottom of a slight dip, we turned left into a wooded area that became a driveway into the house.

The house was constructed of split-logs with a story and a half, a long side porch and what appeared to be a recently added wrap-around deck in the back. We walked to the side porch, containing two caned-back rocking chairs and a variety of well tended houseplants, primarily philodendron, in colorful pots. Outside the back door, near the

grassy parking area, was a handcrafted kiln, where Candie works as an accomplished potter.

Inside, a storage bar separated the kitchen from the open dining area. Candie suggested we sit at the massive eight-seat dining table for the interview. I took a seat on one side of the table, looking toward four long windows that revealed the outside deck, with woods dropping out of sight down a hill, two bird feeders and a cat lolling in the sun on the rail. From my vantage point, I could peek into the living area to view indistinguishable framed photographs and posters covering the walls. During the interview, the cat occasionally walked across the table and frequently fell asleep on top of my book bag.

We talked casually for a while about what I want to know about Highlander. At one point Guy left the room and returned with scrapbooks, books and albums that he piled in the middle of the table. I suspected that age may be affecting Guy. Although he is only in his seventies, he appeared to have trouble remembering, staying focused and not dealing in *non sequiters*. Candie, on the other hand, was lucid, vivacious and well spoken. There was obvious affection between the two and throughout the interviews, they interrupted each other – she to correct misinformation and he to add information he considered of import, usually about the music or to point out something in one of the scrapbooks.

Guy Carawan is a musician with a master's degree in sociology, who had already gained national exposure as a folk singer and musician through working with The Peoples' Song Movement, Pete Seeger, and others, prior to coming to Highlander. In the 1950s and 1960s, he compiled an impressive collection of Southern folk songs and

ballads and that “collection today is considered some of the finest records garnered during the decades of America’s worst encounter with post-World War II civil unrest” (Brown, F. 1999, np). After the death of Zilphia Horton, Carawan filled the void by taking over the role of Music Director for the Highlander Folk School. His memories of the early days of the Civil Rights Movement race along to the beat of a distant song, perhaps reverberating to the intensity of “We Shall Overcome,” which he helped stylize, pace and popularize. Although his thoughts are difficult to harness, his memories of the period are quite lucid. In addition, he was one of the young men incarcerated with Septima Clark during the ultimate raid on Highlander, which subsequently closed the school, and he and Candie were both placed in lockup by Bull Connor for trying to enter a black church in Birmingham in 1963.

Candie Carawan was an exchange student from California who was spending a year at Fisk University in Nashville when the sit-in movement began. She first came to Highlander with those students for a workshop. While there, she met Guy Carawan, whom she subsequently married. Eventually, she took over the direction of some of the workshops, while assisting Guy with the cultural events as well as singing herself on the several albums the pair have released. They are also the authors of several volumes of collected folk songs and criticism.

Bernard Lafayette was one of the university students in Nashville, Tennessee, who with others like Diane Nash and James Bevel, studied nonviolent protest under the direction of James Lawson, a young minister strongly influenced by Gandhian philosophy. Lafayette himself was preparing to go into the ministry at American Baptist Theological Seminary when the Nashville sit-ins began. He participated in those

protests, was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, joined others in the Freedom Rides throughout the South, where he was attacked on more than one occasion, and eventually became “one of Dr. King’s most reliable lieutenants” (Boyd, 2004, p. 90).

After several foiled attempts to meet in Nashville, I interviewed Dr. Lafayette at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville at the end of January 2005, during a two-day event celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. I was permitted to attend the formal presentations, thus, I was privileged to hear Dr. Lafayette speak on more than one occasion and to a variety of different audiences.

The interview was conducted in a cramped seminar room in the University Center. It was late afternoon on the worst weather weekend of the winter season with ice and snow all over the state and more forecasted for the evening. For Dr. Lafayette it was a brief hiatus during a long day. He had lectured through both the morning and the afternoon sessions and filled in for the luncheon speaker who canceled due to the weather. From having seen his photograph as a young man, I would not have recognized him for although he was not heavy, he was no longer the emaciated young activist who participated in SNCC and the Freedom Rides. He was professorially clad in a dark suit, a deep blue shirt and tie. Dr. Lafayette currently directs the Center for Peace and Nonviolence at the University of Rhode Island and travels the country to events such as the one at the University of Tennessee to remind young people of their history and to energize them to become involved. He is obviously accustomed to being interviewed and to giving reasoned responses to questions.

Fay Bellamy-Powell was a fortunate, if unplanned, addition to the list. I asked to interview her because I was struck by her intelligence and presence during the open sessions. In her youth Ms. Bellamy-Powell was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and present on the Pettus Bridge during the Selma march. Although she is aging, she is statuesque and commanding. We spoke at the end of a very long day of conference sessions in which she addressed the young audience as well as participating in leading the freedom songs that opened each session. Ms. Bellamy-Powell is currently involved with the “We Shall Overcome Fund,” initiated under the auspices of Highlander, primarily to fund grassroots organizations through mini-grants.

Attorney Cecil Branstetter’s law firm is in downtown Nashville in a refurbished older building with interior brick and paneled walls. An elevator took me to the correct floor and opened directly into the firm’s reception room. I was greeted by a young man who called a woman from an interior cubicle; it was obviously casual Friday for both were dressed in jeans and pull over tops. I was asked to wait a few minutes.

I knew that Mr. Branstetter would be older, since he was the attorney of record during the Highlander closure decades ago, but I was totally unprepared for the gentleman who came out to greet me. He was dressed in stereotypical attorney garb, a dark gray pinstriped suit, topped by a shock of white hair. It was his eyes, however, that drew me – a laughing blue with a touch of the firebrand he still is. During the interview, conducted in the firm’s conference room, I found out that Mr. Branstetter is 84 years old and still actively practicing law. He admitted to having forgotten a great many details of his younger years, particularly names, but asserted that he did not really care, he was

merely happy to have lived so long. Even though, it was only mid-morning, I could tell that Mr. Branstetter was tiring during the interview.

At 82, Scott Bates is a retired professor of French at the University of the South in Sewanee, where he still lives. Although Monteagle and Sewanee are only seven geographical miles apart, they are philosophically separated by great distances. We were scheduled to meet for the interview in January but the trip was canceled due to weather concerns. On March 1, 2005, at a prearranged time, I contacted him by telephone, the context of which was taped and transcribed.

Dr. Bates served as a soldier in World War II as an interpreter and returned to the States to pursue his degree on the GI Bill. After completing his undergraduate work at Carleton College and earning his doctorate from the University of Wisconsin, Bates began at the University of the South, his first position. He refused an offer in California because of the loyalty oath requirement. Coming from the North, he was surprised at the attitudes toward race in Southeastern Tennessee and became interested in Highlander when he realized the staff was working toward the same goals as he. He has served on the Highlander board since 1958.

Interview Profiles

Because this research deals with a historic period almost a half century ago, many of the persons who might have been interviewed to round out the discussion were no longer available, either due to infirmity or death. Thus, materials in this section are garnered from multiple sources, including archival review, newspaper accounts and secondary readings, which offered interviews previously conducted by others.

The persons who attended the Highlander Folk School workshops were already leaders on a local level; they were those who had made some impact on their individual communities. Thus, the question is not whether the sojourn at Highlander empowered people to become leaders but whether or not that pedagogy honed leadership to elevate it to activism. According to Oldendorf (1990),

empowerment in a democratic society will be defined as: 1) believing that people can be effective in addressing injustice and oppression in their lives; 2) asking questions about the differences between democratic ideas and the realities of society; and 3) acting to change society based on universal principles of benefit to all (p. 176).

From the perspective of the Highlander staff, “The safest thing to say is that all of them had an expansive sense of the possibilities of democracy” (Payne, 1995, p. 68).

The Civil Rights Movement

Although Highlander Folk School had been in operation since 1932, it was never more viable, more palpable and, unfortunately in some ways, more visible than it was during the Civil Rights Movement. By 1941, Highlander was a noted workers’ education center (Langston, 1990), but it had received little in the way of universal notoriety or media attention. However, when Highlander chose not only to violate the state law against integration but also to show flagrant disregard for the opinions of those who were opposed to their policies, the attention gurgled and bubbled and spilled over.

