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**2010 – Milwaukee, WI**

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“What is that You're Reading?” An Analysis of Leadership Texts  
Research Paper

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to understand the types of texts currently being used and recommended within the field of leadership education. Data triangulation methods were used to identify academic and popular texts for a content analysis. Themes emerged relating to context, writing style, method, and content.

Biographical Sketch

Justin Harris is a graduate student at North Carolina State University in Agricultural Education. He plans to teach high school agriculture in the near future. Justin obtained his

undergraduate degree from North Carolina State University in Agricultural Education. Justin was raised outside of Asheville, North Carolina.

Jacklyn Bruce is an Assistant Professor at North Carolina State University in Extension Education. Her research interests include leadership skill acquisition and training environments and their effect on training transfer. Her teaching interests include youth development, leadership and management of volunteers, and collaborative leadership.

Dr. Jones grew up in California and attended California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) in San Luis Obispo where he received his B.S. and M.S. degrees. After teaching high school for seven years Dr. Jones returned to Cal Poly to teach in the Agricultural Education and Communications department. Dr. Jones was encouraged to pursue his Ph.D. and attended the University of Florida in 2003 to begin his doctoral program. Dr. Jones graduated in May, 2006 from the University of Florida with his Ph.D. in Agricultural Education. Dr. Jones began working at NC State July 1, 2006. He teaches courses in leadership and leadership development.

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# **“WHAT IS THAT YOU'RE READING?” AN ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP TEXTS**

## **Introduction**

One important way people learn about leadership is through reading. The texts they learn from may be texts which they have been exposed to through a leadership education course or simply a book they have come across in a bookstore. Here, the potential for two diverse categories of leadership education books emerges. On one hand we have academic texts which leadership educators teach from and recommend and on the other we have “pop-culture” or popular press texts which readers, many of whom may have never taken a leadership course, purchase. In order to evaluate ourselves as leadership educators, it is important to understand what both of these types of text present and analyze them for similarities and differences.

## **Theoretical Framework**

There is a need at all levels of society for greater leadership (Gardner, 1990; Rosenthal, Moore, Montoya, & Maruskin, 2009). As issues and problems become increasingly complex, the need for leaders will continue to grow. As leadership educators, we believe that leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices (Kouzes & Posner, 1987; 1988). Huber (2002) tells us that the purpose of leadership education is as varied as its contributing disciplines. Further, it is the purpose of the leadership educator to engage learners in understanding the role of the leader and the key facets of leadership. According to Edgar & Cox (2010) then, a diversity of disciplines, concepts and contexts is a strength within leadership education.

Colleges and universities around the country are attempting to fill the leadership void via curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities. Of particular interest in this case are the opportunities students find for leadership development within the classroom. Several researchers have discussed areas of significant consequence including: (a) students' comfort level with the concept of leadership, (b) identification of leadership elements, (c) acceptance of leadership as a process, (d) greater awareness of the practice of leadership, (e) establishment of leadership purpose, (f) development of a personal leadership approach, (g) enhancement of analytical skills, and (h) sharing new and emerging leadership theories (Lewis, 1995; Watt, 1995; Wren, 1994 as cited in Edgar, Boyd, Rutherford & Briers, 2009).

The need for this research is grounded in several previous studies. Ball and Knobloch (2005) describe how critical it is for practitioners to study their respective fields in order to engage professional practitioners in reflective practice to improve the discipline. Doerfert (2003), Tucker (2004), and Whiting (2002) called on researchers to examine their discipline, focus research, create cohesion, and develop goal-oriented visions (as cited in Edgar, Boyd, Rutherford & Briers, 2009). Baker, Shinn, and Briers (2007) show us that there is a need to study and understand the core objects and knowledge domains of a discipline in order for its practitioners to move the discipline forward. Knowing all this then, as the development of leadership courses become more and more popular across the country, curriculum and course content is an imperative consideration for educators. The root of that curriculum is often the text used. It has become obvious that leadership is important and that good leadership is needed now more than ever, but the question becomes, *What is the best way to teach leadership?*

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to understand the types of texts currently being used and recommended within the field of leadership education. To accomplish this purpose, several objectives were established:

1. Develop working definitions of “academic” and “popular culture” as they are related to leadership texts.
2. Compile a list of the texts currently being used and recommended within the field of leadership education.
3. Using qualitative techniques, develop an understanding of the content of the texts.

