Communities of Practice Impact Evaluation Report

July 2015

Learning and Talent Development

Contents

Cover Photo

UW-MANIAC "Kindergarten for Grown Ups" Event
Photo by Harry Webne-Behrman

Acknowledgments

Quilters 10th Anniversary Painting Party, July 2015

This year, this very month, the oldest of these CoPs—Quilters—celebrates its tenth anniversary. It is a beautiful coincidence that we can offer this report as a public, formal recognition of a decade of impact on the UW campus, Madison, Wisconsin, and the world.

It has been a privilege to document this story.

—Bethany Laursen

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Introduction

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people who voluntarily engage with each other in a particular subject domain for a sustained period of time, developing aligned practices and imaginations of what is (and is not) possible (Wenger 1998). CoPs are complex, adaptive systems with emergent properties that are greater than the sum of their parts. They are living, breathing, real communities. None of them can be replicated or controlled, but through theory and analysis each of them offers lessons to be learned about the phenomenal impacts that occur in and through CoPs.

Goals of this Evaluation Study

Why Evaluate Impacts of CoPs in General?

Because they are real communities, CoPs have an incredible potential to shape individual and organizational identities. When people—and organizations—change how they understand themselves, they almost always express these changes in other communities of which they are also members, causing an emergent ripple effect across an entire landscape of practice. These changes can manifest as new reactions, learning, behavior, and results (D. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick 2006). Therefore, for an organization that prizes some or all of these impacts, CoPs promise high leverage. The question is: do they deliver?

Why Evaluate Impacts of These CoPs Now?

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison (the UW), Learning and Talent Development (LTD; formerly the Office of Human Resource Development), started convening CoPs as a talent development strategy in 2005. As real communities, each followed its own rate and path of development and only now are we ready to name and evaluate the impacts these CoPs have had in the landscape of practice at the UW. This maturity also comes at a time of financial strain as state

and federal funding to the UW has steadily (and sometimes dramatically) decreased to a fraction of its formal level. This financial strain urges us to put resources where they will have the highest leverage. This evaluation study therefore aims to accomplish the following **three goals**:

1. **To help LTD and the UW at large decide to what extent to continue nurturing CoPs as a talent development strategy, and**

2. **To tell the story of how impacts on individuals and organizations occur through these CoPs in order to identify areas for their future improvement, development, evaluation, and research, and**

3. **To pilot CoP impact evaluation methods in order to assess their viability and replicability.**

Evaluation Methods

Data Collection

Meeting Notes

The convener (Harry Webne-Behrman) took notes during each CoP meeting, originally to direct his next steps and archive community learning. We mined these notes for evidence of elements of CoPs and levels of impact (see Coding Framework for definitions). Notes captured the practices, the topics (domains) covered, and some elements of the community in each meeting. These gave good insight into the reactions and learning individuals experienced, but they were less focused on the behavior changes and organizational results accruing from each meeting. The exceptions were notes from two focus groups from the UW-MANIAC and the Level 5 CoPs in which they reflected on the value (and impact) of each CoP, respectively.

Guided Reflections with the Convener

To fill in gaps in the meeting notes, the evaluator guided the convener through retrospective reflections on two aspects of each CoP. The first guided conversation reflected on how
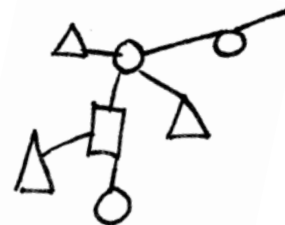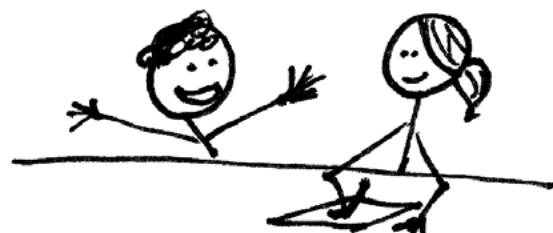
each CoP has organized itself over time. The second reflected on what organizational impacts have spun off from each CoP.

Web-based Surveys

To capture participant perspectives, we administered two different web-based surveys: 1) 24 questions (open- and closed-ended) adapted from an improvement evaluation of CoPs at the Asian Development Bank (Yu 2009)[1], and 2) two open-ended questions to elicit reflections on changed behaviors and organizational results. Survey 1 was administered in April 2014, yielding 58 respondents. As an adaptation of the ADB survey, survey 1 focused mainly on (a) performance on the domain, community, and practice elements of all CoPs, and (b) ideas for improving recruitment and organizational support for each CoP. But a few questions simultaneously assessed impacts and only at the level of organizational results. To better understand how people's behaviors changed and their organizations benefitted, Survey 2 was administered in June 2015 yielding 26 respondents. We summarized the quantitative data using simple cross-tabs and graphical interpretation, i.e. we added, subtracted, and used bar charts.

Data Analysis

We were guided by our main evaluation question: what high-impact possibilities could the UW open by nurturing CoPs?

In the human resources profession, a common framework for describing impact is the Kirkpatrick Levels of Impact model (D. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick 2006). It was originally designed to capture the likely and intended impacts of human resource training programs.[2] Although CoPs are not programs but communities, we suspected many of their impacts could also be captured with the Kirkpatrick Model, and this would help us communicate our findings to LTD in shared language. We coded all of our data using the definitions in Table 1 as our codebook for Levels of Impact.

However, we also needed to capture what is different about a CoP compared to a training program. For this, we used the CoP model published by Wenger (1998). Wenger theorizes that all CoPs have a community, domain, and practice—although not always equally strong. We coded all data using the definitions in Table 2 as our codebook for Elements of a CoP.

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1   The adapted survey was piloted with 25 CoP participants before being revised and sent to all participants.
2   Incidentally, Professor Kirkpatrick first developed his model as a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1954 (D. Kirkpatrick 1954)!

Coding Framework

Table 1

Kirkpatrick's Levels of Impact

Reaction	how people felt and thought about something the group became, did or discussed
Learning	what people learned (how their knowledge increased) about something the group became, did or discussed
Behavior	how people's behaviors changed about something the group became, did or discussed
Results	how the organization (unit, community, institution) benefited from something the group became, did or discussed

Table 2

Wenger's Elements of a Community of Practice

Domain	the topics and issues tackled by the group
Community	the relationships, roles, conflicts and structure in the group
Practice	the learning activities and knowledge repositories developed by the group

Table 2 definitions from Wenger and McDermott 2011

In addition, several themes emerged outside of these two theoretical frameworks. Only three of these turned out to be useful in explaining the connection between the Elements of a CoP and the Levels of Impact recorded: identity, transference, and champions.

After everything was coded, we summarized the themes from each codebook and used them to explain the quantitative data that also applied to those themes.[3] Together, the quantitative and qualitative data gave us a well-rounded understanding of each of the following sub-questions on our way to answering our main evaluation question. That's how the rest of this report is structured:

What (or who) are these CoPs?

What are the impacts of these CoPs?

So what is going on here?

Now what should we do about these CoPs?

_____
3   For mixed-methods nerds, this is a QUAL(quan) approach to triangulation (Creswell and Clark 2010).

Findings

What (or Who) are These CoPs?

Okay, we have to get nerdy here for a bit. Wenger's theory of communities of practice distinguishes between community, domain, and practice, but never—ever!—should we understand them separately. Just as your heart rate, respirations, and skin color are distinct vital signs but together indicate your overall health, the measures of community, domain, and practice are analytically distinct but really interrelated clues to the nature of a CoP. That's why quantitative measures can only go so far with CoPs; the qualitative summaries—and the pictures!—do a better job of showing connection, meaning, and uniqueness. It's important to get to know these CoPs as unique, integral wholes (real communities) before we try to understand their impacts and decide what to do about them.

So, we'd like to introduce you to these seven CoPs:
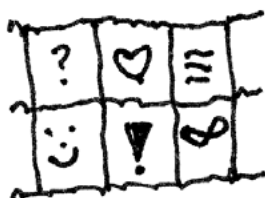
QUILTERS

INTEGRALS

UW MANIAC

LEVEL 5

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP
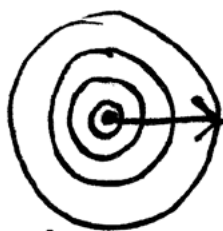
PPLC

CoP NETWORK

Figure 1a

Overall Performance as CoPs
n=58

Community — Avg. Agree or Strongly Agree with Measure — 84%
Domain — 83%
Practice — 70%
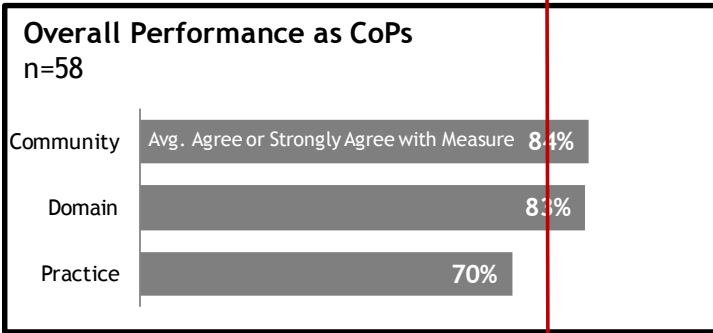
Community
Strong mutual trust. Core-periphery structure. Shifting roles but always structure. Consistent feeder mechanisms for new members. Waxing and waning participation.

Domain
Regarding social complexity and engagement. Fuzzy boundaries with room to explore. Anchored by seeds as part of practice (below).

Practice
Most evolved from or produce study groups or courses.
Every meeting: Seed-->Cross-Pollination & Growth-->Maturity-->Fruit

CoP Network Performance as a CoP
n=15

Community — 89%
Domain — 96%
Practice — 73%
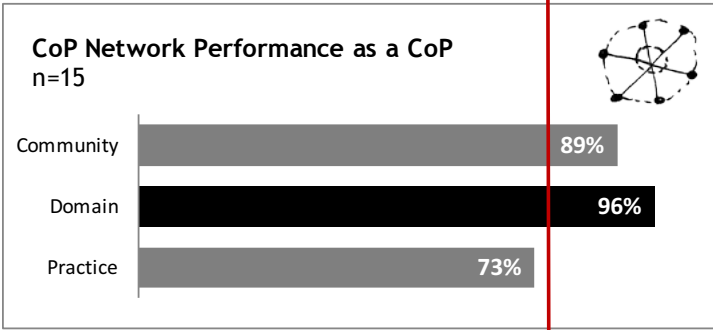
Community
A few dedicated members yet mostly sustained by the conveners. Participants also hold convening roles in other CoPs.

Domain
Regarding phenomena in cultivating communities of practice.

Practice
Brown-bag lunches monthly, sometimes with a planned speaker and topic and other times emergent agenda. No shared knowledge repository yet.

Level 5 LC Performance as a CoP
n=7

Community — 96%
Domain — 90%
Practice — 100%
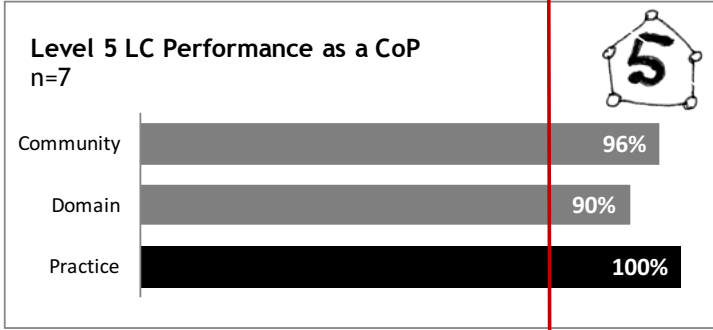
Community
Long-standing, tightly knit, small group. Strong sense of loyalty to each other that has inspired each to take leadership in the group in various ways.