The School was never so concertedly under attack as in the years when it served as the educational center for the southern civil rights movement. At the same time, it was never stronger or more effective, measured in terms of financial support, internal organization and functioning and the number and variety of students served. (Horton, A., 1989, p. 193)

The media attention, the outside agitators, the Ku Klux Klan drive-bys, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the gunshots in the night were of little consequence to those at Highlander who felt they were working for social justice. Whether workshop participant or workshop facilitator or Highlander director, in a way all those with whom Highlander came in contact over the years practiced some form of civil disobedience, a form that likely would have garnered kudos from the likes of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson and did claim praise from their more modern counterparts like Paulo Freire, John Dewey and Martin Luther King. According to Hall (1971), “civil disobedience with an avowed intent of challenging the validity of a law can be said to fall with the realm of justifiable political activity” (37). Thus, by definition, civil disobedience must contain some form of civility. Suber (1999) noted, “Civil disobedience is a form of protest in which protestors violate a law. Classically, they violate the law they are protesting, such as segregation” (p. 110). In order to bring together those who might serve to antagonize or overthrow the laws that Highlander and others considered unjust, it became necessary to violate the state law by providing a venue for interracial workshops.

According to Clark and Greer (Winter, 1991),

Highlander’s task in those days was again to nurture emerging leaders ... at that time, Highlander played an important role as a convener, pulling together people who might not have an opportunity to travel and meet other people because there was no single national structure or forum that provided such an opportunity (p. 54).

Although there is no quantitative proof, it has been thusly conjectured that without a venue such as Highlander, there would have been few ways for people from diverse regions to congregate and plan.

The Community Perspective

The citizenry of the sleepy mountainous town of Monteagle, Tennessee were unprepared for Highlander Folk School and particularly unprepared for the onslaught of outside attention the school received during its work with the Civil Rights Movement. When the Georgia Commission, the governor of Arkansas, the Eastland Commission, the Tennessee Highway Patrol, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and an onslaught of media entered the picture, accusing Highlander of being a Communist training ground, the community became aroused and agitated. In an era invested in McCarthyism and awash in the turbulent waters of the Cold War, it was human nature to identify an enemy and to make that enemy accountable. However, according to Attorney Cecil Branstetter, “No Tennessee legislature, nor do I think the Governor of the state, would have backed anything of the nature that occurred without all of that push and shove, publicity that is being put out that they were Communists up there” (C.Branstetter, personal communication, January 27, 2005).

An article in *The Nashville Tennessean* further pointed out,

The aura of mystery that surrounded the school and what went on there stimulated the belief by some local people that what was taught at Highlander was communism. This fear now has been fed by leaflets and billboards which have been distributed across the South by the White Citizens Council. (Caldwell, N., 1965, July 25, p. 3-B)

Although there were no blacks living in Monteagle and the interracial situation certainly stirred things up, the community’s disregard for Highlander was evidenced much earlier. Released sporadically under the Freedom of Information Act, the substantial Federal Bureau of Investigation file on Highlander spanned four decades and included a variety

of letters originating in or near the region. One such letter, penned in Harriman, Tennessee dates as far back as April 25, 1936, stated in part:

It is the opinion of the writer that this school should be investigated. If it were possible an agent of the Dept. should be sent there as as [sic] a student. He would find that a statute was being violated-possibly TREASON. The writer has no axe to grind, and is asking for nothing. He does not know a single member of the faculty nor the name of a student in this Highlander Folk School. But he knows enough about this institution to know that there is something radically wrong. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI 61-7511-1, April 27, 1936)

“Highlander-haters have sometimes hinted, and even charged, that Monteagle was a hotbed of communism, that the school was a front for anti-democratic, anti-American preachments and activities” (Clark, 1975, pp. 198-199). Once again, sides were taken and much of the debate centered in the press with the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* and the *Chattanooga News-Free Press* leading the charge against Highlander and arousing not only local suspicion but contempt for the school. Branstetter stated, “people are easily influenced who have their minds already made up and they then become stronger in their viewpoints where they think they’re getting some publicity or recognition” (C.Branstetter, personal communication, January 27, 2005). One of those Highlander-haters and the person responsible for part of the girth of the FBI file was C. H. Kilby, leader of the Grundy County Crusaders. Ironically perhaps, Kilby accused Highlander of soliciting media attention. In the transcript of the closed session hearings in Tracy City by the State of Tennessee in 1959, Kilby remarked about the people at Highlander, “They all seek after news and wedging their way into different organizations in order that they might work their nefarious communistic ideas into the heart of that organization and spread from there (*In the matter of investigation of the Highlander Folk School of*

Grundy County, Tennessee, Vol. 1, p. 62). He continued, “I will say this, with confidence and finality, that the majority of their money certainly must come from those interested in overthrowing America” (*In the matter of investigation of the Highlander Folk School of Grundy County, Tennessee*, Vol. 1, p. 79).

Another local resident, W. A. Swift, a Monteagle minister, wrote to J. Edgar Hoover on July 31, 1953:

The Highlander Folk School, about three miles of Monteagle, is believed by many citizens around here, to be one of the hottest beds of Communist teaching in the United States. It seems they get a half bushel of mail a day ... They claim they are here to help the mountain people, but no one knows of any one around here they have helped. It is evident to me, from what I hear, that it is a communist center. (Federal Bureau of Investigation File, True Copy)

A United States Government Office Memo (61-7511-177), dated August 27, 1953 and released on March 1, 1984, was attached to the Swift letter: “Rev. Swift stated that he cannot understand how any school could receive this much mail unless it was engaged in some sort of illegal or subversive activity” (p. 2), and that he was sure “the HFS personnel were acting as spies in the different churches” (p. 3) because they attended a different one each week

During those initial hearings on Highlander, conducted in Tracy City on February 21, 1959, a variety of folks from Monteagle and Tracy City came to testify. According to Myles Horton and supported by Cecil Branstetter, almost every state witness or one of their family members had been convicted of and served time for one crime or another (McCarthy, 1981; Branstetter, personal communication, January 27, 2005). One of those who testified was county judge Malcolm Fults who stated, “we are not interested in them [Highlander] from the standpoint of their integration activities. We don’t have any

integration problem up here because we don't have any colored people" (*In the matter of investigation of the Highlander Folk School of Grundy County, Tennessee*, Vol. 1, p. 9).

Fults and others had examined the refuse dump at the school and Fults declared their finding alcohol bottles "confirmed Highlander's reputation as an 'integrated whore-house,' 'a hot-bed' of subversion, and 'a cess pool of vice and crime'" (Glen, 1996, p. 236). The judge continued, "I have heard it reported that ... mixed sexes go in bathing in the nude, and I didn't see it of course, but I have heard that and it is the general talk around here" (*In the matter of investigation of the Highlander Folk School of Grundy County, Tennessee*, Vol. 1, p. 12). Another local resident at the hearings, Carrington Scruggs, said that he had been brainwashed by Highlander as a child because he was given a book, *The Road Ahead* by Harry Ladler, which said that capitalism was exploiting labor. He further added that Highlander was taking advantage of current situations, like integration, because "When a man is down, you can hit him a lot better" (*In the matter of investigation of the Highlander Folk School of Grundy County, Tennessee*, Vol. 1, p. 119).

According to Glen (1996), Kilby never had any direct contact with the school and Scruggs's only time at Highlander was when he was a child.

Each man nonetheless announced that he had extensive information about Highlander that he would divulge only to the committee, Kilby claiming that the FBI had taken his files and Scruggs alleging that his 'classified' testimony had to be cleared by military intelligence. Kilby railed away at Highlander and its supposedly immoral, Communistic practices. He swore that HFS teachers constantly sought to insinuate 'their nefarious communistic ideas into the heart' of various organizations and that Horton – who was 'as mean as the devil' – discouraged children from going to church, told one young woman there was no God, and did not call on ministers at the school to say grace. [...] Scruggs had come to realize that Highlander was 'operated out of Moscow' and was working for the violent

overthrow of the United States government. Yet both Kilby and Scruggs admitted that they had never observed any immoral or subversive activity at Highlander. (Glen, p. 225)

Herman Baggestoss, Editor of the *Grundy County Herald*, interjected at the hearings, “I think perhaps they take credit for doing a lot of things they don’t do. In other words, if there is a lot of trouble in some place they run down there and take credit for having stirred the trouble up” (*In the matter of investigation of the Highlander Folk School of Grundy County, Tennessee*, Vol. 1, p. 135). Baggestross was supported by Kilby, who added, “They all seek after news and wedging their way into different organizations” (*In the matter of investigation of the Highlander Folk School of Grundy County, Tennessee*, Vol. 1, p. 62). It is true that as Highlander’s involvement in the Civil Rights Movement fanned out to other locales, primarily through the work of the Citizenship Schools, media further afield took up the banner of castigation. For example, an article in *The Birmingham News* on October 11, 1957 stated:

The Negroes and whites, caught in the destructive whirlpool of strife and emotions, are mere pawns in the Communist master plan which has been spelled out for us by the Communists themselves. [...] It is interesting to note that almost every place that staff members of Highlander did field work in 1955, have become the scene of racial incidents (Strickland, np)

Another Grundy County resident present at the Tracy City hearings, L. C. Goodman, noted that when he asked Myles Horton what contribution Highlander was making to the community, Horton responded that Goodman could not understand. “He [Horton] said they were for the downtrodden people of the county and they were working for their interests ... I [Goodman] told him I thought the best thing he could do for the people of Grundy County would be to leave” (*In the matter of investigation of the Highlander Folk School of Grundy County, Tennessee*, Vol. 1, p. 37). It is true that in the

early stages of the school's history, the property functioned as a social center for the community but their "efforts to improve the economic conditions of the residents in their rural community were generally failures" (Langston, 1990, p. 150). In spite of the public outcry, the testimony at the hearings and the vitriolic press, Attorney Cecil Branstetter expressed that without the pressure from the outside to note Highlander as a communist training school or as an interracial institute, the locals "would have just steered clear of it" (C.Branstetter, personal communication, January 27, 2005).

