

**MIDDLE EASTERN STUDENT'S ATTITUDES TOWARD THEIR INVOLVEMENT  
IN AN INTENSIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

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Bryan J. Hains  
Graduate Teaching Assistant/Ross Fellow  
Purdue University  
e-mail: [bhains@purdue.edu](mailto:bhains@purdue.edu)

Jerry L. Peters, Professor  
Youth Development and Agriculture Education  
Purdue University  
615 W. State Street  
West Lafayette, IN. 47907-2053  
e-mail: [peters@purdue.edu](mailto:peters@purdue.edu)

Presentation Track: Research

This presentation showcases the attitudes of Middle Eastern and North African students ages 15-19 toward their involvement in an intensive leadership program.

Bryan Hains is currently a Doctoral student at Purdue University, where he is studying Agriculture and Extension Education in the Department of Education Curriculum and Instruction. Previous to attending Purdue, he taught high school agriculture in the state of Indiana. Both his bachelor and master's degrees were obtained from Colorado State University. During his education at Colorado State University he was trained in Agriculture Education and Integrated Resource Management.

Jerry Peters is professor in the Department of Youth Development and Agricultural Education in the College of Agriculture at Purdue University. He received his B.S. and M.S. degree in Agricultural Education from Purdue and his Ph.D. in Agricultural Education from The Ohio State University. He teaches an undergraduate course, Leadership in Developing the Agricultural Professional and has been actively working with the Indiana Center for Cultural Exchange presenting leadership programs in the support of projects that advance better understanding, appreciation, and cooperation between the United States and the Muslim world.

## Introduction/Literature Review

Within society individuals are often classified as a leader, a follower, or a bystander. However, these three categories are not exclusive of each other; each of us performs them simultaneously in many different situations (Fritz, Brown, Lunde, and Banset, 2005). Fritz et al. (2005) states, "But regardless of the mix of functions in our lives, we know the most successful leaders are also capable of being successful followers." (p. 342). The definition of leadership is very diverse. Chemers (2000) in his book on leadership research and theory defined leadership as "a process of social influence in which one person is able to enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task." (p.27). Most individuals defining leadership are influenced by their primary research objectives, therefore, making it difficult to narrow down a definition.

With the political unrest and turnover currently among Middle Eastern nations there is no better time to initiate a youth leadership program like the present. In his paper on youth crisis in Middle Eastern Society, Fuller (2004) adds insight to the current events associated with these countries.

The culture of the Middle East is presently undergoing one of the greatest crises in its modern history. The old authoritarian order, so widespread through much of the region, is running out of steam and out of time. The gulf between ruler and ruled has never been greater, while frustration and anger among the general populations at existing conditions-economic, social, political, and international-is at new heights. (p.4)

Against the background of these dramatic events there lies a less dramatic, but possibly more important, phenomenon that may have greater impact over the longer run than even terrorism and war. I refer to the emergence of a huge and growing population of young people in the region whose presence will likely shake present regimes from within more devastatingly than even the forces of international politics. This demographic factor, sometimes designated as a demographic "youth bulge," refers to the unusually large percentage of young people among the overall population. (p.4)

United Nations (2004) demographic statistics reveal that the population of youth under the age of fifteen are 43% in Afghanistan, 34% in Egypt, 41% in Iraq, 37% in Jordan, 39% in Saudi Arabia, and 48% in Yemen. This is compared to the 21% of the population in United States under the age of fifteen. These statistics clearly show the increase in youth populations which will take leadership roles in the future.

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell (2002) in his speech, *Building Hope for the Years Ahead*, to the Heritage Foundation stated the need for youth leadership development in Middle Eastern countries, "too many of the region's children lack the knowledge to take advantage of a world of economic and political freedom. Powell continues by adding, "Our ultimate goal is a just and comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement, in which all the peoples of the region are accepted as neighbors, living in peace and security." Training youth for leadership and helping them implement these goals could help accelerate the reality of a unified Middle East.

The United States Department of State through the Middle East Partnership Initiative chose the Indiana Center for Cultural Exchange (ICCE) to initiate a Summer Institute on American Life

and Youth Leadership to train youth from eleven Middle Eastern countries. “The ICCE was established as a partnership between Indiana University, Purdue University and the University of Notre Dame as well as twelve participating national institutions in order to collaborate on projects that will advance understanding and appreciation between the United States and the Muslim world” (Mitchell, 2004, p.1).