Domain
Regarding the transformation of management systems at the UW. Topics are always politically sensitive.

Practice
Confidential, loosely structured check-in times that function as a "room of requirement," giving each member whatever is needed at the

Madison Integrals Performance as a CoP
n=7

Community — 66%
Domain — 57%
Practice — 52%
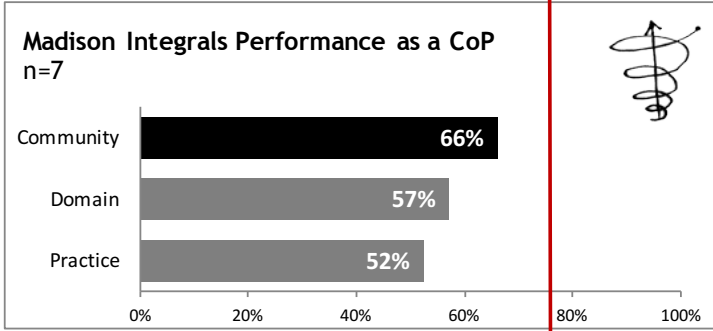
Community
Has been dispersed and dormant for several years until a recent "rebirth" around a related topic. Few members volunteered to lead, relying mainly on a few champions who got burned out.

Domain
Regarding Integral Theory and Spiral Dynamics in human systems, always anchored in academic theory.

Practice
Formerly article discussions, then infrequent listserv threads, then only a few comments here and there. A study group has been meeting

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Average = 79%

6

Figure 1b

Public Participation LC Performance as a CoP
n=17

Community	85%
Domain	90%
Practice	86%
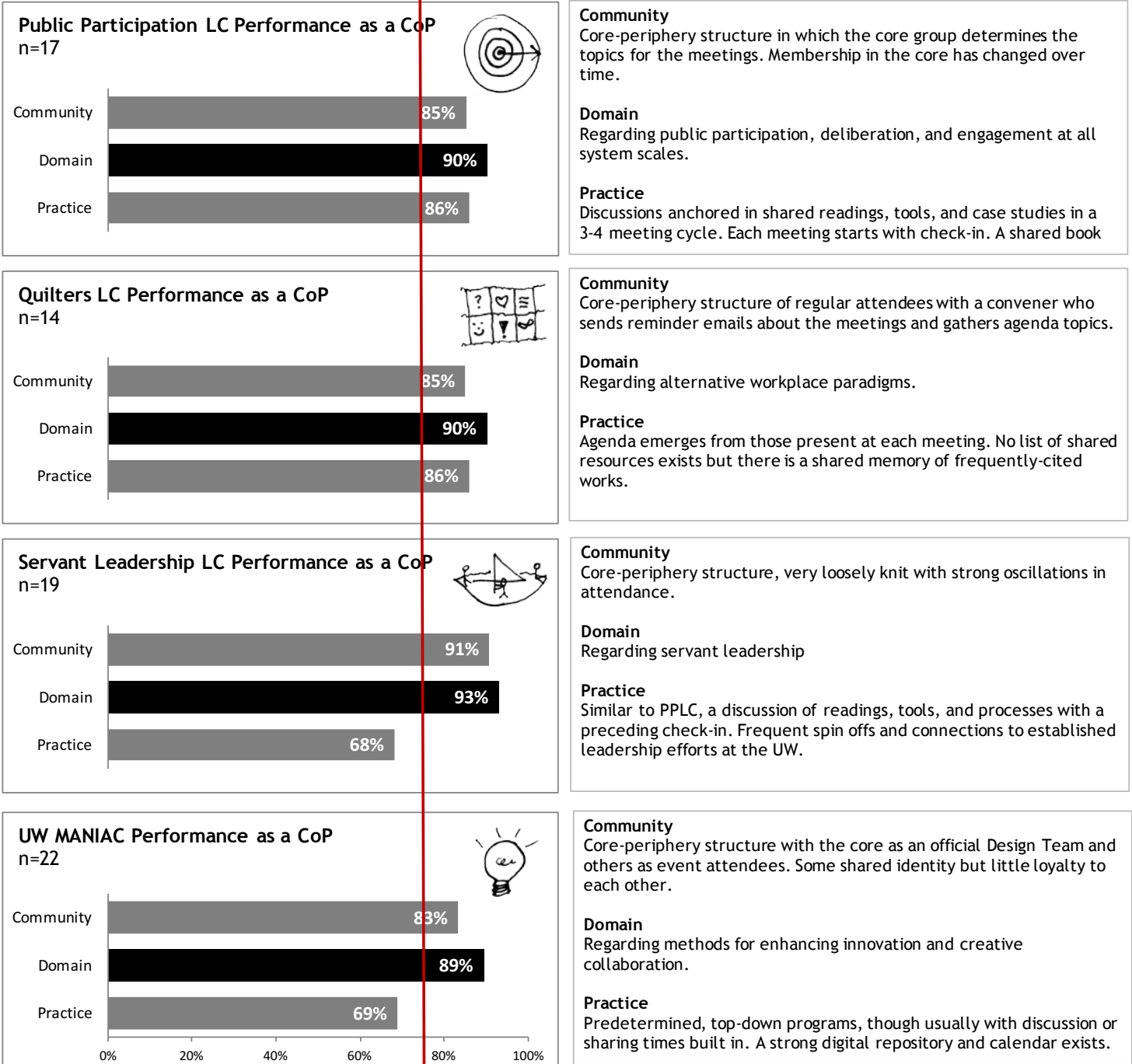
Community
Core-periphery structure in which the core group determines the topics for the meetings. Membership in the core has changed over time.

Domain
Regarding public participation, deliberation, and engagement at all system scales.

Practice
Discussions anchored in shared readings, tools, and case studies in a 3-4 meeting cycle. Each meeting starts with check-in. A shared book

Quilters LC Performance as a CoP
n=14

Community	85%
Domain	90%
Practice	86%

Community
Core-periphery structure of regular attendees with a convener who sends reminder emails about the meetings and gathers agenda topics.

Domain
Regarding alternative workplace paradigms.

Practice
Agenda emerges from those present at each meeting. No list of shared resources exists but there is a shared memory of frequently-cited works.

Servant Leadership LC Performance as a CoP
n=19

Community	91%
Domain	93%
Practice	68%

Community
Core-periphery structure, very loosely knit with strong oscillations in attendance.

Domain
Regarding servant leadership

Practice
Similar to PPLC, a discussion of readings, tools, and processes with a preceding check-in. Frequent spin offs and connections to established leadership efforts at the UW.

UW MANIAC Performance as a CoP
n=22

Community	83%
Domain	89%
Practice	69%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Community
Core-periphery structure with the core as an official Design Team and others as event attendees. Some shared identity but little loyalty to each other.

Domain
Regarding methods for enhancing innovation and creative collaboration.

Practice
Predetermined, top-down programs, though usually with discussion or sharing times built in. A strong digital repository and calendar exists.

Average = 79%

What are the Impacts of These CoPs?

Warning: return of the nerd. Professor Kirkpatrick keenly noticed there is a difference and logical sequence among four levels of impact that ripple from a training intervention: reaction, learning, behavior, and results (Table 1). Successful trainings generate positive impacts at each of these levels. vMore and deeper positive impacts at more levels indicate more successful training. Appendix A documents participant responses in each of the following categories.

Here are the results of our impact evaluation!

Reaction

Participants have strong, positive reactions to these CoPs. They used words including fun, rejuvenating, challenging, expansive, and exciting, all while feeling safe in a sense of mutual support.

> "I enthusiastically bathe in the nourishing, illuminative rhythms of CoP's like Quilters… In general, the CoP rhythms resonate deeply with what I value most: authentic inclusion via an inviting array of pathways for facilitative engagement."

> "If nothing else, it's your moment of sanity. Sometimes we have discussions about work ideas; other times it's the bitch session, group therapy, sharing information to help each other."

> "[UW-MANIAC is] kindergarten for grownups."

In a virtuous cycle, this positivity then generates a "love to continue" more of the same reactions as well as deeper levels of impact. CoPs therefore inspire immediate leadership to co-create a new "we" that is fresh and energizing, leading to discoveries and abundant smiles. Participants feel more sane, relaxed, and whole as they experience these communities of generosity and trust. In short, they really, really like their CoPs, which opens the way for learning.

Rejuvenating the Wisconsin Idea

The Wisconsin Idea has been around almost as long as the UW; it is our anchoring vision to connect the University with the entire state of Wisconsin and beyond. But over time, we'd lost track of the Progressive Era ideals that make the Wisconsin Idea different from any other land grant university. By 2011, our institutional memory of this aspect of the Wisconsin Idea had grown very thin, leaving the Idea bereft of much of its original story & values.

Gwen Drury, however, had not forgotten. In fact, she had amassed a wealth of historical research on the topic. She brought her thoughts to the Quilters CoP, which always welcomes iconoclastic thoughts in their emergent agenda.

Katherine Loving, civic engagement coordinator for University Health Services was also a member of Quilters. She had recently been given a key leadership role in celebrating the Year of the Wisconsin Idea in 2011-2012. She came to Quilters asking for advice, and she came away with Gwen Drury. With Katherine's support, Gwen to write a brilliant and widely read essay on the history of the Wisconsin Idea that is now the most recent and comprehensive treatment of the subject.

http://www.ls.wisc.edu/documents/wi-idea-history-intro-summary-essay.pdf

But she didn't stop with publishing! Advised by Quilters, Gwen convened a series of Wisconsin Idea discussion groups across campus to rejuvenate the its meaning in the lives of today's university students, faculty, and staff. Dozens of people participated.

Their work championing the Wisconsin Idea has been so influential that Katherine and Gwen are frequently sought for comment on the subject.

"Quilters offers a rare opportunity: a protected space in which some of the most intellectually lively people I've met freely explore exciting ideas and possibilities. When I can participate, I relish the luxury of considering new theories, practicing divergent thinking, making unexpected connections, hearing others draw fresh conclusions. This makes me feel relaxed and happy, mentally stretched, whole, restored. By contrast, when it's not possible to attend I feel 'dull' missing and craving the fellowship of our community."

Learning

CoP participants not only learn about concepts, concrete solutions, and community allies, they also build their capacity to learn about these things through reflective practices. All CoPs except UW-MANIAC and Madison Integrals, begin their meetings with a "check-in" practice that sparks the learning for the day as participants bring real work issues to knowledgeable colleagues to receive confidential advice. Check-in is so powerful, it has actually become a synecdoche for all learning that occurs in these CoPs.

"Being able to talk in a 'safe' setting with others from across campus about various issues is invaluable. Because of the relationships that I've built, I know that I always have someone to call who will listen and respect me while providing guidance regardless of what my situation is."

"These years [in Level 5] have been the best learning experiences of my 30 years here [at the UW]."