As mentioned previously, it was ultimately the financial records of Myles Horton that caused the State of Tennessee to revoke the charter. If the school were tax-exempt and if Myles Horton were taking monies and land from the school, he was not only in violation of the state charter, he was guilty of tax-evasion. According to the Tennessee Supreme Court ruling, operating the school for personal profit "was a misuse and abuse of its powers ... and injurious to the public. It is needless to say that under the scheme of operation as used by Horton, he evaded the payment of taxes" (*Highlander Folk School et al. v. State ex rel. Sloan*, April 5, 1961).

Despite the urging of Kilby and others, FBI documents revealed that

The Highlander Folk School has been the subject of numerous allegations that it is a communist school and the headquarters of communism in eastern Tennessee due primarily to its interracial character. These allegations have never been substantiated. The Bureau has not investigated this organization. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Note on Yellow 61-7511, September 19, 1960, p.2)

Regardless of the motivation behind the community's antagonism toward Highlander -- whether created by external forces, distrust of what they could not understand, anger about the racial mixing, or the paranoia pervasive at the time -- that ire

is obviously still a factor, even though decades have elapsed since the school and its staff vacated Monteagle. Branstetter summarized:

Time doesn't heal all wounds, contrary to the old concept. The prejudices that were embedded in the minds of the young people and the old people have just carried over in my guess. The Highlander folks were just no good, Martin Luther King was no good, anybody who would approve of anything other than segregation was no good and that was embedded in the minds of the young people and as they came along, the children. I could see it when I was up there. The children are no longer children by any means but few, very few, of them have changed their minds and their attitudes. (C. Branstetter, personal communication, January 27, 2005)

Esau Jenkins and The Citizenship Schools

If Highlander Folk School were to be deemed successful at motivating community leaders to become activists, the pinnacle of the Civil Rights era for the school was the formation and diffusion of the Citizenship Schools. Langston (1990) pointed out that although education was not necessarily considered "militant ... these schools were a significant mobilizing factor" (p. 157). According to Oldendorf (1990), "The ultimate evidence of empowerment ... is action" (p. 177) and as the schools multiplied, persons became involved in the political process and helped establish adult education, a kindergarten, a credit union, a nursing home, a health center and low income housing. Payne (1995) acknowledged that, in the final analysis, "whether a community achieved this or that tactical objective was likely to matter less than whether the people in it came to see themselves as having the right and the capacity to have some say-so in their own lives" (p. 68).

A. Horton (1989) assessed, "Some workshop members on returning home intensified their efforts to bring about desegregation of schools and other facilities and to

encourage greater participation of others” (p. 210). One such deep-rooted connection can be traced directly from Highlander to Esau Jenkins, the motivating force behind the Citizenship Schools. “After returning from the 1954 workshop to his home on Johns Island, [Jenkins] attempted to integrate school leadership on the island by running as the first black candidate for school trustee since Reconstruction” (Langston, 1990, p. 153). Although he was soundly defeated, he had paved the path for others to tread. Under the tutelage of Myles Horton and Septima Clark, “Esau Jenkins saw blacks and whites live and work together at Highlander Folk School in a new way. The impact was profound on Jenkins, as it was on Rosa Parks” (Couto, 1991, p. 304). Candie Carawan referred to the Citizenship Schools as a “strong underpinning to the movement ... it was like [their] power increased as [they were] learning to participate in the community” (personal communication, (6/9/03)).

Not only was Jenkins instrumental in the launch of the Citizenship Schools, he became the driving force behind many of the life-altering improvements on the islands and a champion for voter registration. In a letter to Myles Horton, Jenkins proclaimed, “In 1954 in the county, there were round about 5,000 or 6,000 Negroes registered. In 1964, almost 14,000, so everybody is jubilant for the Highlander Folk School, who have helped them to see the light” (Horton, A., 1989, p. 228).

Not everyone in the South was jubilant about Highlander, however. An article in the Charleston, South Carolina *News & Courier*, March 12, 1959, proclaimed that “Should a Negro bloc develop in the South ... white Southern politicians would seek it. The kind of politicians who court the Negro vote ... will set up racial antagonisms that will hurt both races” (np). In referring to Jenkins’s being trained at Highlander, the

article continued, “A committee of the Tennessee legislature found considerable circumstantial evidence that Highlander Folk School has been ‘a meeting place for known communists or fellow travelers’” (np).

The critique from the *News & Courier* continued over several years and on April 28, 1965, an unknown columnist penned,

Responsible Charlestonians should take note of the ‘civil rights educational workshop’ being held here under Highlander Center sponsorship, and look to the future. For years, the Highlander organizations have been deeply involved in radical political action. One can be sure that the latest operation has not been set up without some long-range political goal in mind ... local government agencies should exercise caution in giving funds or facilities to the ‘war on poverty.’ They may be paying for the political indoctrination of slum dwellers. (p. 8A)

Thus, as much as the Monteagle community resented Highlander’s presence in their midst so did others in the South blame Highlander for intruding in their communities and becoming squatters at the center of controversy. According to Sewanee professor Scott Bates, “As Myles Horton said, these people could not imagine black people starting their own movement. They thought there must always be outside agitators involved” (personal communication, March 1, 2005).

Rosa Parks

Other than Martin Luther King, Jr., who was at Highlander only as a friend, guest or a speaker, likely the most well known person who attended the workshops was Rosa Parks, the Montgomery seamstress whose act of civil disobedience propelled the Montgomery Bus Boycott and ignited the wildfire of the Civil Rights Movement. Parks attended a Highlander workshop, entitled “Racial Desegregation: Implementing the

Supreme Court Decision,” in the summer of 1955. According to Boyd (2004), it was difficult for Parks to leave the harmony she discovered at Highlander and particularly hard to say goodbye to Septima Clark, whom she had grown to admire.

At Highlander, Parks recalled, I found out for the first time in my adult life that this could be a unified society, that there was such a thing as people of differing races and backgrounds meeting together in workshops and living together in peace and harmony. It was a place I was very reluctant to leave. I gained there the strength to persevere in my work for freedom, not just for blacks but all oppressed people. (Williams, 1987, pp. 64-65)

When Parks returned to Montgomery, her friend Virginia Durr noted that Parks had a “strengthened self-confidence” (Garrow, 1986, p.13), and in a 1973 radio interview with Studs Terkel, Parks acknowledged, “Myles Horton, along with his staff, and others there on the Mountain did give me my first insight to the fact that there were such people who believed completely in freedom and equality for all” (Myles Horton Papers, RG #2, Series I). According to Brinkley (2000), one of the last people to interview Rosa Parks before her illness,

Parks left Tennessee feeling empowered to be one of the African Americans who would no longer tolerate racist bullying and who would use the federal courts to dismantle American Apartheid. ‘I gained the strength to persevere in my work for freedom,’ she said of her experiences at Highlander. (pp. 98-99)

On December 1, 1955, only a few months after leaving Highlander, Parks refused to surrender her seat on the Montgomery bus. According to C. Brown (1999), the meeting with Myles Horton and Septima Clark coupled with the inspiration of E. D. Nixon motivated Parks’s action. “Events had not happened in a random way; they were

hooked together through the relationships that people had established with each other” (Brown, C., p. 19).

On the other hand, Clark and Greer (Winter 1991) insisted, “Teachers need to be very modest when claiming credit for what their students do. Who can trace that line? The only way I know it can be done is for the students to acknowledge the contributions a teacher made” (p. 57). Although Highlander never took credit for cause and effect activism where any of their students, including Parks, were concerned, many in the South felt “some conspiracy had to be behind these incidents ... [and all] available evidence led to Monteagle” (Adams, 1975, p. 122).

The Student Movement and SNCC

If the assessment of Highlander as a halfway house had value, it applied most to the work with student activists and, eventually, with members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Halfway houses functioned as a central place where people could meet to create networks and to organize. “Halfway houses develop a battery of social change resources, such as skilled activists, tactical knowledge, media contacts, workshops, knowledge of past movements, and a vision of a future society. What they lack is broad support and a visible platform” (Morris, 1984, p. 140). Thus, it might be a *post hoc* fallacy to infer that there was a connection between one of the earliest Highlander student meetings and the organization of SNCC only two weeks later.