### **Methods**

The researchers desired to explore and understand the texts being used to learn about leadership. In order to develop this understanding, a mixed methods investigation was undertaken.

The population of this study was a census of leadership educators who are currently teaching leadership courses at the university level. The Association of Leadership Educators’ current membership roster was the frame for this study. From the list, only those members listed as “regular” members (meaning faculty) were contacted. Eighty-four individuals were contacted; however 5 contact emails were bounced back as unusable, making the total target population 79 individuals. Participants were asked to respond to a single request: to send the researchers a list of the top five texts that they use or would recommend using in their leadership classrooms and a second list of their top five most used or recommended popular culture leadership texts. Both academic and popular press texts were included in the request because of the rising popularity of popular culture in the teaching of leadership. The researchers used Dillman’s (2000) strategy of five contacts to conduct this request. Thirty-three individuals responded to the request for a total response rate of 41.7%. Frazee, et.al (2002), found that there was a significant difference in response rates depending on the delivery of the survey requests. Further, they tell us that the average response rate of email surveys, such as the one in this study, is approximately 27%, so while the response rate is may seem moderate, the researchers felt confident that enough data had been collected, and with proper data triangulation (as described below), and could go forward. To deal with the issue of non-response error, the researchers used method one of Linder, Murphy, Briers (2001), comparing early to late responders. No significant difference was found.

Triangulation allows researchers to offer perspectives other than their own (Borman, LeCompte, & Goetz, 1986 as quoted in Berg, 2001). Three data gathering techniques are generally used to investigate the same problem (Berg, 2001) and a means of mutual confirmation and validation of findings (Jick, 1983; Knafl & Breitmayer, 1989; Leedy, 1993; Mitchell, 1986; Sohler, 1988; Webb, et. al., 1981). In order to triangulate the findings of the study, two secondary sources were used to confirm text usage: first, three popular publishing houses that offer a leadership and management selection of texts were contacted requesting they share the most often requested texts. Second, researchers referenced the March (2009) Bloomberg *BusinessWeek* magazine’s (a popular leadership and management trade publication) list of best selling leadership and management texts. Where suggestions from the publisher and the trade publication were the same, a note was made, where the findings were different, the texts were added to the list for analysis.



Once the final list of texts was identified, the research team began the process of content analysis. Once texts were identified, the research team began the process of content analysis. “Content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way, through an analysis of their communications” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009, p. 472). When assessing written documents, in this case written texts, it is imperative for researchers to first decide at what level they plan to sample and what units of analysis will be counted (Berg, 2001, p.244). In the case of this study, the research decided to sample at the chapter level of each text. Following unitizing, the data was coded.

The researchers analyzed the data using the constant comparative method described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) that employed unitizing and categorizing of the data. Categories of content analysis can be determined inductively, deductively, or by some combination of both (Strauss, 1987 as cited in Berg, 2001, p. 245). In the case of this study, the researchers used a combination of both. Two members of the research team coded the data collectively to ensure consistency of the coding. Researchers started with deductive categories formed based on common leadership theory, then immersed themselves in the texts in order to use inductive reasoning to triangulate the deductively formed categories or add new categories. The classification of the types of texts that were analyzed, served as the categories of data. The categories of data were then sorted into emergent themes and theme titles were developed to distinguish each theme from the others (Erlandson et al., 1993). Continual revision, modification, and amendment were used until all data were classified into an appropriate theme. Two professionals familiar with leadership development texts served as independent peer debriefers, reviewing the researchers’ themes and suggesting revisions. Final themes with appropriate codes, as part of the trustworthiness criteria of confirmability are reported in the results section.

## **Findings**

Findings of this study will be reported by objective.

### *Objective One- Develop working definitions of “academic” and “popular culture” as they are related to leadership texts.*

Academic was defined by Merriam-Webster Online as “of, relating to, or associated with an academy or school especially of higher learning” (Academic, 2010). This definition was combined with the lists of leadership educators’ recommended academic texts to determine academic books for analysis. One definition of “popular” found on Merriam-Webster Online was “adapted to or indicative of the understanding and taste of the majority” (Popular, 2010). For the purpose of leadership texts, this definition, along with the evidence of the best-sellers list, was used to determine which books qualified as popular culture.

### *Objective Two- Compile a list of the texts currently being used and recommended within the field of leadership education.*

As described above, the texts gathered were compiled into two lists, academic and popular press/culture. The tables below show the texts and the frequencies with which they were reported, by the leadership educators.