Faculty involved in the youth leadership component of the program chose to use both transactional and transformational leadership theories when developing and implementing curriculum for the leadership series. Fertman and van Linden (1999) in their article on character education for developing youth leadership, define transactional leadership as “focusing on the skills and tasks usually associated with leadership, such as speaking in public, delegating authority, leading meetings, and making decisions.”(p.1). They go on to define transformational leadership as “the process of leadership and what it means to be a leader. It is concerned with how individuals use their abilities to influence people.” (p.1) By utilizing both leadership theories within the curriculum design, it is thought that participants will become well rounded leaders.

### Methods

The population of interest consisted of sixteen participants from eleven countries identified within the Middle East and North Africa (see Table 1). Six males and ten females between the ages of sixteen and nineteen were chosen to participate in the four week summer institute July 15- August 21, 2004. Each participant was evaluated by delegates representing the U.S. Embassy within each country. The selection process included evaluating each student’s scholastic performance, community and extra-curricular involvement, and English proficiency.

Table 1  
*Countries of Origin for Students Participating in Summer Institute on American Life and Youth Leadership*

Country	Number of Participants
Bahrain	1
Egypt	1
Israel	2
Jordan	1
Lebanon	2
Morocco	1
Oman	1
Saudi Arabia	2
Syria	1
Tunisia	2
West Bank	2

Students participated in a four week intensive institute. The first two weeks focused on educating participants about American life and political structure. The final two weeks focused on leadership development. The leadership development component will be the focus of this paper.

Leadership education was implemented through panel discussions, on site visitations and traditional classroom instruction. Topics for each discussion panel were chosen based on their relevance to current events within Middle Eastern countries. Discussion topics included Women in Leadership and Diversity in Leadership.

To enhance student learning and implementation of leadership skills, participants attended a variety of on site visits. Students participated in a two part leadership program on the University of Notre Dame campus. Participants took part in international peace dialog and specifically examined Muslim and Christian relationships during a visitation to the Kroc Institute. They were also able to visit with directors of the Center for Social Concerns while discussing current collegiate service learning programs. While making an on site visit to meet Mr. Muhammad Ali, students watched a biographical movie highlighting his leadership accomplishments. The capstone site visitation included a two day conference with the Indiana 4-H program at the Indiana State Fair.

Throughout the leadership component of the institute, traditional classroom instruction was utilized to introduce transformational and transactional leadership theories. The Leadership Director implemented several National FFA Life Knowledge instructional leadership materials covering the following leadership topics. Each topic was chosen for its' relevancy to youth leadership development (Table 2).

Table 2  
*Leadership Topics Presented at the Summer Institute on American Life and Youth Leadership*

Introduction to Leadership	Eliminating Myths in Leadership
Understanding Leadership Styles	Myers Briggs Personality Indicator
Personal Growth and Goal Setting	The Communication Process
Overcoming Communication Barriers	Distance Communication
Parliamentary Procedure	Group Dynamics
Team Building	Individual and Group Motivational Techniques
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	Time and Stress Management

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were utilized to design a summative survey. The survey, designed by participating faculty, included a four point Likert Scale, as well as open ended discussion questions for students to add rich data relevant to each leadership topic.

The summative survey coincided with a pre-test post-test instrument developed by a panel of experts from the United States Department of State. Students took the pre-test within 24 hours of their arrival. The test was given upon their arrival to prevent a biased view of leadership influenced by their American experience. Participants concluded the institute by taking the post-test.

## Findings

When reporting results from the faculty produced survey it is important to note that the table entries are percentages based on the number of students who completed each question. Due to rounding, some rows do not sum to 100%. It is also important to understand that the results from this study only pertain to the participants involved.

### *Summative Survey Classroom Instruction*

Participants were asked to rate each educational session covering fourteen specific leadership topics (Table 3). The four Likert categories included very helpful, somewhat helpful, not so helpful, and not helpful at all. All fourteen leadership categories were listed as very helpful or somewhat helpful by 100% of the students.