Through and beyond check-in, their discussions influence how participants think as cross-pollination of people and practices yield creative solutions, deeper & more complete understanding, and insights from excellent dialogue. These unexpected connections stretch participants beyond their comfort zones with "deep dives" into the discovery of new tools, models, and best practices in their topical domains. Such synthesis helps refine thinking on every scale, from a

The Big Learning Event

The Big Learning Event is just one example of the many symposia, posters, articles, and workshops that have spun out of these CoPs. But the BLE was very special. In 2011 and 2013, a cross-division team created a deliberative learning space that was like TED talks but with intentional interaction among many speakers at once and with the audience. The premise was to bring together some of today's greatest thinkers and see what cross-pollinating conversations emerged. It's like a mosh pit of the minds, but with good manners. Hundreds of UW and Wisconsin citizens gathered to think big thoughts about the future.

Several different CoPs contributed to the design and execution of the BLE both years it was held. The BLE conveners used the CoPs as expert sounding boards, resulting in innovative and effective designs. The Public Participation Learning Community brainstormed multiple channels for public participation, ranging from tweets to sticky walls to table topics. UW-MANIAC used their expertise in design thinking to create a paper flower garden that lined the lobby walls, a place for attendees to write and celebrate their aspirations and insights. Quilters dreamt big about the goals for the event which inspired study groups leading up to the BLE to lengthen and enhance the impact of the event.

The BLE contributed to the establishment of meditation spaces at the Union and the WID-MIR, collaborations across campus programs, and bringing Lily Yeh as an Artist-In-Residence to University Housing. More fundamentally, the BLE changed our vision of the level of community transformation that is possible from a conference.

"crystalized vision" to "nuts and bolts." The learning is so powerful it not only imbues new content knowledge, it also restructures entire cognitive, emotional, and social architectures, which can't help but manifest as behavior change at multiple scales.

> "[In my CoP] we are not limited to/ stifled by the usual constraining parameters on thought and action."

> " 'Many hands make light work' and synergies are created when different lines of inquiry intersect and cross-pollinate."

> "You get this bump that helps you get unstuck, crystalize a vision."

> "I consider my CoP a primary avenue for my own professional development. Many things that I learn there end up influencing how I think about my own work."

Behavior

Participants experience three kinds of behavior change: 1) personal, 2) interpersonal, and 3) application to work tasks. The personal transformations participants experience are remarkable, especially for a talent development program. Participants become more confident, inspired, encouraged, engaged, and committed—a fundamental shift from their previous inner behaviors.

> "So often the social structures and human systems dynamics of UW's silos & mineshafts are crazy-making: they often churn out *walking-wounded* who become a shell of the vibrant forces they once were. For me, periodic infusions of the CoP nectar beyond those stifling rhythms refuels and helps me to Keep On Keepin' On in spite of whatever."

> "I also notice I feel more confident and inspired to engage."

Redesigning HR Design

When the UW first began re-designing its HR system, the norm for public participation was limited to a survey and a few town-hall meetings. As with the BLE, several of the LTD CoPs contributed expertise, feedback, and facilitation skills that made the vision of HR Design collaboration and deliberation a reality.. Public participation expanded to include second- and third-shift workers, multi-lingual support, a dedicated communications person, and bottom-up design of the new HR system. Several CoP members served on the collaboration team that designed these processes, and as members of other HR Design work teams.

As of July 1, 2015, when the new system went live, over 20,000 people had participated in the HR design process. This would not have been possible without the vast human resource of facilitators developed through the LTD CoPs (especially Servant Leadership and Public Participation) and other UW CoPs including the CPO Network and Focus on Facilitation.

Not only has HR Design effectively created a new, publicly deliberated HR system, it has shifted the paradigm for what counts as legitimate public participation in policy decisions on the UW campus. Official shared governance committees are no longer the only fora for deliberation, and surveys are not the only way to hear from stakeholders. Such high-engagement deliberative processes have been applied to the Ad-Hoc Diversity Committee, sustainability conversations, financial services reform, and departmental strategic planning processes. The persistent attention to authentic engagement sustained the HR Design effort over 4 years, including 2 years of legislative delays, until it is now a functioning system in which everyone had a timely and meaningful opportunity to participate.

They manifest this new centeredness in their relationships with others. Powerful new interpersonal habits develop: listening deeply, practicing empathy, speaking up, reaching out, and addressing conflict.

> "This learning community helps reinforce my practice of Servant Leadership. Although I am not a leader by title, I strive to serve others and help them grow through my work as a business analyst, project manager, group facilitator, and mentor. This may sound odd, but my reflection just now makes me realize I've changed the tone of my voice from one tending toward 'command and control' to one increasingly of an appreciative seeker of knowledge from others. As evidence, I've been speaking fewer 'declarative sentences' and more 'open-ended questions.' I believe that underlying this outward-facing transformation was the internal recognition that each person has value and insight - far beyond my own. The Servant Leadership Learning Community has fed and continues to feed this transformation."

> "I began to notice how I am already improvising in daily life. I speak up more spontaneously."

They apply these relational skills to concrete work challenges that manifest in tangible process improvements: project management, accessing resources, facilitating meetings, pitching ideas, changing directions, innovating, and taking leadership in other groups. For example, "I have included staff far more in the decision making processes of our unit and become more engaged with my staff on a personal level," and "**I have copied strategies I learned about from other members of my CoP who deal with similar work challenges.**" Many summarized the effects on their behavior with variations of this simple and profound statement:

> "It may not seem like much, but that hour and a half per month helps make you a better employee. It may not be related directly to what you do at your desk, but it helps you do all of those things better."

Impacting the UW, Madison, Wisconsin, and the World

The UW

Because CoP participants are also members of other groups on campus, they diffuse innovations throughout the UW. For example, the UW-MANIAC "Jammin'" process of networking for innovation was once new to campus but is now widely accepted as participants have shared this activity with other colleagues. High-level administrators have also embraced ideas from certain CoPs (i.e. Level 5 and Quilters) and now are even endorsing CoPs as an officially sanctioned employee activity.

Madison

These CoPs have steadily built a large group of competent facilitators who are available for community processes, such as MG&E's renewable energy discussions the summer of 2015. There have also been many shared projects and ideas between community entrepreneurs, state agency personnel, and UW employees. One example is how UW-MANIAC has partnered with the UW Artist-in-Residence program to connect with the Madison community.

Wisconsin and the World

Some CoP participants live many miles from Madison, yet they participate remotely through email, conference calls, and other means. Many of these are consultants who work locally, and they are bringing the innovative ideas and social capital from Madison to their communities.

Moreover, several participants contribute to their global communities of practice by publishing books, presenting at conferences, and inviting international thinkers to Madison for events. The Madison Integrals have excelled in this arena, winning international awards and publishing edited volumes containing Madison authors.

Results

Like tectonic plates, such a dynamic and monumental foundation of impacts on reaction, learning, and behavior exponentiates the organizational results that ripple from these CoPs. Teams, units, institutions, and communities benefit from these CoPs through *overt* and *covert* results. *Overt* results include new tangible products and improved states of affairs. These have included books, articles, posters, awards, workshops, certification courses, teaching curricula, events, solved problems, efficiencies, and several major campus-wide initiatives including HR Design (see sidebar). Here is an extended example:

> "I engaged in a pair activity at the CoP meeting that helped me reflect on how I approach group work. The insights gained from this helped me focus my advising efforts differently with a specific student later that day. I was much more intentional and centered during that difficult meeting. As a result of having a thoughtful, centered conversation I was able to help a student consider his future with an organization that he had grown tired of. Ultimately the student was able to make a decision that was in his best interest but also benefited the organization. The student left the organization—which was a healthy choice given his level of discord and the angst he was causing within the group. The student wasn't interested in changing his behavior but he did realize that it was going to be a bad fit so he decided to move on. The organization was much healthier as a result. When I next saw the student who had left the org—he appeared much more at ease as well."

Covert results fill these tangible results with sustaining energy and meaning. Participants "set the tone" in their workplaces in many ways: "the way I approach conflict," "ideas spread and gain currency," "we develop a shared language,"

"presencing always matters," trust enables faster and deeper collaborations, others mimic new behaviors, and the spirit of the Wisconsin Idea grows.

> "The discussions we have each month change the way I approach conflict and the way I approach my daily work. I am more likely to take time to address the underlying conflicts face to face, rather than letting them simmer. This has resulted in productive conversations and smoother collaboration."

> "So, you want me to comment on when my eyes and heart were wide open since the Laloux events? Only happens when I'm breathing. I think you get it…you can't take something like presencing and figure out when it mattered the most… it always matters the most! The CoP resource is one of my life lines."

Through such overt and covert results, these CoPs contribute significantly to the international reputation of the University of Wisconsin-Madison for exemplary innovations in talent development, public engagement, and institutional problem solving.

> "The Servant Leader group welcomes students, faculty, people from private industry and other state agencies to participate…I work at the Department of Revenue and I heard about this group and they welcomed me and others. This is proof that it is strengthening collaboration across the community."

Summary of Impacts

The impacts are HUGE! There is no other way to say it. Despite the apparent simplicity of a group of people sitting together once a month, these CoPs are profoundly sophisticated social learning structures. This natural complexity forms a supporting foundation strong enough to move entire mountains and valleys in the surrounding landscape of practice. We have documented merely   that which can be explicated, which reminds   us that   much   lies tacit and implicit—a mystery   of emergence not to be dis-   sected but embraced.

So What is Going on Here?

Why are we seeing these extremely positive impacts? These CoPs are shaping people's identities, and these people then express their new identities as courageous behaviors with remarkable results in other communities across their unique landscapes of practice at the UW and beyond.

Years ago, Wenger (1998) theorized identity as a key personal trajectory within a single CoP. He named three processes by which identity is shaped through CoP participation: alignment, engagement, and imagination. Recently, he and colleagues have pondered how these three processes shape people's trajectories across multiple CoPs in a so-called "landscape of practice" (E. Wenger-Trayner et al. 2015).

Transference in a Landscape of Practice
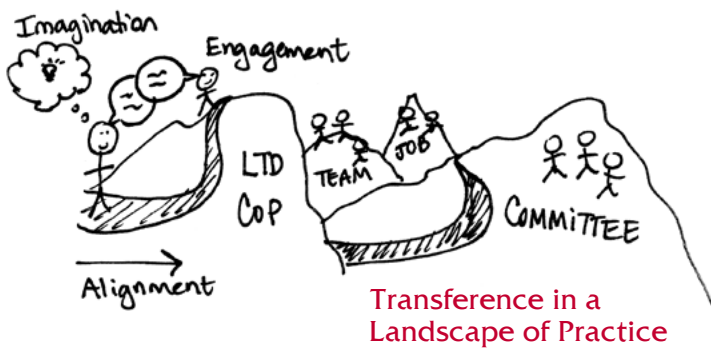
We believe identity transformation is what is driving the impacts from the LTD CoPs. For example, one participant described how his engagement with his CoP transformed his imagination of what is possible in work teams, prompting him to seek and create similar engagement in other groups in which he was a member:

> "The nature of the group being an inclusive and ego free group of diverse backgrounds and perspectives has caused me to be more aware of and look for those qualities in the teams I'm working on. I've discussed some of my observations about that with my teams and we've been working at espousing those qualities."

Another participant noticed how her CoP is a space where she can integrate the various identities she must hold in other groups—a space to align, engage, and imagine various combinations of alignment, engagement, and imagination.