Table 1.

*List of Academic Texts Identified by Leadership Educators (N=132)*

<b>Academic Texts</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
The Leadership Challenge – Kouzes & Posner	17	12.8
Leadership: Theory & Practice – Northhouse	15	1.3
Leadership: Research Findings, Practice & Skills - DuBrin	6	4.5
The Bass Handbook of Leadership – Bass	4	3.0
Leadership in Organizations -- Yukl	4	3.0
Exploring Leadership – Komives, Lucas, & McMahon	3	2.3
Leadership – Burns	3	2.3
Leadership Theory, Application & Skill Development – Lussier & Achua	3	2.3
Now Discover Your Strengths – Buckingham	2	1.5
On Becoming a Leader – Bennis	2	1.5
Organizational Culture & Leadership—Schein	2	1.5
Transformational Leadership	1	0.8
Out of Women's Experience: Creating Relational Leadership -- Regan & Brooks	1	0.8
Women of Influence, Women of Vision – Astin	1	0.8
Leaders & the leadership process -- Pierce & Newstrom	1	0.8
The Art of Leadership -- Manning & Curtis	1	0.8
Reflections on Leadership: How Robert K. Greenleaf's Theory of Servant Leadership	1	0.8
Influenced Today's Top Management Thinkers – Spears	1	0.8
The Art of Followership -- Riggio, Chaleff, Lipman-Blumen	1	0.8
The Quest for a General Theory of Leadership -- Goethals & Sorensen	1	0.8
Leaders Who Make a Difference -- Nanus & Dobbs	1	0.8
Introduction to Leadership – Northhouse	1	0.8
Transforming Leadership – Burns	1	0.8
The Prince – Machiavelli	1	0.8
Leadership in Nonprofit Organizations --Dym & Hutson	1	0.8
Ethics, The Heart of Leadership – Cuilla	1	0.8
Values Leadership – Fairholm	1	0.8
The Art & Science of Leadership – Nahavandi	1	0.8
Leadership in Place – Wergin	1	0.8
Leadership: Personal Development and Career Success -- Ricketts & Ricketts	1	0.8
Organizational Change – Burke	1	0.8
Leadership Without Easy Answers -Heifetz	1	0.8
The Leader's Companion – Wren	1	0.8
Organizational Behavior -- Robbins & Judge	1	0.8
A Very Short, Fairly Interesting and Reasonably Cheap Book About Studying Leadership --Jackson & Perry	1	0.8

Leadership Communication -- Barrett	1	0.8
Preparing for Leadership: A Young Adults' Guide to Leadership Skills in a Global Age --Woyach	1	0.8
The Future of Leadership -- Bennis	1	0.8
The Leadership Experience -- Dart	1	0.8
Group Dynamics for Teams -- Levi	1	0.8
Linkage Leadership Development -- Gibler & Goldsmith	1	0.8
Leadership: A Communication Perspective -- Hackman & Johnson	1	0.8
Leadership Development in Balance -- Avolio	1	0.8
Leadership in a Diverse and Multicultural Environment -- Connerly & Pedersen	1	0.8
The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership & Management -- Herman	1	0.8
Influence in Organizations -- Vecchio	1	0.8
Leadership: Understanding the Dynamic of Power and Influence in Organizations -- Vecchio	1	0.8

Table 2.

*List of Popular Culture Texts Identified by Leadership Educators (N=110)*

<b>Popular Texts</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Good to Great -- Collins	5	4.5
Leadership Jazz -- DePree	4	3.6
Servant Leadership -- Greenleaf	4	3.6
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team -- Lencioni	4	3.6
The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People -- Covey	4	3.6
Leading Change -- Kotter	3	2.7
The 5 <sup>th</sup> Discipline -- Senge	3	2.7
Adaptive Leadership -- Heifetz	2	1.8
Crucial conversations -- Patterson, et. Al	2	1.8
Developing the Leader within You -- Maxwell	2	1.8
Emotional Intelligence -- Goleman	2	1.8
Ethical Dimensions of Leadership -- Kanugo & Mendonca	2	1.8
Leadership: enhancing the Lessons of Experience	2	1.8
Meeting the Ethical Challenges of Leadership	2	1.8
Reframing Organizations -- Bolman & Deal	2	1.8
Social Intelligence -- Goldman	2	1.8
The Leadership Moment -- Useem	2	1.8
Courageous Follower -- Chaleff	1	0.9
The Essential Drucker --Drucker	1	0.9
Stewardship -- Block	1	0.9
What Got You Here Won't Get You There --Goldsmith & Reiter	1	0.9
Outliers: The Story of Success -- Gladwell	1	0.9