Table 3  
*Participant's Rating of Helpfulness of Individual Leadership Topics (n = 16)*

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not So Helpful	Not Helpful At All
Introduction to Leadership	81%	19%	0%	0%
Eliminating Myths in Leadership	63%	38%	0%	0%
Understanding Leadership Styles	94%	6%	0%	0%
Personal Growth and Goal Setting	100%	0%	0%	0%
Perception and Conflict Resolution	100%	0%	0%	0%
The Communication Process	100%	0%	0%	0%
Overcoming Communication Barriers	94%	6%	0%	0%
Distance Communication	81%	19%	0%	0%
Parliamentary Procedure	69%	31%	0%	0%
Group Dynamics	88%	13%	0%	0%
Team Building	94%	6%	0%	0%
Motivational Techniques	94%	6%	0%	0%
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	94%	6%	0%	0%
Time and Stress Management	88%	13%	0%	0%

### *Myers Briggs Personality Indicator*

All participants took part in the Myers Briggs Personality Indicator. Students used the Likert scale categories helpful, somewhat helpful, not so helpful, and not helpful at all. Ninety four percent of participants felt that the Myers Briggs Personality Indicator was either very or somewhat helpful, while six percent felt that it was not so helpful (Table 4).

Table 4

*Participant's Rating of Helpfulness of Myers Briggs Personality Indicator*

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not So Helpful	Not Helpful At All
Myers Briggs Personality Indicator	81%	13%	6%	0%

*Panel Discussions*

Two separate questions were asked regarding panel discussions. Students were asked to rate the panel on Women in Leadership by its' helpfulness to their leadership education. In contrast, students were asked to rate the panel on Diversity of Leadership by how much they enjoyed the session. Two Likert scales were also used in the evaluation. When rating the Panel on Women in Leadership the categories included: very helpful, somewhat helpful, not so helpful, and not helpful at all. When rating the Panel on Diversity of Leadership the categories included: very much, some, not so much, and not much at all as the measuring factors.

When asked to rate the panel on Women in Leadership by its' helpfulness to their leadership education, 56% felt it was very helpful, 38% felt it was somewhat helpful and 6% felt it was not so helpful (Table 5).

Table 5

*Participant's Rating of Helpfulness of the Panel on Women in Leadership*

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not So Helpful	Not Helpful At All
Panel on Women in Leadership	56%	38%	6%	0%

Upon being asked how much participants enjoyed the panel on Diversity of Leadership, 64% of the students felt they enjoyed the session very much, while 29% felt they enjoyed the session some and 7% felt that they enjoyed the session not so much (Table 6).

Table 6

*Participant's Rating of Enjoyment of the Panel on Diversity of Leadership*

	Very Much	Some	Not So Much	Not Much At All
Panel on Diversity of Leadership	64%	29%	7%	0%

*Youth Leadership Site Visits*

Students evaluated each on site visit utilizing the Likert scale categories very helpful, somewhat helpful, not very helpful, and not helpful at all (Table 7). The visit with Muhammad Ali at his home and training facility rated highest with 88% of the participants rating it very

helpful, 6% rating the visit not very helpful, and 6% rating the visit not helpful at all. The Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame was ranked second as 63% of the students felt it was very helpful, 25% stated it was somewhat helpful, 6% declared the visit was not very helpful and the remaining 6% felt it was not helpful at all. Peer visitation at the Indiana State Fair Youth Leadership Conference was rated fourth with 50% of the students stated that it was very helpful, 31% stated that it was somewhat helpful, 13% felt it was not very helpful, and 6% felt it was not helpful at all. The leadership visit to the Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame rated last with 44% of the participants feeling that it was very helpful, 44% rated the visit somewhat helpful, 6% felt it was not very helpful and 6% stated that it was not helpful at all.

Table 7  
*Participant's Rating of Helpfulness of the Youth Leadership Site Visits*

	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Very Helpful	Not Helpful At All
Muhammad Ali	88%	0%	6%	6%
Kroc Institute at the University of Notre Dame	63%	25%	6%	6%
Peer visit with 4-H leaders at the Indiana State Fair Youth Leadership Conference	50%	31%	13%	6%
Center for Social Concerns at the University of Notre Dame	44%	44%	6%	6%

*Overall Evaluation*

The method of measurement for the question, “How much did each of the following parts of the Youth Leadership segment of the Summer Institute develop your leadership skills?”, included the Likert scale categories of very much, some, not so much, and not much at all (Table 8). Classroom discussion rated the highest as 100% of the students felt it developed their leadership skills very much. Classroom lectures placed second with 88% stating that lectures developed their leadership skills very much and 13% felt it helped develop their skills some. Placing third was their participation in on site visits with 80% of the students felt it helped their leadership skills very much, 13% felt it developed their skills some and 6% felt that it developed their leadership skills not so much.