> "Early in my career, I felt really guilty about focusing on my own learning and development, and also about not having a 'five-year plan' and sticking to it. Lots of people were putting lots of time into articulating priorities and action plans, but I found myself recognizing and acting on a

series of opportunities that energized and inspired me. Our Quilters community provided the breathing space I needed to observe and reflect on emerging patterns in my work. It took several years for the pattern to settle out and become clear, so I could feel confident in my choices and comfortable acting in accordance with core values, reaching toward a vision rather than executing a pre-conceived plan."

For many, then, in a complex landscape of practice, these CoPs feel like "home:"

> "[UW CoPs] provide rejuvenation oases in what is often desert terrain and, most importantly, they remind that my non-conventional orientation and passions have a place like 'home' with some kindred spirits."

The connection between one's home and one's identity has a rich body of theory and legend worth bringing to bear here, perhaps explainable in terms of alignment, engagement, and imagination.

There is no single feature of these CoPs that causes this identity transformation (see "Appendix B" on page 31 for two extended participant responses). The community, domain, and practice elements all interrelate and affect each individual differently. Yet when we take a step back, we notice that these particular CoPs all produce impacts with a similar, signature flavor: *deep joy*. It is evident at every level—from reaction to results. This joy flourishes in the remarkable trust that has developed within each CoP. In a safe space of mutual support, fear gives way to joy, which not only flavors but also fuels every level of impact. If trust were to disappear, the joy would go, too, and impacts would wither.

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Now What Should We Do About These CoPs?

What else does an organization under pressure do but invest in the strategies with the highest leverage? These CoPs demonstrate remarkable impacts on individuals, units, the UW, and beyond—embodying the Wisconsin Idea—for a relatively small input of dollars and time. There are no curricula or computers to develop, maintain, and distribute; CoPs don't require many extra salaries or expert trainers; most meet only 1.5 hours per month; and they scale up and down with little effort. CoPs are extremely sustainable: with a consistent convener and the blessing of management, they tend to sustain themselves through virtuous cycles of alignment, engagement, and imagination.

In short, it would be wise not only for LTD to continue nurturing these CoPs but also for the entire UW to nurture more and better CoPs across the institution. The following sections offer specific recommendations based on the evaluation data.

Areas for Improvement

Of course, no community is perfect. While strong in measures of community and domain, these CoPs scored notably lower on measures of practice (Fig. 1a on page 6). Examples of practices to improve include: ways of storing and sharing knowledge with the UW (60% of respondents felt this was not a strong feature of their CoP), mechanisms for sharing ideas with management (at 21% this was the top-ranked recommendation for improving practice), and an agreed set of communal resources (40% felt this was not a strong feature of their CoP). Hiring a student to support these knowledge repositories could be easy and effective; for example, UW-MANIAC has a project assistant and arguably the best developed set of communal resources and wide-reaching knowledge sharing practices.
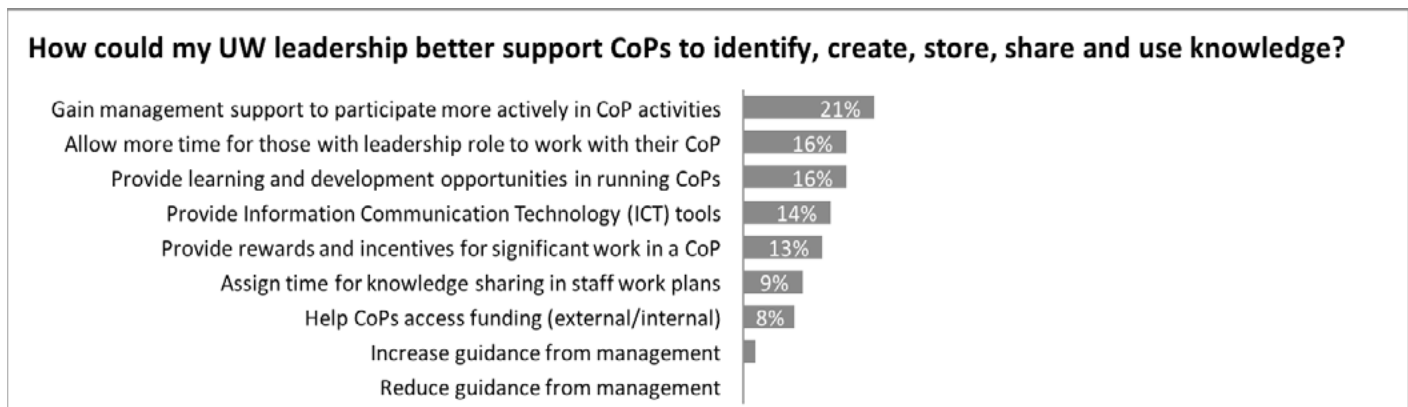
In addition, LTD and the UW at large could do more to create an enabling, nurturing environment for these CoP impacts to flourish. The top-ranked suggestion (21%) for institutional support was more support from managers to allow employees to participate more actively in their CoPs. From other data, we see the most desirable form of manager support is help with managing the employee's time so s/he is able to participate in the CoP. That is, while manager support was the top-ranked suggestion (21%), the top-ranked reason for not participating was a lack of time due to heavy workloads (62%) and the second reason was lack of management support (14%). So, in some cases employees feel their managers actively discourage CoP participation, but in most cases employees realize they simply have heavy workloads and would like manager support in decreasing or shifting those workloads to make time for CoP participation.

In order for this to be feasible, CoPs must be directly related to work: the top two reasons for participating in CoPs were solutions to work challenges (21%) and learning and development (20%). However, while these are motivators for participation, these are not the primary reasons for CoP success: 67% reported that aspects of community (including trust, attitudes of sharing, and a passionate coordinator) account for the success of their CoPs; activities and experts related to work only account for 20% of reported success. This indicates an interesting interaction to be explored further: that people may originally enter or justify CoPs for their topical relevance to work but find the community aspects to be much more important in the end. This could explain why respondents say increasing or reducing guidance from management would be the two *least* effective methods for improving UW leadership support of CoPs (Fig. 2) ; every other suggestion ranked higher than these and they all involved building capacity for the CoP to manage itself rather than be managed by others (a key feature of "nonformal education;" Tight 2012).

Even considering these areas for improvement, the CoPs perform very strongly as CoPs and at all levels of impact. There is no glaring problem but always room for continuous improvement.

Figure 2

How could my UW leadership better support CoPs to identify, create, store, share and use knowledge?

Gain management support to participate more actively in CoP activities	21%
Allow more time for those with leadership role to work with their CoP	16%
Provide learning and development opportunities in running CoPs	16%
Provide Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools	14%
Provide rewards and incentives for significant work in a CoP	13%
Assign time for knowledge sharing in staff work plans	9%
Help CoPs access funding (external/internal)	8%
Increase guidance from management	
Reduce guidance from management	

This is really important!

Areas for Development

Because these CoPs are so powerful, it would be wise to support the identity work that individual participants, each CoP, work units, and the UW as a whole are undergoing due to these CoPs. Meg Wheatley speaks of this as "hospicing the old and midwifing the new" (Wheatley and Frieze 2011). This requires further thinking about how alignment, engagement, and imagination interact in landscapes of practice (see "Future Evaluation & Research" below).

The formal structures and informal norms that connect CoPs to the UW also need to be developed in a healthy way. This will need focused attention if CoPs receive institutional recognition and therefore replicate across campus. A few CoPs is one thing; using CoPs as a sanctioned strategy with over 13,000 employees is quite another.

Future Evaluation

One of the three main purposes of this evaluation was to pilot CoP impact evaluation methods. We found it helpful to use both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (notes) data; quantitative data helped us compare CoPs while qualitative data explained these numbers in terms of human meaning and experience. But the adapted ADB survey was only mildly helpful for the purpose of an impact evaluation; it was designed for an improvement evaluation and basically functions as a status indicator of current CoP structures. A better impact survey would focus on Kirkpatrick's four levels of impacts resulting from these CoPs.

In fact, we think that the most useful insights into explaining and enhancing impacts would come from an evaluation framework that searches for the correlation and causation between Kirkpatrick's Levels of Impact and Wenger's Identity Processes (Alignment, Engagement, and Imagination). Wenger's theory of social learning predicts these connections (E. Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2015), and we found evidence of these identity processes at work here, even though we didn't start out looking for them. The domain, community, and practice elements of a CoP are merely containers (artificially separable) for the identity processes that are actually driving all levels of impact. We have recently introduced these "A, E, I" terms to the CoP Network and UW-MANIAC, and both groups have resonated with the face validity of thinking about their work in these terms.

These meta-evaluative reflections lead us to these future evaluation questions:

> What are practical, accessible tools for assessing CoP impacts?

> Do other UW-Madison CoPs demonstrate the same impacts as these CoPs?

> In what ways might particular CoPs be strengthening their international domains of practice (e.g. publishing books, presenting at conferences)?

> Are there specific ways of organizing (e.g. emergent agendas vs. planned activities) that are more likely to lead to certain kinds of impacts?

Future Research

Our local observations make us curious about a few general phenomena:

> How do individuals use CoPs to support their identity work as they traverse their unique landscapes of practice?

> Which elements of CoPs (domain, community, or practice) enhance the identity work of alignment, engagement, and imagination?

> How can we help maintain the integrity of the non-formal structure of CoPs while giving them institutional support (Bennis and Biederman 1998; MacKenzie 1998; Hill et al. 2014; Wenger, MacDermott, and Snyder 2002)?

Etienne   Larry   Meg   Don
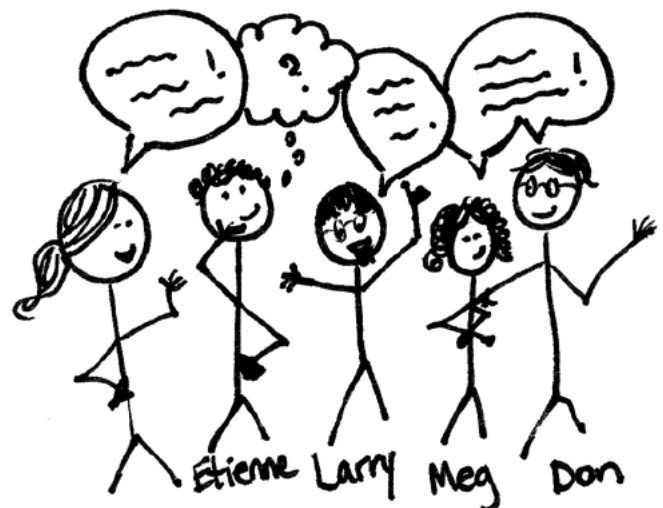
Final Summary

We achieved three goals with this evaluation:

1. **To help LTD and the UW at large decide to what extent to continue nurturing CoPs as a talent development strategy.**

   Given the extremely positive and powerful impacts for such a low investment of resources, it would be wise for LTD and the UW to continue investing in these CoPs. Two areas in particular could benefit from significant attention: a) investing in CoP capacity to self-direct their domains, communities, and practices, and b) careful thought to healthy structures and norms that preserve CoP autonomy while supporting employee participation and the spread of innovations through the institution.

2. **To tell the story of how impacts on individuals and organizations occur through these CoPs in order to identify areas for their future improvement, development, evaluation, and research.**

   We dug deeply into four levels of impact resulting from these CoPs and found transformative impacts at every level, unique among most talent development strategies. The foundation of these impacts seems to be the *deep trust and joy* signature to these CoPs, which then enable and encourage identity transformation and transference to other communities in the UW, Madison, and beyond.