Habitudes – Elmore	1	0.9
Art of Leadership – Bothwell	1	0.9
Letters From Leaders: Practical Advice for Tomorrow's Leaders From the World's Most Influential People – Doorman	1	0.9
Empowering Youth: How to Encourage Youth Leaders to do Great Things – Curtis	1	0.9
Leadership is an Art – DePree	1	0.9
Prime Rib or Potted Meat: Thoughts on Getting More out of Life – Loftin	1	0.9
Fish! Tales: Real life stories to help you transform your workplace and your life -- Lundin and Christensen	1	0.9
Leading Leaders – Salacuse	1	0.9
Contrarians Guide to Leadership – Sample	1	0.9
Soul of the Firm – Pollard	1	0.9
What Leaders Do—Kotter	1	0.9
The Servant as Leader – Greenleaf	1	0.9
Leaders -- Bennis & Nanus	1	0.9
The Leadership Secrets of Colin Powell – Harari	1	0.9
The Secret Language of Leadership – Denning	1	0.9
You Don't Need a Title to be a Leader – Sanborn	1	0.9
It's Not About the Coffee: Leadership Principles from a Life at Starbucks – Behar	1	0.9
A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life – Palmer	1	0.9
Certain Trumpets – Willis	1	0.9
Developing the Leaders Within You – Maxwell	1	0.9
Shackleton's Way -- Morrell & Capparell	1	0.9

Below is a table showing the data triangulation—those texts listed as Business Week Best Sellers or recommended by publishers:

Table 3.

*Lists of Texts Suggested by Publishing Houses and BusinessWeek*

<b>Title &amp; Author</b>	<b>Suggested By:</b>
Good to Great – Jim Collins	<i>BusinessWeek</i> & Publisher
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team – Patrick Lencioni	<i>BusinessWeek</i>
Who Moved My Cheese? – Spencer Johnson	<i>BusinessWeek</i> & Publisher
Our Iceberg is Melting – John Kotter, Holger Rathgeber	<i>BusinessWeek</i>
The Tipping Point – Malcom Gladwell	<i>BusinessWeek</i>
The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People – Stephen R. Covey	<i>BusinessWeek</i>
Getting to Yes – Robert T. Kiyosaki, Sharon L. Lechter	<i>BusinessWeek</i>
Leadership Theory & Practice – Northouse	Publisher

### Objective 3- Using qualitative techniques, develop an understanding of the content of the texts.

When analyzing the content of the texts, several themes emerged. Similarities and differences between academic texts and popular texts are described as they relate to audience, writing style, method, and content.

#### *Leadership Context*

The popular texts appeal to the reader by explaining how to become better leaders on an individual basis, whereas the academic texts were written about organizational leadership and teamwork. In fact, personal leadership was focused on to the extent that often whole chapters, and sometimes the entire book, were devoted solely to individual growth as a leader. An example of this is found in Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, where chapter content includes *Personal Vision*, *Principles of Personal Leadership*, and *Principles of Personal Management*. This emphasis on personal leadership is echoed in Leadership Jazz by Max DePree, in which the importance of keeping promises and reflection are accentuated. Popular press leadership texts seemed to have the goal of creating a personal do-it-yourself guide to becoming a leader.

It became clear that academic texts discuss leadership on a broader level whereas pop-culture texts are primarily concerned with the personal development piece of the puzzle. This can be seen as academic texts were more concerned with leadership as it applied to organizations and teams. Evidence of this can be found in Bass & Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership (Bass, 1990) where a section of the text is devoted to "Leadership, Environment, and Organization." This theme is proved again by Yukl (2009) through his discussion of "Leadership in Teams and Self-Managed Groups" and "Leading Change in Organizations." Clearly, academic texts explained leadership on a wider spectrum when compared to the self-improvement popular press leadership books.