Table 8  
*Participant's Rating of Segment Impact on Personal Leadership Skills*

	Very Much	Some	Not So Much	Not Much At All
Classroom Discussion	100%	0%	0%	0%
Classroom Lecture	88%	13%	0%	0%
Site Visits	80%	13%	6%	0%

Upon evaluation of the qualitative component of the faculty produced survey participant's answers introduced a variety of common themes. When asked a question relating to which aspects of the Summer Institute were most valuable to them, a majority of students stated

that the leadership component was the most valuable. This theme is best presented by quoting two students:

*The most valuable aspect of the Summer Institute was our study about youth leadership, because it helped us understand how we must build our personality and organize our life, which in turn will help us become a leader in our community.*

*I think that the leadership course is one of the most important courses. It isn't easy to take this course everywhere. In this course you can improve your leadership skills to become a great leader and to enhance your life success.*

Students were asked the open ended question, "How do you plan to use the leadership information you received from the Youth Leadership segment of the Summer Institute?" A majority of the students indicated they will use the leadership information gained within their community, family, and personal lives. One participant commented:

*I will do my best to use what I have learned. Not only will I use this information in my daily life but also in my relation with friends and family. I think it will also help me in my future job.*

Another participant stated, "I plan to read the information and try to establish my own youth group."

#### *Pre-Test Post-Test*

The United States Department of State developed a quantitative pre-test post-test instrument which measured each participant's self evaluation of key leadership skills. One hundred percent of the participants stated that they increased their self evaluation (Table 9).

Table 9

#### *Percentage of Participants Rating Themselves as Excellent in Leadership Skills*

Self-Evaluation of Key Leadership Skills	Pre-Program	Post-Program	% Change
Self-Reliant	29	69	+40
Public Speaking	21	38	+17
Listening to Others	50	69	+19
Expressing Ideas/Feelings	21	56	+35
Working with Different People	43	63	+20
Leading/Motivating Others	36	50	+14
Being Flexible	7	69	+62
Solving Problems	14	56	+42
Planning for the Future	21	69	+48
Managing Time	29	50	+21
Managing Money	14	56	+42
Discussing Beliefs/Values	29	69	+40
Willing to Change your Community	29	63	+34

U.S. Department of State (2004)

## **Conclusions and Implications/Recommendations**

Participants chose the areas of classroom discussion, classroom instruction, and the Myers Briggs Personality Indicator to be the most beneficial to them. It is implied that students thrived in an environment inclusive of transitional and transactional leadership theories which were presented by accommodating various learning styles. It can be concluded that by initiating the Myers Briggs Personality Indicator within leadership instruction, students are better able to understand individual personalities and associate them with individual leadership styles.

A majority of the students felt that the leadership site visits were advantageous to their leadership advancement. However, it is recommended that individual leadership sites chosen should be reviewed for impact on leadership growth.

In addition, it can be concluded that students felt the discussion panels were of minimal help to their leadership growth. It is recommended that future topics pertain to leadership subject matter discussed within the classroom.

Based on the summative survey results it can be concluded that all fourteen leadership topics helped participants with leadership growth. It is implied that topics chosen for the leadership curriculum were topics that were most beneficial to participants and should not be changed for future institutes.

Based upon the results from the U.S. Department of State pre-test post-test instrument, it can be concluded that participants greatly increased their confidence level of key leadership skills. It is implied that by attending an intensive leadership development program participants attitudes were positively influenced.

From the information gathered from the instruments and the student's comments on the open-ended questions, it appears that indeed the Middle Eastern students that participated in an intensive leadership development program improved their knowledge and skills in the area of leadership development. It is hopeful that these young men and women will return to their own countries and by utilizing their newly gained knowledge in leadership development, help make a difference in their local communities and beyond.

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