   Areas for improvement include stronger knowledge sharing practices, manager support in navigating heavy workloads, and clearer, healthy connections to the larger institution. These CoPs could also develop explicit support for the identity work that individuals, CoPs, work units, and the institution as a whole undergo while participating in CoPs. Future evaluation and research can guide these improvements and developments.

3. **To pilot CoP impact evaluation methods in order to assess their viability and replicability.**

   We found a mixed methods approach to be useful because it offered data that were comparable as well as meaningful, and from a variety of perspectives. However, the quantitative survey (adapted from the ADB) was less useful than we had hoped because it largely neglected impacts and the alignment, engagement, and imagination processes we discovered were key to understanding impacts. We suggest designing a survey and coding scheme around a two dimensional framework that seeks connections between Kirkpatrick's levels of impact and Wenger's processes of social identity formation. Summative data should be collected from several different points of view (the convener, individual participants, entire CoPs, and external units) but if evaluation resources are limited, then it will be most useful to focus on individual participants and external units.

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Appendix A
Participant Responses to Survey, Focus Group, and Guided Reflection

Sorted by Kirkpatrick's Levels of Impact to Which They Refer

Reaction

The people who are involved in Level 5 actually care about their jobs on campus; they are passionate about the University. It's a "support network." "If nothing else, it's your moment of sanity. Sometimes we have discussions about work ideas; other times it's the bitch session, group therapy, sharing information to help each other.."

My local consulting business has benefited greatly from my regular participation in my UW CoP. I can always count on the members for creative ideas and other types of support.

This has been an excellent and helpful experience. I met a lot of very helpful and knowledgeable people. I would love to continue participating in this in the future.

Working with these groups is incredibly powerful and helpful.

The MANIAC events I manage to attend (I guess that is my CoP) are always stimulating, fun, and provide opportunities to connect with others across campus.

I appreciate the opportunity to have these free professional development events on campus.

enjoyed the workshops

Right now the main value is in providing a space for students and faculty to engage with integral theory and practice.

The conversational nature of Quilters means an effort to "grow" the group dramatically would likely be counterproductive, damaging. To have many more Quilters would mean creating additional Quilters-type groups.

I would not favor using technology in ways that diminish "face time." Nor would I advocate for "formalizing" participation in our community of practice. The fluid nature of our conversations offers a welcome antidote to highly structured work. The gift of time is priceless.

Quilters offers a rare opportunity: a protected space in which some of the most intellectually lively people I've met freely explore exciting ideas and possibilities. When I can participate, I relish the luxury of considering new theories, practicing divergent thinking, making unexpected connections, hearing others draw fresh conclusions. This makes me feel relaxed and happy, mentally stretched, whole, restored. By contrast, when it's not possible to attend I feel "dull" missing and craving the fellowship of our community.

Although I still feel protective and "selfish" about my Quilters time, I do believe that when we invest in this kind of free thinking and synthesis, we grow as individuals and in community with each other, and the university reaps the reward of higher quality, more creative work.

What I most appreciate about this group--and most of the UW CoP experiences I have had--are their genuinely inviting boundary-spanning opportunities to gather/network, stretch and grow in generative ways beyond *de box* for the greater good.

In general, the CoP rhythms resonate deeply with what I value most: authentic inclusion via an inviting array of pathways for facilitative engagement. Individual voices & stories matter and so do the leavening forces of social systems/structures and contexts (notably, power and privileging realities)!

They have been a much valued and appreciated LIFELINE for me in my boundary-spanning, innovation-seeking, social justice-grounded orientations to doing my work and the work. Down where the rubber meets meets the road, my passionate commitments and stance often stand alone in sometimes crazy-making climates of BEing. I am grateful for CoP gatherings and networks!

I enthusiastically bathe in the nourishing, illuminative rhythms of CoP's like Quilters--its rounds of creative emergence and networking, its authentic inclusion of wide arrays of topics & themes, etc. They provide rejuvenation oases in what is often desert terrain and,

most importantly, they remind that my non-conventional orientation and passions have a place like "home" with some kindred spirits.

I am profoundly grateful for Harry Webne-Behrman's vision and work over the years===> discerning and/or conjuring up ripely fertile terrain for emerging CoPs. Even if only for a slice of the time, I attend whenever I can *seize* the time because my many experiences over many years have convinced of the foundational value of CoP. They are especially crucial for those of us striving to make a difference for the greater good--and our own greater good as ravenous lifelong learners--in spite of whatever.

Sorry, no peak experiences....well except for engaging with Hazel S. again.

Reminded me to be present, or I am going to miss connections like this. But then moments with Harry, Darin, and many of others attending were of the kind I value most as I walk my path...eyes wide open, heart the same, full of energy and possibility and ready and willing to share. I'm not so sure the topic is very important. But Harry and Darin are.....you can't place a high enuf value on what they bring, of themselves, to the party. Let that soak in...I've met a lot of people...these two are very unusual...in a way that is very good for others.

The greatest experience in Level 5 has been support and fresh ideas that are part of this group.

Listening and participating in this group provides an experience that -my opinion- is similar to one who has found a group that speaks the same language that I use to best express myself, and viewing issues and solutions in that language.

This was a promising introduction, but too short. Best experience for me was the new connections made.

Diversity of the people who show up is highly valued, "campus/community connections, people from varied departments and campus roles," and these people are often valuable for forging relationships to address work needs. Keep it diverse and unique!

Two tracks of programs stick in peoples' minds: "Jammin'" networking and "Other workshops." This tells us that the internal distinctions we make regarding different names and series are not shared by our participants. Therefore, keep it simple.

Opportunity to play and the value of play;

helps release tension

Safe environment super important.

Learning

"I have a project, I'm stuck, I need advice.," The PPLC gives advice.

Several graduate students and others stay involved through the e-list.

Individual impacts: learning how to navigate the system in fostering respectful workplace environments.

Helped people who are involved in the groups to understand the idea of CoPs, e.g. digital habitats.

Individual learning, while varied among members, appears to be quite profound for several of them.

This has been true since the group's inception, which started from a study group committed to action learning about public deliberation projects, and consulting with one another about those situations is an ongoing feature.

Once again, the sense of safety experienced by members, so they can dive deeply into topics related to their most vulnerable practices, is a key benefit of membership.

This group [UW-MANIAC] is different from the others, as it does a lot of program planning and delivery: the Design Team plans the various events, each of which has individual impacts, but we have learned through focus groups and event surveys that people see applications to their varied workplace environments.

Madison Integrals LC: Grew out of a study group on integral theory and spiral dynamics, the group met monthly for a few years, reading materials about the topic and seeking ways it might be applied to our work.

I live in the box of Union South, so Level 5 gave me campus perspectives on classified staff congress. Learned dis/advantages of different staff policies.

"Moment of discovery:" I had a personal medical emergency due to stress. Next day, Level 5 meeting found out 14 of 15 people present have had to take advantage of emergency services for a stress related issue. "The Sustainability Problem. A huge Oh My God moment."

The people who are involved in Level 5 actually care about their jobs on campus; they are passionate about the University. It's a "support network." "If nothing else, it's your moment of sanity. Sometimes we have discussions about work ideas; other times it's the bitch session, group therapy, sharing information to help each other.."

There's always an action-oriented component, problem solving in Level 5. "You get this bump that helps you get unstuck, crystalize a vision." A level of comfort and trust.

With a pressing grants problem it helped knowing people.

Participants are sincere, helpful, and extremely knowledgeable. "This has been one of the most, best leadership experiences. These years have been the best learning experiences of my 30 years here."

Know you're going to get confidential advice. "That's huge. There are times you feel like you don't know who to turn to." They turn to level 5.

What did you learn? That other people have these problems

Ad-hoc problem solving. We are all connected to different networks. e.g conversations about what is happening with the budget situation.

Understanding how nuts and bolts work on this campus.

It wasn'tt just talking about the issue or project at hand. It was a back-and-forth with everything that happened.

CPO - community partnerships and outreach is attended regularly by both University and community partners, also the university represented by a variety of disciplines as well as Extension. The community attendees are able ot look to a variety of people for partnerships because

of the breadth of the group. Often projects that included community members are shared and offered as models ot other disciplines.

Big Learning Event: On several occasions, members of Quilters have discussed Etienne Wenger's work on communities of practice. Lindsey Stoddard Cameron and Shoko Miyagi had a follow-up conversation with Mary Hoddy about how a key point from Wenger's BLE presentation -- "identity as transformative invitation" -- might inform our work with new employees.

Over the years, I've found it enormously helpful to read and reflect on and discuss a number of books that Harry Webne-Behrman has recommended.

Many things that I learn there end up influencing how I think about my own work.

opportunities to test ideas

opportunities for simulations

Concrete solutions to difficult/challenging workplace situations are identified and strategies to solve problems are continually being generated.

Every topic discussed develops a deeper and more complete understanding in a group setting than in a solitary environment.

3: I've learned best practices for a variety of tasks through my CoP colleagues

We meet to discuss to current issues and problem solve. We share best practices (processes, forms, etc) to reduce duplication of work.

Both the Quilters and Servant Leadership groups have exposed me to new resources and concepts

They're also sometimes helpful refreshers on goals, concepts, etc. that are part of things I want to work on.

CPO monthly meetings are a staple for learning about other projects.

It would be time-consuming and difficult, perhaps impossible, to duplicate what we are able to learn together through individual research.

"Many hands make light work" and synergies are created when different lines of inquiry intersect and cross-pollinate.

I could describe any number of Quilters discussions yielding useful knowledge that I've subsequently applied in my work. (For example, I understand contemporary legislative and budget issues better because Gwen Drury guided us through a lengthy and detailed exploration of the Wisconsin Idea, the importance of public engagement, the potential of social centers, and the principles underlying UW-Madison's shared governance system.)

In fact, participating in the learning communities from which our community of practice emerged, and engaging in sustained conversation and study with fellow Quilters over the past decade, has substantially shaped my understanding of organizational culture, development, and change.

We are not limited to/stifled by the usual constraining parameters on thought and action.

The greatest experience in Level 5 has been support and fresh ideas that are part of this group.

You can change your own behavior but it's hard to accept that others may not see or care to do anything but show up or get through the day. I'm fine with that now. You do what you can and you understand that if someone wants to be a red or blue let them. Makes life a lot easier. People will move only when they want to. You can only hope to structure the enviroment to allow them to do that.

The article we read on fixing, helping, serving had an impact on me. I have been reflecting on how best to serve, rather than fix or help.

I engaged in an pair activity at the CoP meeting that helped me reflect on how I approach group work. The insights gained from this helped me focus my advising efforts differently with a specific student later that day. I was much more intentional and centered during that difficult meeting.

Faisal created community right away, asking us questions and engaged us. Demonstrated how you can say something in art that you may not be able to say in words; how to change the system from within the system

learning from play;

Learning about other cool stuff in community that you want to connect to.

Safe environment to move beyond comfort zone.

Seeing creative solution in action.

Connections unanticipated

Behavior

People acquire skills to approach their work more innovatively and creatively. E.g. Improv & leadership skills in a meeting (leading and participating with improv skills). E.g. Decision making workshop shows us there are different ways to make decisions. Not enough to make a new pattern, but people are more aware and open to building the habit.*How do we build in follow up coaching to reinforce these awarenesses?

MANIAC foray to 100 State. As a result, some people continued to interact with 100 State.

Individual impacts: learning how to navigate the system in fostering respectful workplace environments.