Whether connected or not, more than 80 students, over half of them black, from 17 different colleges came to ‘The New Generation Fights for Equality’ workshop at Highlander on April 1, 1960. According to Guy Carawan, musical director at the time,

these were young people who “knew they were ready to move on ... something like sit-ins or not putting up with segregated facilities” (G. Carawan, personal communication, June 9, 2003). Little was accomplished at the workshop with the exception of the realization that something needed to be done and the development of guidelines for future protests. Several of the students were startled by Myles Horton’s pedagogical style and a few even slammed out of the meeting. One of those who left was James Bevel, who was unaccustomed to and uncomfortable with Horton’s probing style. According to Branch (1988), in discussing Myles Horton, Bevel remarked that he “had never heard a white man speak so bluntly and yet so deftly. He seemed like Socrates, always challenging assumptions, boring deeper toward the core” (p. 263). In addition, Bernard Lafayette commented that, at the time,

I didn’t understand the whole concept of a devil’s advocate and I didn’t know what the devil Myles Horton was trying to say. When he confronted me as a white man ... it irritated me and he was able to get a little rise out of me. (B. Lafayette, personal communication, January 28, 2005)

By Easter weekend, April 16-18, two weeks after the Highlander workshop, more than 100 students responded to the call from activist, Ella Baker, herself a Highlander workshop participant, for the first Southwide Student Leadership Conference on Non-violent Resistance to Segregation, later shortened to Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Boyd, 2004). “The idea was not to impose her own ideas on the group, but to allow them to be independent of the elders” (Boyd, 2004, p. 100), ideology very much like that practiced at Highlander. Although Baker was executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), she frequently clashed with the prevailing philosophy of that organization because she did not believe the group needed

only one great leader; Baker understood that all people involved in the struggle could be empowered to become leaders, another similarity to the Highlander vision. “SNCC’s leadership included several members of Highlander’s ‘New Generation’ workshop, foreshadowing a relationship that would persist well into the [decade]” (Glen, 1996, p. 177).

Candie Carawan, a white California exchange student at Fisk, studied under James Lawson, participated with her black peers in the sit-ins, and attended the “New Generation” workshop on April 1. Although it might have reflected cultural disparity, her initial reaction to the methodology of Myles Horton was quite different from Bernard Lafayette’s. She noted that Horton “wanted people to feel at home and relaxed ... he also was good about helping people, knowing the things that would help build trust” (C. Carawan, personal communication, June 9, 2003). Continuing about his initial exposure to Highlander, Bernard Lafayette added, “I had questions about how they were able to survive in such a rural culture ... the climate, the atmosphere, and particularly racial prejudice ... so, I was happy to leave” (B. Lafayette, personal communication, January 28, 2005).

Although Fay Bellamy-Powell attended Highlander much later than those early students, she remarked, “I learned from people in SNCC that [Highlander] was a very powerful, very positive place and it had been a resistance to a lot of people in various movements” (F. Bellamy-Powell, personal communication, January 28, 2005). When Wigginton (1991) collected oral history on Highlander and the Civil Rights Movement, one of the persons he interviewed was Andrew Young, who had been invited to a Highlander workshop in the winter of 1961. According to Wigginton (1991), Young

remarked, “I contend that being together there at Highlander and talking about long-range goals and strategies [was partly responsible for that] core group of people who were committed to doing something like the Freedom Rides” (p. 281).

In addition, the Highlander workshops might have triggered another facet of the student movement. According to F. Brown (1999, May 2), Candie Carawan noted that on their first trip to Highlander, Myles Horton encouraged the students to remain in jail if they were arrested. “Not long after that, decisions were made to stay in jail, not to just come out” (Brown, F., 1999, May 2, p. 5). It was determined that young people being jailed for standing up for what they thought was right would attract more positive attention to the movement and a more negative view of its detractors.

The Highlanders

Over the decades of Highlander’s history, directors, teachers, and cultural facilitators have come and gone either because their particular talents were no longer required to address the issue at hand or because those skills were needed elsewhere. Highlander’s *raison d’etre* was to train persons who would then return to their individual communities in order to initiate change, a desired outcome which applied not only to workshop participants but, occasionally, to those conducting those workshops. Keddy (2001, Summer) affirmed, “As people become awakened to their own dignity, they are compelled to move beyond being spectators to become leaders in the public arena. Their understanding of who they are, of their ‘self,’ grows exponentially” (p. 48).

In part, the key to the longevity of Highlander has been its ability to adapt to new situations and to surge forward in innovative directions. According to Guy Carawan,

I think that was probably some of the genius of Highlander, to work with something for awhile and then let it go and sense something else that needed doing and move on to that. I don't think it would have lasted all these years if it hadn't been flexible enough to sense new things and new people coming on to work with those problems and have other people who worked before go back home or do something else. (personal communication, June 9, 2003)

Three persons associated with Highlander who shifted direction with the institution through a variety of issues and a number of years are Guy and Candie Carawan and Scott Bates. According to Candie Carawan, "Highlander, I think, as the umbrella under which we worked all through time and still true today, is trying to nurture and help social movements grow to really impact this region and help it become more democratic and equality-based" (personal communication, June 9, 2003).

Guy Carawan was music director at Highlander when he and Candie met and although they have traveled and performed and taught elsewhere, Highlander had been their refuge, a home base of sorts for decades. Retired University of the South professor and Highlander Board Member since 1958, Scott Bates affirmed that he and the Carawans are now the "old guard" of the Highlander philosophy. Interestingly, all three refer to themselves as catalysts or cultural educators, rather than leaders.

Candie Carawan summed up the Highlander idea.

I think these days, there's this concept about popular education; that it is a method, that is sort of a formula that you apply to get people to tell their stories, then you have your cultural sharing where everybody brings something, then you have your mapping where you get out your paper ... you know, you can go through all those formulaic things and it doesn't make one whit of difference because you've not pushed people beyond what they came in with in a way that's going to pay off in some real action when they go home. I'm very suspicious of methods and formulas and I think when this place has been at its most effective, there's a bigger concept; there's a concept that we're trying to change what's going on

here and in order to do that, we have to help people understand their strengths in a certain way so that then they can take the next step. (personal communication, January 21, 2005)

Analysis

The questions proffered to the interviewed respondents were as follows, with some adjustments for their individual involvement with Highlander Folk School and the Civil Rights Movement:

1. What does leadership mean to you? Do you consider yourself a leader?
How did you acquire your leadership skills?
2. How did you hear about Highlander Folk School? What did you expect to find there? Did those thoughts prove to be true?
3. What does the term charismatic leader mean to you? How would you describe the leadership style of Myles Horton?
4. Tell me about the Highlander teaching method. How would you describe its strengths and weaknesses?
5. Describe the role Highlander played in the Civil Rights Movement.
6. How did your time at Highlander influence your views?

What does leadership mean to you?

Evidently, leadership is a subjective or connotative term for the definitions offered by those who were interviewed were as myriad as the formal definitions of the term penned by those who study the topic in depth. Several key words emerged in the definitions, however, such as: vision, initiative, responsibility, goals and focus. Both

Guy and Candie Carawan expressed that leadership should be more of a group effort, citing the Highlander mantra of no one leader. According to Fay Bellamy-Powell, from its inception, that philosophy prevailed in SNCC as well. Obviously, a communitarian, Bernard Lafayette cited leadership as the ability to deal with internal and external problems for the good of the entire community, while Scott Bates added that leadership meant having strong goals and being willing to go to bat for them.

As an illustrative example of most people's view of leadership, Candie Carawan related an anecdote she had read about Myles Horton. He had been invited to speak on a college campus but had received insufficient directions to the appointed venue. After wandering around for awhile, he noticed a large group, which he followed to an auditorium. When the speaker for the evening was announced, Horton jumped on stage at the last minute. According to Carawan, the author of the remembrance implied that was the way leaders are – they find a group of people on their way somewhere and then at the last minute, they jump up in front of them and start talking (personal communication, January 21, 2005). She, on the other hand, stated, “we need to counter the American concept that leaders are strong individuals out in front with people falling in behind ... often, leadership is the nitty, gritty little jobs. It's not a corporate entity where roles are assigned” (personal communication, January 21, 2005).

Do you consider yourself a leader?

Although humility may have been a factor, each of the participants danced around the question and offered labels, other than leader, for the work they do. Bernard Lafayette assured that he is only a leader inasmuch as he trains others to be leaders, while

Fay Bellamy-Powell avowed, “Some people lead within an organizational system; some people create organizational systems. I create; I help lead until it gets established and then I move on” (personal communication, January 29, 2005). Both remarks echoed the Highlander philosophy and illustrated the concept of honing leadership.