#### *Writing Style*

Popular texts seemed more interesting and engaging through use of a more relaxed writing style, where the academic texts used a more formal writing style to make known the research and theoretical foundations of leadership development. Pop-culture texts were much more conversational in style of writing than were academic texts. This made popular books "easier-reads" in comparison to the academic books. In other words, the pop-culture texts didn't require the reader to have an extensive vocabulary or background knowledge in the subject in order to find the texts interesting, engaging, and informative. This was achieved through informal language such as, "Confront the Brutal Facts" (Collins, 2001), "Put First Things First" (Covey, 2004), and "Lighting the Fire" (Lencioni, 2002), all content areas of various pop-culture leadership texts which were analyzed. DePree's Leadership Jazz provides another example by titling a chapter "Ropes or Bathrooms," in which he relates a story about choosing a hotel room with a bathroom or one with a fire escape to making choices in life. This relaxed writing style was common in popular texts.

Academic texts made use of field-specific language while terminology which is more commonly used in everyday language was found more often in pop-culture texts. The technical terminology found in academic texts includes contingency theory, situational leadership theory, transformational leadership, and so on. To contrast the language used in academic text with the aforementioned pop-culture content areas, content areas in academic texts were titled “Dyadic Role-Making Theories and Followership” (Yukl, 2009) and “Leader-Member Exchange Theory” (Northouse, 2007). Another example of this language is seen in Northouse’s Leadership: Theory and Practice which speaks of subordinate characteristics, supportive leadership, institutional collectivism, and gender egalitarianism, for example. These all serve as evidence that academic texts were prone to use a technical writing style, with terminology and jargon specific to the leadership education field.

### *Method*

Several popular texts relied heavily on story-telling to demonstrate tenants of leadership. DePree (2008) relies heavily on recollections of personal stories and events to drive his points home. Covey (2004, p.102) too utilized personal experience as a means to convey his thoughts about leadership:

At the final session of a year-long executive development program in Seattle, the president of an oil company came up to me and said “Stephen, when you pointed out the difference between leadership and management in the second month, I looked at my role as the president of this company and realized that I had never been into leadership. I was deep into management, buried by pressing challenges and details of day-to-day logistics. So I decided to withdraw from management. I could get other people to do that. I wanted to really lead my organization...

Examples of this can also be found throughout Lencioni’s (2002) The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, where he even goes as far as to dialogue conversations to tell the stories. In fact, this text is presented as “A Leadership Fable.” Pop-culture texts’ use of stories differed from the use of those found in academic texts in that the stories served as the primary means for transferring information to the reader. Academic texts, on the other hand, used the stories to reinforce the theory and data presented in the chapters.

In the case of academic texts, stories served as a support mechanism rather than a primary means of conveying information. In doing so, academic texts tended to state the theories and research in the chapter first, and then make use of case studies to provide examples, if they made use of stories at all. Northouse (2007) especially used several case studies at the end of each chapter to strengthen the connection between research/theory and practice. However, Northouse (2007) was more prone to use situational and hypothetical stories such as “Can this virtual team work?,” “Andy’s Recipe,” and “A Shift for Lieutenant Colonel Adams” to fortify his content than using stories about famous leaders. Each of these stories was at the end of a chapter and described in great detail background information to create a situation in which the reader could see the theory, which was previously discussed, in action in a real-world context. Stories were a supplementary item in academic texts rather than being critical to the conveyance of ideas.

## *Content*

Academic texts were much more comprehensive, or all-inclusive, than were popular books, as nearly every theme which emerged in the popular texts was also found in the academic texts. The opposite was not true.

The main emerging theme in academic texts was leadership theories, specifically transformational, contingency, situational, strategic, and charismatic. Popular texts rarely made reference to leadership theory, but when they did, it was strategic or charismatic theory. Interestingly, these two theories are the least of the aforementioned theories referenced in the academic texts. Evidence of the inclusion of leadership theories was also found in the academic text, Leadership: Theory and Practice, as Northouse almost exclusively uses leadership theories as chapter titles, such as “Psychodynamic Approach,” “Transformational Leadership,” and “Path-Goal Theory.” Similarly, DuBrin (2009) uses chapter titles such as “Charismatic and Transformational Leadership,” “Contingency and Situational Leadership.”

Ethics is a valued tenant within the academic texts, as each academic text analyzed contained specific content areas specifically addressing ethics. “Ethical Leadership” (Northouse, 2007) and “Leadership Ethics and Social Responsibility” (DuBrin, 2003) served as examples of the emphasis placed on ethics as it applied to leadership in the academic texts. Meanwhile, ethics was not focused on in pop-culture texts in the same manner as it was in the academic books.