It started with Level 4: project to set up keywords to find courses. The Level 5 group provided outsider perspective. Changed directions twice based on feedback. So, she jumped in as a Level 5 mentor for Level 4. Felt like she was doing a better job thinking like a user.

Level 5 kept me from getting discouraged with training project.

Felt empowered to step outside of regular job. "It's not scary when you have other people to support you. Sadly to say, in my division, I'm not getting that support."

Created training program: Level 5 suggested getting the trainees together to ask them what they wanted to learn. The mere fact of involving them, made them feel more involved in their unit. Still rolling it out ripples remain to be seen.

Workplace climate: facilitated discussion about this. Co-level 4 person stepped in an helped facilitate. Invited back a second year. Then it became a series of campus discussions; then L&S and CALS did some of their own. Now people are actually talking about classism.

An employee was embezzling, and whole financial unit turned over. Level 5 talked through specific challenges in that transition. Put proper policies in place; mental support to keep going.

Trust is the foundation of the "community" in "community of practice." It can be built. Being able to reach out to individuals in external meetings. Recognizing who is trustworthy and who isn,Äôt.

Being able to talk in a "safe" setting with others from across campus about various issues is invaluable. Because of the relationships that I've built, I know that I always have someone to call who will listen and respect me while providing guidance regardless of what my situation is.

I am not a UW staff person; I work for a state agency. My participation in Focus on Facilitation meetings helps me facilitate meetings within my agency and with external partners. If you want a more detailed response, ask me (Barb Bickford)

I've met and built relationships with folks from many departments across UW-Madison and in the larger community.

I am housed in the School of Education and as a result of my involvement with this CoP I have substantively engaged with students, faculty, and staff outside of that, such as Human Resources.

Ad Hoc Diversity Committee and Engagement, Inclusion & Diversity: Lindsey Stoddard Cameron served as an ex officio member of the Ad Hoc Diversity Committee.

Shoko is an active member of the FP&M Engagement, Inclusion & Diversity team (& currently is developing a new web portal for FP&M employees informed by FP&M and EID values).

I frequently access resources recommended by my CoP members & share them with colleagues.

the CoP has given me abilities that I could not have gotten anywhere else in the areas of leadership, listening, managing, empathy, wellness, conflict resolution, and difficult conversations.

For example, when you are dealing with an employee that has personal issues, we can now implement the "carefrontation" concept!

CoP helped me improve how I engage with others through business analysis, project management, and group facilitation.

Both the Quilters and Servant Leadership groups have exposed me to new resources and concepts, as well as ways to implement concepts on a regular basis.

I have copied strategies I learned about from other members of my CoP who deal with similar work challenges.

Our emphasis on positive change and willingness to experiment frequently result in the immediate application of ideas and resources explored through "just in time" conversation.

The most meaningful gift of Quilters has been to foster the development of my "true self" to help me develop the awareness and strength NOT to change my behavior.

Early in my career, I felt really guilty about focusing on my own learning and development, and also about not having a "five year plan" and sticking to it. Lots of people were putting lots of time into articulating priorities and action plans, but I found myself recognizing and acting on a series of opportunities that energized and inspired me. Our Quilters community provided the breathing space I needed to observe and reflect on emerging patterns in my work. It took several years for the pattern to settle out and become clear, so I could feel confident in my choices and comfortable acting in accordance with core values, reaching toward a vision rather than executing a pre-conceived plan.

We flex and stretch our mental muscles, exercise our imaginations, gain capacity to envision alternative systems and solutions.

So often the social structures and human systems dynamics of UW's silos & mineshafts are crazy-making===> they often churn out *walking-wounded* who become a shell of the vibrant forces they once were. For me, periodic infusions of the CoP nectar beyond those stifling rhythms refuels and helps me to Keep On Keepin' On in spite of whatever.

In addition to my active cultivation of independent bases of validation beyond the university, the CoPs are internal vitalization & rejuvenation resources that help me to do my work: most notably, to continuously serve as a beacon of appreciatively-affirming provocative possibilities, despite contrary operative forces.

I enthusiastically bathe in the nourishing, illuminative rhythms of CoP's like Quilters--its rounds of creative emergence and networking, its authentic inclusion of wide arrays of topics & themes, etc. They provide rejuvenation oases in what is often desert terrain and, most importantly, they remind that my non-conventional orientation and passions have a place like "home" with some kindred spirits.

Through the Level 4 group I was able to commit to follow through on my project. I received advice and encouragment. Additionally, I was able to participate in conversations regarding campus wide issues. This definitely broadened my perception of these issues. It has been invaluable to me both at work and in my role in shared governance.

I have included staff far more in the decision making processes of our unit and become more engaged with my staff on a personal level.

This was a leadership development focused MANIAC topic, and we had to put together our pitch or 2 minute elevator speech. Since that session I've been asked to do this exercise a number of times but through different efforts. Getting a start with it with MANIAC was helpful. It wasn't anything I thought was all that necessary. I wasn't in sales, so why did I need a pitch? With declining state subsidies, more competition for funding, etc., we all need to be better at pitching our projects, services, and even ourselves.

* Connecting with other people who are interested in and pursuing this practice

* Working with those people in other contexts, e.g., consulting and training

* Incorporating readings and resources into training programs

I began to notice how I am already improvising in daily life. I speak up more spontaneously.

I feel more confident about offering things to others in my organization.

This learning community helps reinforce my practice of Servant Leadership. Although I am not a leader by title, I strive to serve others and help them grow through my work as a business analyst, project manager, group facilitator, and mentor. This may sound odd, but my reflection just now makes me realize I've changed the tone of my voice from one tending toward "command and control" to one increasingly of an appreciative seeker of knowledge from others. As evidence, I've been speaking fewer "declarative sentences" and more "open-ended questions." I believe that underlying this outward-facing transformation was the internal recognition that each person has value and insight - far beyond my own. The Servant Leadership Learning Community has fed and continues to feed this transformation.

Too many benefits to even begin to describe.

You can change your own behavior but it's hard to accept that others may not see or care to do anything but show up or get through the day. I'm fine with that now. You do what you can and you understand that if someone wants to be a red or blue let them. Makes life a lot easier. People will move only when they want to. You can only hope to structure the enviroment to allow them to do that.

The discussions we have each month change the way I approach conflict and the way I approach my daily work. I am more likely to take time to address the underlying conflicts face to face, rather than letting them simmer.

In general, attending UW-MANIAC's events have helped me be more creative and innovative in my personal life and in the community activities I am involved with. I am retired and no longer work.

Empathy is one of the characteristics of a servant leader. I have tried to practice more empathy in my life and with my relationships with others.

This CoP has been very useful to provide a forum to discuss ideas related to "integral approach" with UW and community members. Launching the group and seeing it grow and evolve was a peak experience for me. The ebb and flow of this group sometimes dwindle the impact, but personally I have been able to incorporate many insights from these experiences into my teaching.

I would think and act using an integral lens...the four quandrants. Using a multidisciplinary and multidimensional approach to addressing tough problems on campus.

What I learned though these engagements continues to inform how I work and the resources I bring yo the table. Specific changes include deeper listening, better able to assess the resources of my team, access to a broad network of support (I used to be the only one who did things differently and that was very limited). I also notice I feel more confident and inspired to engage.

What I learn though these engagements continues to inform how I work and the resources I bring yo the table. Specific changes include deeper listening, better able to assess the resources of my team, access to a broad network of support (I used to be the only one who did things differently and that was very limited). I also notice I feel more confident and inspired to engage.

I was able to have a network of people to rely on that are passionate about their work and the university that I can call and trust to speak to me about any topic. They may not always have the answer but can usually give me a direction to move in or a person that can help me. If they cannot even do that, they let me bounce things off them just to see if I am on the right track. I know I can trust them to keep my conversation confidential as well.

I feel as though I have learned so much from the experience of others and have been reminded that we always need to view things from other perspectives than our own. I gained skills in conflict resolution, communication, supervision, and "people skills". The Level 5 experience has twists and turns in situations that can't possibly be predicted, so it's never the same there's just so much you take in from sharing those experiences as they go through them. Highly recommended!

Brainstorming for solutions in these trying times was very helpful. I found that I engaged those I supervise as well as faculty with whom I work as a result of some of the reminders about the importance of communication. Miscommunication and lack of understanding of others is the root of too many problems. Intentionally reaching out is so important, and this CoP reminded me of the need for that.

I engaged in an pair activity at the CoP meeting that helped me reflect on how I approach group work. The insights gained from this helped me focus my advising efforts differently with a specific student later that day. I was much more intentional and centered during that difficult meeting.

focusing on listening for the direct and indirect (subtle) needs and apprehensions of an individual.

The nature of the group being an inclusive and ego free group of diverse backgrounds and perspectives has caused me to be more aware of and look for those qualities in the teams I'm working on. I've discussed some of my observations about that with my teams and we've been working at espousing those qualities.

Facilitating sustained, continuing contact with others is valued, and not fully tapped. So, be sure there are contact lists at the events or sent out shortly thereafter.

How it boosts innovation and creativity.

Help people take the ideas back to their work, e.g., bring activity to their work place.

Results

The public participation class supports facilitation capacity. (Harry is working on a community project that needs facilitators, and many come from campus).

Deb Gurke brought Meg Wheatley, who still influences our campus. Deb is now Director of Innovation with MKE school district.

Integrals spun off the Journey of Facilitation & Collaboration workshop in 2007

Alberto Vargas and Darin came to campus and they lead a study group about spiral dynamics and integral theory, and they continue as a LC and bring Don Beck to campus (twice).

Hazel was profoundly affected by this (follow her journey).

Impact to the field of facilitation. Now a two-volume book (alberto and harry are in there).

Teri Balser knew Tom Christiansen (member of the group), a soil sci professor with background in facilitation. She proposed OHRD fellows. She created the Women in Leadership symposium, UW MANIAC, and continued resource for other study group ideas.

Quilters helped develop the language around CoPs on this campus. Harry was supposed to be just teaching classes, but he started study groups that allowed people to explore themes (containers to explore mysteries).

Quilters shared results of first year at Showcase. Explored Croquet digital habitat software (DoIT)

Quilters met with Darrel Bazell to discuss campus issues, and people got involved with efforts that came out of that conversation.

People come with a dilemma and come away with help. E.g. Gwen Drury on the Wisconsin Idea and Katherine Loving hired her to work on it. Study groups explored Wisconsin Idea, and the CPO network organized the Wisconsin Idea Symposium.

Quilters also spun off the Gen Y LC.

Quilters spun off Reinventing Orgs and then 35 people showed up.

The Coordinated Leadership Initiative (CLI). Leaders for CLI came from the Servant Leadership CoP.

UW MANIAC event, Joe Goss was interested in Servant Leadership. Workshop with Larry Spears: study group Jeff Russell. People develop the social capital through these experiences, learn the model in one CoP and apply it to another. They create a new domain and practice.

CoP fed formal certificate in servant leadership.

Peer consultation for SOAR innovation: how can we engage our student staff in contributing to the idea-generation for improving SOAR? They did it! Circa 2010.

UW MANIAC was one think tank to influence the BLE. Harry brought BLE challenges to PPLC, UW MANIAC, and Quilters. MANIAC brought people power to design an artistic experience of BLE (the flower garden‚Äîdo we have a picture of that?) Individuals influence these organizations, and because their identities and mental models are shaped by their CoP membership, the CoP influences the organization.