Highlander board member Scott Bates reflected that ideology. “I don’t consider myself as more of a leader than anybody else in the group. We don’t have a hierarchy ... we have open discussions ... leadership just naturally evolves out of that. Leaders naturally rise to the fore” (personal communication, March 1, 2005). The Carawans resonated that sentiment by referring to themselves as catalysts or educators, rather than leaders. Several of the participants noted that leadership skills are acquired by modeling the actions of others and Bernard Lafayette confirmed that “everyone is born with ... leadership ability that has to be cultivated, that has to be groomed” (personal communication, January 29, 2005).

How did you hear about Highlander Folk School?

When asked this question, Fay Bellamy-Powell laughingly replied, “The first time I heard about Highlander, I didn’t know it was a folk school. I just heard about Highlander, the communist school ... that let me know how media and propaganda can be both negative and ... positive” (personal communication, January 29, 2005). She learned of Highlander through people in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee who considered the school “a very powerful, very positive place” (personal communication, January 29, 2005). Shortly before the organization of SNCC, both Bernard Lafayette and Candie Carawan came to Highlander as student activists, fresh from the Nashville sit-ins, while Cecil Branstetter attributed his knowledge of the school to Jordan Stokes, Highlander’s original counsel, who asked him to represent the school during the court action that led to closure.

Guy Carawan first heard of Highlander through folk artist Pete Seeger, who had attended the school as a teenager with his mentor, Woody Guthrie. Carawan was planning a trip through the South to visit the homeland of his parents and Seeger told him he must go to Highlander. Scott Bates attended his first Highlander workshop after hearing Myles Horton give a speech at Sewanee. Bates was concerned about the racial situation in the area and discovered Highlander was already at work on the problem.

What did you expect to find there?

Scott Bates replied jocularly that when he testified at the hearings, several times, he told the audience that he had been somewhat disappointed in Highlander. “I’d heard that Highlander was a communist school and I went over there expecting to talk to communists and I was a little disappointed in not finding any” (personal communication, March 1, 2005).

Fay Bellamy-Powell declared that she had no expectations but was open to the experience. She knew the school was run by white people and she thought they must be very brave. She added, “To me, that’s leadership. It takes heart to go into a lion’s den and mess with the lions” (personal communication, January 29, 2005). Bernard Lafayette, on the other hand, replied that he did not know what to expect but that he was “not anxious to experience any rustic atmosphere but ... went along because [he] was with the group” (personal communication, January 29, 2005).

What does the term charismatic leader mean to you?

According to Scott Bates, charisma implies conviction in what one is doing and the importance of that action, while Fay Bellamy-Powell, in referring to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as charismatic, described his voice as “strong [and] drawing people”

(personal communication, January 29, 2005). Bernard Lafayette spoke of charismatic leaders as people with personality and enthusiasm who “gives hope to people, some of whom may be hopeless” (personal communication, January 29, 2005).

Rogers (1988, September) noted that the personal characteristics of charismatic leaders often outshone the movements they represented. He stated,

Mass mobilization is attributed to great or charismatic leadership, and the leaders of movements are drafted into a sanitized pantheon of Great Men. The disruptions and subversive implications of the movements recede from historical vision as the progress produced by protest is memorialized by three-day weekends and commemorative coins. (p. 567)

However, Guy Carawan defined charisma as something almost magical and Candie Carawan offered assurance that the notion of a charismatic leader was challenged at Highlander. She vowed,

A lot of what evolved in the Civil Rights Movement was a challenging of that kind of leadership ...the black ministers, whose faces we all recognize, who were charismatic leaders and could wax eloquently about what was going on. But who, in the end, would certainly not have the ability to coalesce the infrastructure that would carry the movement forward. That fell to the women members of their churches who knew how to organize things (personal communication, January 21,2005).

How would you describe the leadership style of Myles Horton?

Aimee Horton wrapped her dissertation around the man to whom she was married for a time. “Myles Horton was a radical idealist in his dedication to political and social democracy, to the goal of a ‘new social order’ and to education as one of the instruments for bringing it into being” (Horton, A., 1989, p. 255). Candie Carawan agreed that Horton would not be comfortable being called a leader because he thought of himself as an educator. “Myles could get a group of people and push and push and push with

questions to get people to think ... and stretch their own vision” (personal communication, January 21, 2005).

Brubacher (1977) offered, “Horton’s view parallels those of great philosophers of education who have treated education as a branch of politics – Plato in his *Republic*, Aristotle in his *Politics* and Dewey in his *Democracy and Education* (p. 14). In fact, many have compared Horton to Socrates, including Bernard Lafayette, who stated, “He was the Socratic type leader who was always trying to probe and get people’s minds open and stir them up to think differently about things. I think he was very radical in his vision” (personal communication, January 29, 2005). Thus, the word used most frequently in describing Myles Horton’s leadership style was philosophical. According to attorney Cecil Branstetter, during the hearings on Highlander and after the verdict had become evident, “[Horton] was philosophical, win, lose or draw ... his attitude on things were just accepting; that’s where it is, been fighting this old battle all my life and I’m going to continue fighting it” (personal communication, January 28, 2005).

Peters and Bell (1986) pointed out, “Horton does not claim that he has no influence in workshops. ‘I have a vision ... which I can share ... if they wish, they can learn from it, as I do from them’” (p. 21). Each person interviewed applied the word vision or visionary to Horton. Fay Bellamy-Powell remarked, “I am very impressed because he did what he wanted to do. He had vision, obviously, to create an environment” (personal communication, January 28, 2005), while Scott Bates commented that Horton was a visionary Christian socialist who “believed that the poor people of the world, the workers of the world, would eventually be the ones entitled to the world ... it was always in the back of his mind” (personal communication, March 1, 2005). Candie Carawan agreed that while Horton was visionary, “he could also be tough and irascible and hard on people” (personal communication, January 21, 2005).

Because he studied with both, Bernard Lafayette was asked to compare the leadership style of James Lawson, the Gandhian organizer of the Nashville sit-ins, and Myles Horton. Lafayette offered,

Myles was more provocative. James Lawson was much smoother and he would also get people to think but he was very polished, you might say. Myles Horton ... while he was very deep and intellectual ... was a little more rugged in his style and kept tension going. [It was like] the difference between driving in a limousine on an urban city smooth road and driving a Jeep through the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. (personal communication, January 28, 2005)

In Wigginton's (1991) oral history interview, Andrew Young pointed out that "[p]eople accused him of planting all these subversive ideas, but I never heard Myles make a speech about anything. He very seldom even participated in the discussions except to ask questions to keep things moving" (p. 386) and it was that persistent questioning that initially irritated people like Bernard Lafayette and James Bevel.

According to Scott Bates, "Myles has always been called charismatic and always was, in a sense. He never lost his focus; he was always involved in getting something done. He had a spark of genius, I think" (personal communication, March 1, 2005). Added to that assessment, attorney Cecil Branstetter confirmed, "He had guts ... he could take a position, analyze it and stick with it, regardless of if he was the only one in the U. S. of A that was for it" (personal communication, January 27, 2005). Even Candie Carawan, who avowed that charismatic leadership was discouraged at Highlander, noted that "was not to say that Myles was not charismatic. He had that ability" (January 21, 2005).

Tell me about the Highlander teaching method. How would you describe its strengths and weaknesses?

The majority of the respondents agreed that Highlander's primary strength was in the creation of an environment where people could explore their options through dialogue in a relaxed atmosphere. Fay Bellamy-Powell stated that the founders of Highlander wanted to "create a haven so that people could come and ask questions of other people of the same caliber and with the same kinds of interests" (personal communication, January 28, 2005). Guy Carawan added that Horton kept close track of the activities at the school so people would want to come back, "sticking to the main purpose but also ... having fun and joy" (personal communication, January 21, 2005), adding that he and Candie aided this endeavor through music and cultural activities.

The ultimate strength of the pedagogy was the subsequent action that could prove the method worked, illustrated by the question posed at the end of every session: what will you do when you get home? Scott Bates reported that Highlander was a catalyst more than anything else; "in other words, people were oriented [to action] and anxious to do something about it and [the school] gave them a springboard" (personal communication, March 1, 2005). According to Candie Carawan, people who attended the Highlander workshops "did not identify themselves as leaders but they were stepping up and taking leadership roles" (personal communication, June 9, 2003); on the other hand, Stall and Stoecker (1998, December) contended that "[b]ehind every successful social movement is a community or a network of communities. When these communities are effectively organized, they can provide social movements with important benefits" (p.729).