Though pop-culture books were more focused on personal development and issues relating to morality were cited throughout the text, there was not the same level of direct emphasis. An excerpt from Leadership Jazz (DePree, 2008, p. 220) illustrates this point:

Integrity is the linchpin of leadership. Where integrity is at stake, the leader works publicly. Behavior is the only score that’s kept. Lose integrity, and a leader will suddenly find herself in a directionless organization going nowhere.

Here the author addresses some of the same issues found in the ethics sections of academic texts, but these homilies were spread throughout the text rather than focused on as their own sections or chapters.

Academic texts also placed emphasis on diversity, a rare theme in pop-culture books. Other academic texts had portions of their books devoted to culture and diversity as well, such as: “Diverse Groups” (Bass, 1990), “International and Culturally Diverse Aspects of Leadership” (DuBrin, 2009), and “Culture and Leadership” and “Women and Leadership” (Northouse, 2007). It was evident that academic texts placed a high value on diversity and multi-culturalism by devoting portions of these texts to these topics. Conversely, popular press texts did not include the same level of emphasis on diversity.

Both genres called attention to communication and teamwork, which definitely emerged as themes for leadership texts of both academic and popular domains. Topics ranged from the definition and types of communication, to “Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood” (Covey, 2007), to “Admitting Weaknesses and Mistakes” (Lencioni, 2002). An example of this

in the pop-culture realm was seen in The Five Dysfunctions of a Team by Lencioni as he depicts the importance of communication through showing solutions to avoiding the first two dysfunctions of a team, “Absence of Trust” and “Fear of Conflict.” Here we see attributes of a trusting team and a team that engages in conflict, which include things like: “Ask for help,” “Accept questions and input,” “Offer and accept apologies without hesitation,” “Extract and exploit the ideas of all team members,” and “Put critical topics on the table for discussion” (Lencioni, 2002, p. 197, p. 204). All of these things relate to communication as well as teamwork. A parallel example in an academic text was seen in DuBrin’s Leadership: Research Findings, Practice, and Skills, with a content area labeled “Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills.” Further evidence of the emphasis of teams in academic texts was found as Northouse (2007) included a chapter written by Susan E. Kogler Hill entitled “Team Leadership” in his book. Communication and teamwork were important facets of leadership for both realms of leadership texts.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The results of the analysis provided some interesting conclusions. Using the best-sellers lists, it was assumed that the pop-culture texts are popular because more copies of those texts have sold, and therefore more of these types of books are being read than academic texts. Because more readers have purchased and read these popular books, we can draw conclusions about the preferences of the reader. From the results we can see that more readers are interested in improving their own leadership skills, readers prefer conversational terminology to field-specific jargon, readers enjoy real examples and stories to reinforce their understanding and application of leadership theory, and readers of pop-culture texts may not be getting the full spectrum of leadership. From these conclusions, implications can be made that may impact the field of leadership education.

First of all, as personal leadership development was a very common topic in popular press texts, it was concluded that readers are concerned with becoming better leaders. Further, readers may not be as interested in learning about theory and leadership as it relates to organizations as they are in learning how to grow as a leader. This is concluded from the fact that the pop-culture texts analyzed emphasized personal leadership development, while the academic texts placed emphasis on leadership theory, ethics, and diversity. An implication of this presents us with two sides. On one hand, we have the readers whom are buying and reading the personal development based pop-culture texts. On the other, experts in the field of leadership education are teaching from the academic books, which are primarily concerned with theory, diversity, ethics, and other topics not commonly found in the pop-culture books. Are the readers really getting what they need from these popular press texts? Are leadership educators teaching to the needs and desires of their pupils?

A second conclusion stems from the pop-culture texts’ use of conversational terminology to convey thoughts about leadership. This conclusion is that readers prefer this relaxed style of writing in comparison to learning the technical terms used in the field of leadership. Readers want the authors to reach them using a language they are used to, rather than the reader having to do some work to understand new terms in order to learn about leadership. An implication of this is that academic texts are failing to reach many readers simply because their writing style does



not match the preference of the majority of consumers who buy the books. Therefore, academic texts are limiting their audience and the ideas they wish to communicate, no matter how good they may be, never make it to many readers' eyes.