MANIAC artist in residence interactions have changed the residency. The Arts Institute is looking at their residencies differently: they know it‚Äôs important for the artists to reach out to the broader community (Madison).

Jammin' by Darin Eich has been applied to the UW Teaching Academy; the student advisors conference; the Academic Staff Institute; the DELTA program; and UW MANIAC won an award from the National Society for Leadership & NonProfits Innovation in Higher Education.

CoP Network spun out of Quilters

Supported the birth of a few different CoPs.

Attracted Etienne Wenger to the BLE.

In general, the practices we've developed have had an impact on the UW. These diffuse through word of mouth and experience as people have membership/participation (multiplex) relationships. Multiple layers of identity. In other words, in order for these CoPs to maximize their impact, the UW must allow employees to have multiple layers of identity; reducing people to flat dots inhibits synergy and therefore impact.

In general, having the soup (all these ingredients) is essential. The more you have different people looking at all these different ingredients allows people to develop trust in it and innovate with it. In the same way life emerged from a primordial soup.

Because we have the CoPs and JoFC, we now have the capacity to facilitate public participation, e.g. call for facilitators with HR Design. Before HR Design, the campus standard for public participation was town

hall meetings with perhaps interpreters (e.g. ADHC, the creation of a financial services forum, the Dpt. Of Community Health; Finance & Administration, Financial Services, some in Nursing, Pharmacy, SMPH, Medicine). Took convincing and a leap of faith from Bob, Mark, and Steve. (A large number of people for the HR Design participation team came out of the CoPs).

Impact can't be separated from the origin story. Relationships are critical for understanding impacts and diffusion of ideas. Route of diffusion may become clearer by understanding the origin stories.

There have been spinoff actions taken by subgroups (e.g., Gen Y LC emerged), and individuals have developed ideas within the Quilters cocoon and launched them broadly elsewhere (e.g., Gwen's "History of the WI Idea" article study groups keynote presentations), but most outcomes have accrued to individuals making institutional impacts.

But they have most definitely impacted those work contexts, leading and otherwise facilitating a wide range of complex and meaningful processes about important issues.

PPLC has also contributed to improvements of campus-wide initiatives, ranging from serving on HR Design Teams to helping with "Big Learning Event" initiation and improvements. But they don‚Äôt act as a group, merely providing people-power to those other efforts. Two exceptions: Early in the group‚Äôs history, PPLC was asked by NCDD to review draft "principles for public deliberation," and endorse them. The second was during the 2011 Capitol Demonstrations, where PPLC collectively deployed resources.

In addition, SLLC spawned another group early on, what has become the Coordinated Leadership Initiative

This group largely has individual impacts, as members come from varied work contexts.

However, it has spawned a spinoff collective action that has been quite meaningful, the Coordinated Leadership Initiative.

In either space, the relationships formed are connected around the content (servant-leadership concepts) and the safe, trusting learning space of the community

fosters deep questioning and meaningful examination of the challenges and opportunities to apply these concepts in members' lives.

There is no real "collective impact" documented, yet it appears there is a small cultural shift that has accrued from the wide range of MANIACal learning opportunities, and various "tool and technologies" from this group have been recognized and adapted by other groups.

UW-MANIAC even won a national award for this work and I am asked to facilitate on behalf of UW-MANIAC at other learning events and the UW Speakers Bureau.

The group also sponsored a few Don Beck workshops and trainings on spiral dynamics.

The most salient practical outcome has been the establishment of JOFC and the integral facilitation model.

The Integrals have had a varied history, arising with great energy after a study group, acting collectively to bring Don Beck to campus (twice!) and to sponsor other learning opportunities.

The group has also nurtured the launch of the Integral Facilitation approach by three of its members, and has sponsored an award-winning poster at an international higher education conference (which was designed collectively).

but there appear to be powerful individual impacts as its members move into other settings and bring Integral theory with them to those arenas (e.g., Focus on Facilitation, Quilters).

This group has struggled to find its footing collectively, despite its explicit efforts to do so. Individuals are impacted and benefit from participation, and they bring back new insights to their workplaces. However, despite its intention, the group has had little collective institutional effect. But its opinions are sought by campus leadership, and members invited to serve in key roles and capacities, so it may not yet be time to assess this result.

(a) individuals most certainly bring their learning and support back to their independent efforts,

 (b) the legitimacy of the CoP approach is institutionally enhanced by the existence of the CoP Network.

It started with Level 4: project to set up keywords to find courses. The Level 5 group provided outsider perspective. Changed directions twice based on feedback. So, she jumped in as a Level 5 mentor for Level 4. Felt like she was doing a better job thinking like a user.

Workplace climate: facilitated discussion about this. Co-level 4 person stepped in an helped facilitate. Invited back a second year. Then it became a series of campus discussions; then L&S and CALS did some of their own. Now people are actually talking about classism.

One of the Level 5 ideas got codified into HR design. Maybe I would have done it without Level 5, but probably not or not as effectively.

Ripple effect into a 70 person workshop on this. "We realize we're dealing with the same issues in different contexts."

How does it extend? Level 5 makes you feel confident, that you're okay and it's okay to connect, so they help you know what's the right way to engage the right people. Knowing that this is a confidential group by default creates trust.

Free resources outside of your normal job duties. Low or no cost support.

People have a hard time justifying coming; it doesn,Äôt look like it relates directly to your job. "But that hour and a half per month helps make you a better employee. They may not be related directly to what you do at your desk, but it helps you do all of those things better." Like the leadership institute: it looks like it's not related to your job; but what you're hearing will make you think differently about your job, e.g. trying something new, think differently, be more efficient. Transference (less in some CoPs that are more focused), but level 5 is so diverse so transference is really high. Focused CoPs can focus on nuts and bolts within the existing frame. But the frame of Level 5 is outside all of these frames.

My CoP includes members of many university departments and community members from diverse backgrounds. This is one of its great strengths.

Cross-division collaboration on program offerings.

Contributions to a book in process by members. Assistance with helpful contacts in UW system, e.g. student exchange program possibilities. Sounding board for presentation techniques.

The Servant Leader group welcomes students, faculty, people from private industry and other state agencies to participate. We can work together to better serve the needs of others. I work at the Department of Revenue and I heard about this group and they welcomed me and others. This is proof that it is strengthening collaboration across the community.

My local consulting business has benefited greatly from my regular participation in my UW CoP. I can always count on the members for creative ideas and other types of support.

There have been many times I've tapped into my Level 5 Leadership group for resources needed to produce my work.

I want to mention that while the CoP requires the interest and participation of members, the role of designated staff in facilitating it is extremely important to the continuity and effectiveness.

CoP play a role - but it would be great to see more more collaborations play out between departments and units.

Due to the networking opportunities, several people have made connections across departments that are beneficial to their jobs and their departments.

The Non-violent Communication CoP has been asked to offer workshops to various groups in the community. We are currently working on a Train-the-Trainer program.

As someone not directly employed by the UW (Rather I have worked in partnership with UW departments such as OHRD and Plant Pathology, CoP's such as UW MANIAC, public participation learning community have always been extremely warm and welcoming as well as informative. I think CoP's play a strong bridge building role between UW and the broader Madison community as well as offering unique professional development experiences I can't get at my day job.

My CoP is too loose yet to have that impact.

out of the Quilters group, I helped a colleague start a young managers group [the Gen Y LC] that was open to all young managers across campus and in the private sector, through which we had a successful workshop and a few meetings. I had to leave the group when i transitioned out of management, but i think it was a great success.

Through the CoP for CoP Leaders, I have met several on-campus colleagues with work-related responsibilities similar to mine, and we have established longer term connections that have been useful in problem solving and idea generating for projects in my department.

When people have long-term, trusting relationships and "speak the same language," it's easier to make connections and dive straight in to collaborations as opportunities emerge.

HR Design: Harry Webne-Behrman led the Collaboration team and Katherine Loving served as a liaison from the Collaboration to the Benefits team, which Lindsey Stoddard Cameron and Barb Lanser co-led & facilitated (having recently completed Facilitating by Heart together). Having long-term, trusting working relationships and shared values around communication and service to the community jump-started our collaboration. We were able to dive into a nuanced conversation about campus engagement and really focus on what what was most important to learn, what types of questions we wanted to answer, how we would ask, how we wanted to follow up. We were also able to pass ideas "upstream" with confidence they would be heard, fully considered, and shared as appropriate.

All three of us asked early on how the work of the AHDC and VCFA EID teams would intersect, and each of us worked to assure that these efforts would dovetail rather than conflict. Shoko courageously drew public attention to the issue, asking at the fall Diversity Forum whether members of the Ad Hoc Diversity Committee were aware of the VCFA EID initiative and how work from divisional EID plans would be considered, incorporated. She also made a sustained effort to assure that the FP&M EID team's responses to an early AHDC draft were updated and communicated directly, face-to-face, later in the spring.

I have used what I learned at FOF about context, ORID and space-making in meetings to help my groups work better together.

1: Sharing of knowledge has helped me find resources to better do my job on campus.

2: Bouncing challenges off CoP colleagues has helped me to solve issues faster & has provided different perspectives on problem solving.

I rely on the CoP to keep me functioning effectively and efficiently with my partners - I would not want to, and don't have time to, do this work alone or start it from scratch

I no longer work on campus. However, I know that I and others have benefited from our CoP and are using take homes in our work and personal lives.

We developed an "orientation" manual for those in our role.

We meet to discuss to current issues and problem solve. We share best practices (processes, forms, etc) to reduce duplication of work.

New ideas and products/services. UW MANIAC has been invaluable in helping me think through new fruit products balancing fun and creativity, with pragmatic, useful tools to use so I can better facilitate events and meetings I am engaged with.

Having learned from this CoP about some of the members' backgrounds and interests, one member recently invited others to participate in an emerging book-writing project related to the community's foci to tap the group's assets.

I have copied strategies I learned about from other members of my CoP who deal with similar work challenges. I believe this interaction has increased my professional competence.

To the extent that we are successful and can offer insight to others addressing similar issues, we are developing better practices, reducing the learning curve for each other and preventing "reinvention of the wheel," and gradually building capacity and competencies across the organization.

Croquet: Quilters early adopters made a "test run" with Julian Lombardi and Howard Stearns (DoIT) released 2004: http://www.news.wisc.edu/releases/10270.html

Quilters & Stearns presented at OQI Showcase: http://oqi.wisc.edu/resourcelibrary/uploads/resources/Showcase_Program_2006.pdf

Strengthsfinder: Dan Kneisler hosted a workshop. Katherine Loving gathered information from Quilters (9 members participated) about their top 5 strengths. Libby Bestul analyzed this data to determine what strengths were represented across four leadership domains (and noted Quilters is "a very strategic group" with 24 of 45 strengths, and the most shared strengths, appearing in the Strategic Thinking category). This exercise offers a chance for Quilters to apply habitual methods of learning and application to the community of practice itself -- a metaconversation that helps us understand our overlapping strengths and gaps we may want to attend to as we move forward.

As ideas discussed by groups like Quilters spread and gain currency (as we gain critical mass), our individual ability to promote, support, effect positive change grows, synergies are established, and institutional capacity for transformation likewise grows.

We recognize each other and come together through participation in campus-wide events (e.g., Diversity Forum, Women & Leadership Symposium/Coffee & Conversation, Big Learning Event) and campus-wide initiatives (HR Design, EID). Invite us to participate in the life of the institution and to help shape its future. We will gladly serve. And we will learn together, help each other practice, hold each other accountable, ensure that we bring our best work to the effort.