According to Bolhuis (2003), in cooperative learning, which was evident at Highlander: 1) students acquired social skills that were of great importance in life; 2) student self-esteem was promoted; 3) student learning was assured through active

involvement; 4) students served as a source of information for each other, forcing reflection; 5) independence and self-regulation in learning were fostered; and 6) students understood the social constructs of knowledge. Scott Bates iterated,

The exciting thing is suddenly having a certain importance in your own eyes and other people's eyes when you've never had that importance before, especially if you're a teenager or a very poor person or [one who has] always been in a dominated situation and not been able to do anything. Suddenly, you find yourself with people who are doing something and so it inspires you to get out and do something yourself. It's a kind of nebulous idea in a sense but one that works. You can see it working. (personal communication, March 1, 2005)

Although respondents were reticent to cite weaknesses in the pedagogical techniques, several arguments surfaced in the literature. Clark and Greer (1991, Winter) noted deficiencies in the apparent male chauvinism in not only the Highlander program but in the Civil Rights Movement in general, which led to missed opportunities to connect with women's movements. Some leeway must be allowed for the prevalence of patriarchal ideology throughout the history of the Civil Rights Movement but, frequently, men were viewed as the central characters, while women received short shrift. It was primarily women, however, who were the movers and shakers, the organizers and the implementers. According to Payne (1998), "powerful oratory and big demonstrations may not be important, may even be counterproductive, unless they contribute to the goal of developing a broad leadership base" (p. 103). For example, even though Septima Clark had been instrumental in the creation and diffusion of the Citizenship Schools and even though Dorothy Cotton was in the inner circle of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), it was a relatively unseasoned Andrew Young who was placed in charge of the program when the Citizenship Schools were transferred to SCLC (C. Carawan, personal communication, June 9, 2003). Candie Carawan pointed out that

Horton “wasn’t very progressive in his thinking about the leadership roles women could take” (personal communication, June 9, 2003), and Carter (1994, Spring) affirmed, “Myles’ dominant personality may have overshadowed not only its plan for social action but also other talented or committed individuals associated with Highlander” (p. 5).

A second possible weakness, related in essence to the issue of women, was Horton’s attitude toward children and women with children, whose role he felt should be limited. “Myles had once told me that the education of children was not important to him since children could not act to change the world” (Kohl, Winter 1991, p. 43). In so saying, Horton failed to realize that children grow as they are molded and that it becomes their task to carry on. According to Candie Carawan, it took a great deal of lobbying to convince Horton to add a daycare center to the Highlander offerings but that, under duress, he finally rescinded so that parents could attend the workshops (personal communication, June 9, 2003).

A. Horton (1989) acknowledged that even though Highlander evidenced success in producing programs and in outreach to communities, there were limitations in the program because the school’s mission prohibited creating a movement where one did not exist and because they could not avoid coming under attack. In addition,

There is considerable doubt about whether this kind of experience can provide a lasting motivation, desirable as that might be ... traditional learning educators are probably right in saying that a brief recess in the country will hardly stay long in most minds except as a pleasant memory, possibly titillating for a while. But for the purposes of ‘social’ education at least, we can present with some confidence a general raising of morale in many Southern communities where Highlander students have returned from workshops. (Cobb, December 1989, p. 141)

Another deficiency cited by Clark and Greer (1991, Winter) was that Highlander's outdated notions of "worker" lead to failed opportunities to involve the middle class. This theory was supported by Morris (1984), who conjectured that weaknesses in halfway houses, such as Highlander, can produce "relative isolation from the larger society and the absence of a mass base. This generally means that such groups are unable to bring about wide-scale change or disseminate their views to large audiences" (p. 139). Scott Bates agreed with the halfway house appendage but added that "sometimes it was a three-quarter way house and sometimes a quarter way house. It depended on what stage you were in your own development" (personal communication, March 1, 2005).

Ironically, that relative isolation may have engendered part of Highlander's success. Parker and Parker (1991) stated that during his years with the school, Horton was asked to start a Highlander in New Mexico and one in Chicago, both of which failed. "He later came to see that the Highlander idea fitted third world conditions and succeeded in Appalachia only because Appalachia, exploited and owned by outside business interests, has third world characteristics" (p. 11).

Describe the role Highlander played in the Civil Rights Movement.

According to Morris (1984), Highlander played three important roles in the Civil Rights Movement: 1) before and during the movement, they pulled together black leaders; 2) the school served as a viable and visible model of integrated society; and 3) they developed and propagated a successful mass education program. Fay Bellamy-Powell surmised, at Highlander, "people tried to break down the stereotypes by being open and letting people know this was a place where people come to work, to heal, to be creative" (personal communication, January 28, 2005). Furthermore, "black people needed to know that white people were concerned and interested ... that it wasn't just a

black movement, it was a human movement” (Bellamy-Powell, personal communication, January 28, 2005). Bernard Lafayette agreed, “I think it was helpful because people began to see ... that there were other people who had similar problems that might not have had anything to do with race” (personal communication, January 28, 2005).

According to Glen (1996), “Highlander’s prominence in the southern struggle for black rights stemmed from its ability to anticipate and respond to shifts in the focus of civil rights activity” (p. 173). That was certainly true of the literacy program implemented through the Citizenship Schools and of the nonviolent protests and the voter registration campaign undertaken by the members of SNCC. But it also applied to the day-to-day activities of the workshops. According to Guy Carawan, “the people from Mississippi were meeting the people from Alabama and meeting people from Tennessee and it began to grow and grow so it was a larger repertoire ... to get people to pull together, to resist” (personal communication, January 21, 2005). Thus, again, Highlander’s role as a convener, a halfway house and an environment reinforced its ability to be a shape-shifter. Bernard Lafayette expressed, “Highlander became sort of a maintenance center for organizations and movements, to refresh and get away and help get a clear vision of what we were doing” (personal communication, January 28, 2005).

In discussing Highlander’s contribution to the Civil Rights Movement, Adams (1972) commented, “people have been encouraged to find beauty and pride in their own ways, to speak their own language without humiliation, and to learn of their own power to accomplish self-defined goals through social movements built from the bottom up” (p. 519).

How did your time at Highlander influence your views?

Each of the respondents expressed some influence emanating from time spent at Highlander. Bernard Lafayette responded, “I look back on those experiences and cherish

and value them as contributing to my own leadership ability” (personal communication, January 28, 2005), while Fay Bellamy-Powell added, “It is a lovely environment, like eye-candy to the eye ... it’s also restful to the spirit” (personal communication, January 28, 2005). Both agreed that the reflective atmosphere was integral to the school environment as well. “The experiences at Highlander gave us time to be more reflective; even though you’re in the heat of battle, you need time to reflect, to think, to evaluate” (Lafayette, personal communication, January 28, 2005).

In discussing her first exposure to Highlander as a young student activist, Candie Carawan expressed,

What really struck me about Highlander was how people, just ordinary people without a lot of formal education, would come and talk about their own situation in their own communities. It was a new way of thinking about education and it made all kinds of sense to me. It had a big impact on the way I would think about education [from then on]. (personal communication, June 9, 2003).

Scott Bates added that with the constant encouragement of Highlander, he could accomplish things, not only in his community but on his university campus, and Guy Carawan stated that he felt very lucky to have been through this experience. Only Cecil Branstetter announced that he was unchanged by his exposure to Highlander because he had always maintained some involvement in working with the poor and the downtrodden. “So, [he] didn’t think it changed [him] because [his] attitude then was the same as it is now” (Branstetter, personal communication, January 27, 2005).

Candie Carawan summed it up,

I think my views have been totally affected, both by being at Highlander but also by being lucky enough to be part of some of these social movements. I learned things in the Civil Rights Movement that I will never, ever get away from and the fact that we’ve been able to live in communities, like John’s Island and Appalachia, have totally affected the way I see the world and the way I make my decisions. I think maybe the

strongest thing I learned was that the only way things change in this country is when people organize ... you don't wait for Congress to change the laws, you have to organize and get it done. (personal communication, January 21, 2005)

Summary

This chapter offered the interview profiles, pertinent demographics of the respondents, and materials garnered from archival investigation. The chapter also analyzed the responses from both the face-to-face interviews, the telephone interview and the historic matter as related to the research questions. Chapter 5 presents the themes that emerged from the interviews as well as the implications of those responses. Additionally, recommendations for further study are included.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

“Nothing will change until we change” ... Myles Horton, 1981

Introduction

Myles Horton pointed out in an interview with Bill Moyers that Appalachia had been “missionaried and guinea pigged to death, that “any time anybody wanted to try out a new idea they came to Appalachia to save the region” (McCarthy, 1981). He added that those people, although well intentioned, frequently took away more from the area than they contributed to it. It was, thus, Highlander’s mission to show people that they did not need somebody to save them, they could learn to save themselves (McCarthy, 1981).

“We can’t prove it by statistics, but Highlander students report progress” (Cobb, 1989, December, p. 141). While it is true that the success of Highlander Folk School and the ongoing viability of Highlander Research and Education Center cannot be quantified by standard measurements, anecdotal evidence illustrates a relationship between the school’s programs and activism. The stories of Rosa Parks, Septima Clark, Esau Jenkins, the members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and others indicated their time at Highlander afforded them either motivation to action or, at the very least, a retreat, in which there was a level of comfort to plan, to hear the plight of others, to gain hope that they were not alone and that they could make a difference. If nothing else, the persons who attended Highlander workshops reported that they gained confidence and felt validated in their opinions. Ironically, even the negative evaluations implied that

Highlander was instrumental in motivating leaders; if that were not believed, why would the school have been considered a threat by the surrounding state governments, the media and the community?

Research Questions

The following research questions controlled this study and developed into a variety of identifiable themes:

1. Did the pedagogy/methodology used at Highlander Folk School and/or Highlander Research and Education Center produce and/or tailor grassroots leadership and activism during the Civil Rights era?
2. Was Myles Horton a transformational and/or charismatic leader and, if so, does it take his brand of charisma to initiate and sustain this type of pedagogy?

Themes

An array of themes emerged while researching this topic, both from historical documents and secondary sources, supplemented by first-hand and anecdotal evidence from those interviewed. Although a greater number of minor premises were evidenced, the consistently repeated themes were: 1) importance of environment, 2) adult education, 3) empowerment, 4) Socratic questioning, 5) ability to change course, 6) political involvement, 7) patriarchy and 8) charisma.

Importance of Environment

Whether dazzled by the panorama of Tennessee mountain greenery and vistas, like Fay Bellamy-Powell, or merely needing to be away from the urban melee, like Bernard Lafayette, those interviewed agreed with the secondary sources that Highlander was a refuge, a halfway house, and a maintenance center, a place where thoughts could be gathered, plans could be shared, and action could be formulated. Myles Horton was fond of saying that Highlander was not a place, it was an idea, but for many who attended the workshops, that sense of place, particularly a place without intimidation, was equally as important as the work they had come there to do. This was likely never as true as during the Civil Rights Movement for Highlander was the only place where blacks and whites could gather on a level playing field and be heard.

Adult Education

Years before Malcolm Knowles popularized the term, Highlander was andragogy in action. “Knowles conception of andragogy is an attempt to build a comprehensive theory (or model) of adult learning that is anchored in the characteristics of adult learners” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991, p. 249). Jarvis (1985) designed a comparison of the assumptions of pedagogy and andragogy, from which he developed the following chart:

	<u>Pedagogy</u>	<u>Andragogy</u>
The Learner	Dependent. Teacher directs what, when and how a subject is learned	Moves toward independence and encouraged self-direction

The Learner's Experience	Of little worth. Didactic methods	A rich resource for discussion and problem-solving
Readiness to Learn	People learn what society expects; standardized curriculum	People learn what they need to know, organized around application
Orientation to Learning	Acquisition of subject matter	Based on experience

(Jarvis, P., 1985, p. 51)

From inception, Highlander workshops were centered on learning through reflected experience, which was the principle of andragogy. In discussing the pedagogical or academic approach to education, Myles Horton criticized experts as those who produce solutions for problems people do not have. Instead, he advocated listening to the people, figuring out what they are saying and teaching them to learn to find their own solutions. His primary critique centered on churches, politicians, the War on Poverty, social workers and others who came into the Appalachian region offering democracy and brotherhood when what they people in the region needed was something in their bellies (McCarthy, 1981). That was andragogy in its purest form and, in fact, Knowles was quoted as commenting that “Highlander stands out as a beacon in the pioneering of a new institutional form, the residential adult school” (Bledsoe, 1969, p. 98).

Empowerment

When this study was initially contemplated, one of the controlling questions was intended to address whether or not Highlander empowered persons to become leaders. However, because the Highlander selection process required that participants who were invited to the workshops already displayed leadership or leadership potential, the question was moot. Thus, the question was rephrased to determine whether Highlander honed that nascent leadership to a finely tuned activist edge.

As mentioned previously, it is difficult to draw a direct line from Highlander workshops to activist involvement: however, there is an abundance of coincidental occurrences. Rosa Park's refusal to surrender her seat on the bus occurred shortly after her Highlander workshop; 80% of the students involved in the Highlander meetings were instrumental in initiating the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, with many of them accepting leadership roles (McCarthy, 1981); Scott Bates noted that not only his community but his university landscape changed with Highlander support; Candie Carawan became a Highlander educator, as did Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson; and Esau Jenkins gained the direction from his visit to Highlander to alter the face of literacy throughout the South. According to Horton, Highlander did not claim to organize; it claimed to educate (McCarthy, 1981); however, it did provide a venue through which people could journey on their way to someplace else.

Socratic Questioning

Many of those who attended Highlander workshops compared Myles Horton to Socrates in his ability to probe to the depths of a response by iterating questions. The

only way to produce answers was to ask questions and the only way to delve into bottom-line answers was to keep asking questions. Whether it was his intent or not, Horton employed the Socratic method in the workshops: he assumed a position of ignorance on the issues at hand; he employed both dialogic and dialectic techniques; he requested definitions of concepts; and he tested those definitions by comparing them to experience. Although, as Bernard Lafayette pointed out, this method often placed Horton in the position of devil's advocate, he viewed part of his job as the production of conflict. Only through a certain amount of dissonance could people have discovered not only the answers to their questions but finally comprehend the questions they had asked. Horton stated that "the absence of conflict for the oppressed leaves them disempowered" (McCarthy, 1981) and by creating mild discord in an atmosphere where people felt comfortable, he was, in essence, preparing the way for the major conflicts they might encounter on leaving Highlander.

Ability to Change Course

Likely, the key to Highlander's endurance, despite detractors and distractions, was the program's flexibility. Because the school did not create movements but rather served those who requested aid in creating or forwarding movements, Highlander was equipped to alter direction. From its early navigation along the rocky shores of labor struggles to its riding the crest of the Civil Rights Movement to its traversing the shallows of current issues with the poor and the Latino community, the school has been malleable, constantly shifting, but not losing, its bearings. Through it all, Highlander has been consistent in the certainty that people matter more than institutions matter.

Political Involvement

The issues Highlander selected to tackle over the years always evidenced a political component, whether it was fighting against politically created laws they considered unjust or advocating their right to Constitutional protections, such as freedom of speech. In that sense it was politics that brought Highlander Folk School into being and politics that padlocked its doors. For example, it was politics, coupled with paranoia, that played a defining role in the antagonism toward the Citizenship Schools. Many politicians and local citizenry were afraid that if blacks became literate enough to vote that they would immobilize the white political power structure.

In addition, Cecil Branstetter revealed that, considering the climate of the time, it would likely have spelled political suicide for the governor of Tennessee to ignore the pressure to close Highlander placed on him by politicians from surrounding states.

Patriarchy

Although it was a sign of the times in the United States, only men, many of whom were martyred and catapulted into sainthood, were considered leaders during the Civil Rights Movement. As Candie Carawan conjectured, if one were to ask young students who was responsible for the movement, their answer would be Martin Luther King, Jr., although a few may have heard of Malcolm X. Due to a recent revival of interest, they might have added Rosa Parks but identified her only as the spark that ignited the furor; interestingly, not that long ago, I asked a roomful of college freshmen to identify Parks and not one hand was raised.

If persons were well educated, they might recognize the names of Ella Baker, Dorothy Cotton, Fannie Lou Hamer or even Septima Clark but, generally, the public remained unaware of the essential role played by everyday women in the movement. Women were connected to and through their communities from church groups to beauty shops. They were the organizers, the banner carriers and the workers and yet, even if they achieved some measure of recognition, they stood behind the man on the platform. Even at Highlander, viewed by many as the apex of social justice, women were often given short-shrift and even though they gained respect for their ideas, their methods for implementing those ideas were frequently questioned and discounted.

Charisma

A secondary facet of my research was to determine if Myles Horton was a charismatic leader. Although there were clues throughout the historical records and the secondary sources, early interview respondents identified Horton's leadership as philosophical, which did not fit any prescribed category. The word philosophical seemed to indicate a *laissez-faire* approach but when coupled with vision, which all agreed was evidenced, it signified a transformational or charismatic component. But to be truly charismatic, he had to manipulate and he didn't or did he? Thus, initially, there were, in good Socratic fashion, only more questions. When all hope of an answer had been abandoned, Scott Bates defined his view of a charismatic leader by describing Myles Horton; Candie Carawan admitted that Horton had those qualities; and Cecil Branstetter added that Horton had the ability to manipulate others in addition to vision.