Although I still feel protective and "selfish" about my Quilters time, I do believe that when we invest in this kind of free thinking and synthesis, we grow as individuals and in community with each other, and the university reaps the reward of higher quality, more creative work.

Harry, you have always listened, asked gentle questions, connected us with each other, nurtured us, shepherded our dreams. Over time, each of us has grown more able to reciprocate. As we journey together, those marvelous ripples intersect and spread. / / I would thank you more, and better, if I could. / / My best, as always-- Linds

I am richly filled to overflowing with gratitude-smiles inside and out for the availability of these powerful learning/development opportunities and for the rich

networking and sustainability-fueling crucibles. They are awesome social capital-producing and leveraging engines for the greater good of our campus community and beyond--the Wisconsin Idea and the Wisconsin Experience in action: Right ON!!!

So, you want me to comment on when my eyes and heart were wide open since the Laloux events? Only happens when i'm breathing. I think you get it...you can't take something like presencing and figure out when it mattered the most....it always matters the most! The Cops resource is one of my life lines. I think I see it waking others up also, in the events. There should be more of these opportunities.

I think the whole notion of making a pitch, along with other professional development opportunities I've had recently where design thinking, breakthrough modeling, service blueprinting, were all new exercises, I continued to see the value in making a pitch.

Spreading the impact and influence of the learning community to others, including beyond campus, even to those people who are not directly participating in that learning community.

I think I have definitely benefit from insights to specific and more global problems. I have tapped into years of experience. Many ideas have been valuable and others have started a personal thought string that have benefited my university work.

There are two ripple effects - the first on those who I serve in my projects. They feel appreciated, valued, recognized, heard, and safe. From this place come ideas, innovations, and solutions for difficult problems. The second effect is a change in the behavior of those on my project team. They become practitioners of this Servant Leader approach because they can see how it applies in their own organization as it staff wrestle with difficult challenges.

You can't talk about it or you look crazy or the next flavor of the month thing. Just have to set the tone by how you act or organize a process. This is a slow thing, but it is moving forward. It's also a fragile thing.

The discussions we have each month change the way I approach conflict and the way I approach my daily work. I am more likely to take time to address the underlying conflicts face to face, rather than letting them

simmer. This has resulted in productive conversations and smoother collaboration. The focus on service has informed my daily work as a manager and as an employee, helping me focus on the people around me and their needs, as well as the tasks -- which has in turn improved my ability to accomplish the tasks.

I believe I have come up with some creative solutions to issues, which I may not have otherwise developed.

I have been able to share some ideas derived for the CoP with a large group of undergraduate and graduate students in the past 10 years. / Recently I wrote an e-book chapter detailing that experience. The e-book will be published this Summer.

Listening and interacting with the issues of this group sharpens my integral abilities, and consequently reinforces my attempts to function more instrumentally in the local organizations and groups that are important to me... and more importantly, better benefit the target individuals and/or groups with whom I interact.

Specifically this learning community help my colleagues and I to develop one of the most successful professional development workshops offerred at UW-Madison, JOFC. I also made close and knidred associates at this learning community. Sadly the community is mostly inactive now, but it sure had some peak moments!

A greater ability to support the challenges our team faced, especially when it came to staff relationships with leadership. The tools and processes I introduced continue to inform the group even after I had left the team.

I am able to complete my work better and more quickly since I have people I can go to that will help steer me in the right direction. I dont feel as though I have to sit and dig around as much since someone will help me find the answers.

People are communicating more, and more openly.

As a result of having a thoughtful, centered conversation I was able to help a student consider their future with an organization that they had grown tired of. Ultimately the student was able to make a decision that was in their best interest but also benefited the organization. The student left the organization - which was a healthy choice given his level of discord and the angst they were causing within the group. The student wasn't

interested in changing their behavior but they did realize that it was going to be a bad fit so they decided to move on. The organization was much healthier as a result. When I next saw the student who had left the org - they appeared much more at ease as well.

"Hearing" those needs and fears/apprehensions and giving them attention, reduces the stress level in a meeting, allowing those with the needs to express their concerns with more content and context.

The nature of the group being an inclusive and ego free group of diverse backgrounds and perspectives has caused me to be more aware of and look for those qualities in the teams I'm working on. I've discussed some of my observations about that with my teams and we've been working at espousing those qualities.

Those qualities mentioned above in a group (dynamics) result in much better interactions and results. As our teams attempt to practice these patterns and live those principles, our interactions are improving. Difficult discussions and failure are less looked on with negativity and more embraced as a learning experience where everyone feel free to make contributions to that learning.

Facilitating transference of ideas back to work is an important untapped benefit:

By bringing people together and hearing their stories, can bring people together that may not have connected.

Make sure MANIAC stuff is considered sanctioned learning (OHRD). Be explicit about value of creativity.

Appendix B
Two Extended Responses Demonstrating Identity Transformation

Hazel Symonette

Program Development & Assessment Specialist
Division of Student Life at UW-Madison

Think of one peak experience you've had with your CoP(s). What were some things you did differently in your work because of this experience? What were some ripple effects of that on your organization?

On the run and cannot really think of one peak experience. / What I most appreciate about this group--and most of the UW CoP experiences I have had--are their genuinely inviting boundary-spanning opportunities to gather/network, stretch and grow in generative ways beyond *de box* for the greater good.   / / We are not limited to/stifled by the usual constraining parameters on thought and action. In general, the CoP rhythms resonate deeply with what I value most: authentic inclusion via an inviting array of pathways for facilitative engagement. Individual voices & stories matter and so do the leavening forces of social systems/structures and contexts (notably, power and privileging realities)! / / My time is jammed up now so I cannot cycle through each CoP individually nor can I remember the particular benefits in ways that allow me to parse them among the CoPs that I have experienced: i.e., all except Level 5 LC. Even though sometimes sporadic for some, most of my experiences over the years have been with Servant Leadership, PP, Quilters and Madison Integrals. / / They have been a much valued and appreciated LIFELINE for me in my boundary-spanning, innovation-seeking, social justice-grounded orientations to doing my work and the work. Down where the rubber meets meets the road, my passionate commitments and stance often stand alone in sometimes crazy-making climates of BEing. I am very grateful for CoP gatherings and networks!

So often the social structures and human systems dynamics of UW's silos & mineshafts are crazy-making===> they often churn out *walking-wounded* who become a shell of the vibrant forces they once were. For me, periodic infusions of the CoP nectar beyond those stifling rhythms refuels and helps me to Keep On Keepin' On in spite of whatever.   / / In addition to my active cultivation of independent bases of validation beyond the university, the CoPs are internal vitalization & rejuvenation resources that help me to do my work: most notably, to continuously serve as a beacon of appreciatively-affirming provocative possibilities, despite contrary operative forces.   / / I enthusiastically bathe in the nourishing, illuminative rhythms of CoP's like Quilters--its rounds of creative emergence and networking, its authentic inclusion of wide arrays of topics & themes, etc. They provide rejuvenation oases in what is often desert terrain and, most importantly, they remind that my non-conventional orientation and passions have a place like "home" with some kindred spirits.   / / I am profoundly grateful for Harry Webne-Behrman's vision and work over the years===> discerning and/or conjuring up ripely fertile terrain for emerging CoPs. Even if only for a slice of the time, I attend whenever I can *seize* the time because my many experiences over many years have convinced me of the foundational value of CoPs. They are especially crucial for those of us striving to make a difference for the greater good--and our own greater good as ravenous lifelong learners--in spite of whatever.   / / I am richly filled to overflowing with gratitude-smiles inside and out for the availability of these powerful learning/development opportunities and for the rich networking and sustainability-fueling crucibles. They are awesome social capital-producing and leveraging engines for the greater good of our campus community and beyond--the Wisconsin Idea and the Wisconsin Experience in action: Right ON!

Lindsey Stoddard Cameron

Coordinator of Faculty Services
Office of Secretary the Faculty at UW-Madison

Think of one peak experience you've had with your CoP(s). What were some things you did differently in your work because of this experience? What were some ripple effects of that on your organization?

I could describe any number of Quilters discussions yielding useful knowledge that I've subsequently applied in my work. (For example, I understand contemporary legislative and budget issues better because Gwen Drury guided us through a lengthy and detailed exploration of the Wisconsin Idea, the importance of public engagement, the potential of social centers, and the principles underlying UW-Madison's shared governance system.) In fact, participating in the learning communities from which our community of practice emerged, and engaging in sustained conversation and study with fellow Quilters over the past decade, has substantially shaped my understanding of organizational culture, development, and change.

The most meaningful gift of Quilters has been to foster the development of my true self – to help me develop the awareness and strength **not** to change my behavior.

For many years, I've enjoyed an unusual degree of autonomy/independence in identifying and accomplishing my work, both within and beyond specific responsibilities of my role(s). Paradoxically, I also operate within significant constraints. Much of my work, which is highly collaborative, involves setting goals and implementing programs in partnership with senior administrators. Our decisions and actions unfold in a system shaped by fairly frequent transitions in academic leadership. Sisyphus-like, we cycle through learning curves and struggle to find our balance. Analytical, deductive thinking is privileged. Efficiencies, always prized, are increasingly necessary. These features of my work are not inherently negative. I love my colleagues and genuinely enjoy collaborative work. I certainly appreciate, and am skilled in producing, a well-reasoned argument, grounded in available data. I can and do work within a budget. I find clean systems beautiful and value efforts to save time and energy and resources -- especially if "found time" can be devoted to more meaningful work, not immediately robbed and filled with other mundane tasks. However, as we learn in ballet, "practice makes permanent." Doing "step a, step b, step c" thinking over

a sustained period of time makes it very easy to fall into the trap of working comfortably within expected norms. It's difficult to guard against this tendency, especially when conforming behaviors are explicitly rewarded and encouraged.

Quilters offers a rare opportunity: a protected space in which some of the most intellectually lively people I've met freely explore exciting ideas and possibilities. When I can participate, I relish the luxury of considering new theories, practicing divergent thinking, making unexpected connections, hearing others draw fresh conclusions. This makes me feel relaxed and happy, mentally stretched, whole, restored. By contrast, when it's not possible to attend I feel "dull," missing and craving the fellowship of our community.

Early in my career, I felt really guilty about focusing on my own learning and development, and also about not having a "five year plan" and sticking to it. Lots of people were putting lots of time into articulating priorities and action plans, but I found myself recognizing and acting on a series of opportunities that energized and inspired me. Our Quilters community provided the breathing space I needed to observe and reflect on emerging patterns in my work. It took several years for the pattern to settle out and become clear, so I could feel confident in my choices and comfortable acting in accordance with core values, reaching toward a vision rather than executing a pre-conceived plan.

Although I still feel protective and "selfish" about my Quilters time, I do believe that when we invest in this kind of free thinking and synthesis, we grow as individuals and in community with each other, and the university reaps the reward of higher quality, more creative work. We flex and stretch our mental muscles, exercise our imaginations, gain capacity to envision alternative systems and solutions. This is the "ripple effect" Quilters has in my own life.

Harry, you have always listened, and asked gentle questions, connected us with each other, nurtured us, shepherded our dreams. Over time, each of us has grown more able to reciprocate. As we journey together, those beautiful ripples intersect and spread.

I would thank you more, and better, if I could.

My best, as always – Linds