According to Bryman (1992), charismatic leaders exhibited the following characteristics: 1) they were viewed as extraordinary and special; 2) they were allowed to have power over their followers, who submitted willingly; 3) they were viewed with reference, loyalty and awe; 4) they maintained a social relationship with their followers; 5) they had a sense of mission; 6) they had a physical “presence,” like hypnotic eyes, for example; 7) they were good with oratory; 8) they displayed energy, confidence and endurance; and 9) they were intuitive. From close readings of the literature and personal interviews, it became apparent that Myles Horton possessed the majority of those characteristics with the possible exception of having power over followers. Bryman (1992), on the other hand, explained that his concept of “power over” lead to empowerment, allowing followers to benefit from the association or to model their own activities after the leader. As possibly the definitive answer to the question of whether or not Myles Horton was a charismatic leader, Bryman (1992) clarified that “eruptions of charisma are frequently associated with periods of social crisis [and that followers have a] sense of having come into contact with special forces or being part of a movement for change” (pp. 53-54). The seminal work on charisma by Weber (1968) echoed the same sentiment by noting that “charismatic impulses are ... most likely to occur in times of distress” (p. 1112).

Bryman (1992) continued that charismatic leaders adapt their vision to the situation at hand and “may draw attention to critical situations of which subsequent followers were only dimly aware at the outset” (p. 55). It should be noted that Septima Clark was quoted as saying, “Myles always told people about the injustices that were there, that they had not seen” (Brown, C., 1999, p. 45).

Further Research

According to Professor Scott Bates, what needs to be researched further in relation to Highlander is the period since the closing of the Folk School. He stated that sufficient information is available on the early and middle years and that attention needs to be paid to the current programming, specifically the work with young people, Latinos and the Appalachian poor.

I, on the other hand, am intrigued by three avenues for future research that came directly or indirectly from this examination: 1) I would like to discover why this region, East Tennessee, Western North Carolina and Southern Kentucky specifically, attracts progressive schools. In an area that is notoriously conservative, while maintaining almost hostile independence, what was it that lured the nontraditional to the region; 2) I would like to conduct further research on the Sea Islands of South Carolina, discover more about Esau Jenkins and explore the Gullah culture; and 3) I am still fascinated by the connection between charisma and empowerment as well as at what point that process reverses; for example, in addition to Martin Luther King, Myles Horton, Malcolm X and others, who could be considered charismatic, there was also Jim Jones, Adolph Hitler and Charles Manson.

Implications

This has been a fascinating journey. I have spent months enmeshed in history and feel that I am now much more aware of how far this nation has come since the Civil Rights era. But I have also gleaned an understanding of how much further we have to go to reach the goals of social justice as represented by Highlander Folk School and Myles

Horton. If there were an implication to be gained from this study, Scott Bates expressed it best; “I think it’s just having a faith that on the grassroots level that the American dream can prevail and that we can have something to do with it” (personal communication, March 1, 2005).

Using exclusively archival and secondary works, this study is replicable should another researcher wish to do so; however, the persons associated with the Civil Rights Movement are aging and interviews may, someday, be at a premium.

Summary

Chapter 5 has presented the themes that emerged from the interviews as well as the implications of those responses. Additionally, recommendations for further study are included.

When Scott Bates asked what I taught and I told him about the service-learning classes at East Tennessee State University, he said we were doing Highlander work – for me, the ultimate compliment. As a final word, Monteagle resident and longtime Highlander supporter, Mae Justus was cited in Wigginton (1991), as saying,

This program goes on and will go on as long as it is needed. When we have no second-class citizens, when all Americans have equal rights and opportunities, when no one is turned away from a church or a school because of the color of his skin, then Highlander’s great goal will have been reached. (p. 337)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Letter to Interview Participants

The following letter, with modifications, was sent to all interview participants.

Dear

After twenty years of teaching at East Tennessee State University, I am now pursuing a doctoral degree and am in the process of completing the requirements. The topic of my dissertation is a historical study of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee and its role in motivating grassroots leaders, particularly during the era of Civil Rights.

I hope to put history together with interviews of persons who were involved with Highlander during that period and you are among the people I would like to interview. I am aware of demanding schedules; thus, I am willing to conduct the interview by phone or email and promise to take not more than an hour to complete the interview. Naturally, I would prefer to meet with you in person but my budget as an instructor at a state-supported school will, unfortunately, not support a great deal of travel. I have extensive experience in both interviewing and writing and will guarantee the information you provide will be presented appropriately and accurately. A copy of my vita can be furnished on your request and I am attaching a copy of the proposed questions.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Cordially,

Joyce Duncan
Faculty
East Tennessee State University
duncanj@etsu.edu
423-439-5189

APPENDIX B: Letter from Peer Reviewer



East Tennessee State University
College of Applied Science and Technology

Department of Technology • Box 70552 • Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707 • (423) 439-7822 • Fax: (423) 439-7750

March 20, 2005

Joyce Duncan
Cross-Disciplinary Studies
Box 70270 ETSU
Johnson City, TN 37614

Dear Joyce:

Thank you for allowing me to serve as peer reviewer for your dissertation. It has been my pleasure to guide you through the research phase of this undertaking and to have been your sounding board for questions and ideas. Although my research speciality is quantitative, I have learned a great deal about qualitative inquiry through our discussions.

Your enthusiasm for this project has been impressive, showing a great deal of commitment to and personal knowledge of the subject. Your style of writing is an inspiration to the other students in this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry W. Nave". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jerry W. Nave, MS, PLS
Assistant Professor
Surveying and Mapping Science
Dept of Technology & Geomatics
College of Business and Technology
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, TN 37614

APPENDIX C: Letter from Auditor



East Tennessee State University

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Service-Learning • Leadership Education • Learning Communities • America Reads

March 18, 2005

Joyce Duncan
Cross-Disciplinary Studies
Box 70270 ETSU
Johnson City, TN 37614

Dear Joyce:

Thank you for allowing me to serve as the auditor on your dissertation. As you know, Highlander has been an interest of mine for some time and supervising your research has deepened my understanding of the school's history and programs.

In reviewing your materials, I read through the transcripts, listened to the audio tapes, reviewed your notes and read the final product. It is my belief that your findings were accurate, trustworthy and well executed.

Should you require any other information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Teresa Brooks Taylor".

Teresa Brooks Taylor
Assistant Director Service-Learning

APPENDIX D: Email from Dr. Jack Higgs, March 8, 2005

Joyce, I have finished reading the dissertation. Congratulations! The only problem I find in it is one you have nothing to do with and should not repeat at your orals, and that is the straight jacket of jargon -ridden propositions and ritualistic bleeding candidates have to go through before getting to the real point. One can feel your naturally gracefully style moaning and groaning under the weight of all these torturous divisions which demand that you repeat some of the same information over and over, like the credentials of informants, as if your average reader will have a problem with Alzheimer's and have to be led through the argument like an idiot child. In spite of these constrictions, which will never change, you persevered, maintaining dignity of effort, as much elegance as academe will allow, an obvious fascination with your topic and skill in integrating primary and secondary sources. I would have much preferred a book by you of your own making on the topic--still a possibility--without your having to tote the bed of Procrustes down this painful path to the so-called terminal degree. I have heard of Highlander all my life and you filled in a lot of gaps in my knowledge. Trying to show whether Horton was transformational or charismatic shows how little institutions understand about the nature of the world. It's an artificial rig not in the interest of knowledge but to see what kind of acrobatic and funambulistic gyrations candidates can exhibit. If you use this research for a book, let me suggest an approach that might also double as a title, "Who the Hell was Myles Horton and What Did he do at Highlander School and Why"? Or something similar such as "As Leaders, what are the fundamental differences between George Bush and Myles Horton?" As I say none of this is a criticism of you or the effort here. If they ask what I thought of it, tell them I think it is wonderful and that you are a genius. Also thanks for mentioning our work with the Bill Moyers Interview. I have some minor matters marked, nitpicks, which I can go over briefly if you like. Just think--Free at Last, Free at Last. Again congrats! Jack

VITA

JOYCE D. DUNCAN

- Personal Data: Date of Birth: July 3
Place of Birth: Greeneville, Tennessee
Marital Status: Single
- Education: Public Schools, Greeneville, Tennessee
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
English, B.S, 1985
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
English, M.A., 1986
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, Educational
Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed.D., 2005
- Professional
Experience: Lecturer, East Tennessee State University, Cross-Disciplinary Studies,
2002-
Temporary Full Time, East Tennessee State University, English and
Humanities, 1996-2002
Adjunct Instructor, East Tennessee State University, English, 1986-1996
Managing Editor, Sport Literature Association, 1993-
- Publications: Duncan, J. (Ed.) (2004). *Sport in American culture*. Santa Barbara:
ABC-Clio.
Duncan, J. (2002). *Ahead of their time*. Westport, CT: Greenwood
Press.
Duncan, J. (1987). *Heirs to misfortune*. Johnson City: Overmountain
Press.
- Honors and
Awards: Who's Who Among American Teachers
Phi Kappa Phi
Kellogg Mini Grant Recipient
Love Service Award Nominee