As both types of leadership books tended to include stories and examples, it can be concluded that readers benefit from these stories. Both authors and readers see the value of including examples and stories in their books. This could mean that readers like to learn from examples. Therefore, readers may view these examples and stories as a way to visualize how to apply the theories and skills in the real world. This could have an implication for the way leadership educators teach. If readers benefit from the stories found in leadership texts, students surely would value the use of stories to facilitate learning in the classroom.

A final conclusion from the results of this study is that readers of pop-culture texts may not be getting the complete gamut of leadership from these texts. The results showed that academic texts covered a wider range of topics than did the popular press texts. Specific things that were emphasized in academic texts, but were rare in popular press texts were leadership theories, ethics and diversity. Because these things were found in nearly all of the academic texts analyzed and since the books analyzed were chosen based on the opinions of leadership educators, we can assume that leadership education experts see them as important. However, readers of popular press texts may not be seeing these things as significant because they are not emphasized in the same manner as academic texts. These readers may be "missing out" so to speak because topics like theory, ethics, and diversity are not included in the same intensity in the books that large numbers of consumers are reading.

### **Recommendations**

From these conclusions and implications, we are able to make some recommendations for practice and for further research. First, leadership educators should choose texts which offer a synthesis of the personal development found in popular books and the broader view approach to leadership found in the academic texts. A text which describes theory, discusses topics that pertain to leadership as a whole (such as ethics and diversity), and provides insight to personal application and development would have the "best of both worlds." A good example of this is The Leadership Challenge (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Though analyzed as an academic text, this book shared properties of both academic and popular texts.

Secondly, it is suggested that leadership educators choose texts which use a relaxed writing style. Because many readers buy books which use informal language, students, like readers, are more likely to enjoy and learn from texts which employ the same writing style as found in pop-culture books. Another recommendation for practice is that leadership educators continue to use stories, both in the texts they choose to teach from and in their classroom instruction. As discussed previously, readers value these stories and therefore students are likely to benefit from them as well. A final recommendation for practice is that leadership educators continue to teach from texts which emphasize theory, ethics, and diversity which were common themes for the academic texts analyzed, but rare for the popular press texts.

One recommendation for future research would be to analyze leadership texts used in leadership courses taught in colleges of agriculture versus those used in other colleges (business, management, liberal arts, etc). It is important for leadership educators to stay informed about each other's teachings. In doing so, a broader view of leadership texts, and education in general, might be gained. Along the same lines, leadership texts used in the teaching of undergraduate courses should be compared against those used in graduate courses to see if any themes emerge.

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2) The *Animal House* or a Bad Rap? Leadership Skill Development of Members of Greek-Letter Organizations

3) Research Paper

4) Fraternities and sororities have existed within U.S. higher education since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At the turn of the millennium the number of students involved in Greek letter organizations was approximately 350,000 (Abowitz & Knox, 2003). This study examined how Greek-letter organization members' perceive leadership skills and if they attribute their leadership development to being a member of a Greek-letter organization.

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6) Yes, please print in conference proceedings if selected.

7) Yes, please consider for a poster if not selected for a presentation.

8) Yes, Billy and Manda will serve as reviewers if needed.

9) Yes, Billy and Manda will serve as session facilitators if needed.

## **Introduction**

College is a place for academic and social development for young adults. Many colleges claim to develop certain student learning outcomes such as cognitive complexity (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007). Among other items, cognitive complexity requires a student to “acquire, integrate, and apply knowledge; ... expand [one’s] interpersonal and intrapersonal skills; ... and commit to being engaged in communities and be effective in leadership” (Komives, et al., 2007, p. 387). Long term effects of cognitive complexity can be seen in college graduates as they desire to become people who “make a difference in their families, their professions, and their communities” (Komives, et al., 2007, p. 387).

When young adults enroll in college, they become members of the higher education organization and system that they are enrolled in (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Complex organizations, such as a college or university, will have their own culture and subcultures. Once students become immersed in a subculture, such as a student organization or social network, they develop a daily routine, planned and patterned with their acquaintances in mind (Chickering & Reisser). Once the subculture of a group becomes important to a student, the student will attempt to fit into it. “It is ironic that the group may demand more obedience than parents would, or more conformity than administrators would” (Chickering & Reisser, p. 394).

“Organizations exist to accomplish a specific purpose” (Komives, et al., 2007). Often that purpose is embedded in the organization’s culture. Culture is the deeply rooted nature of the organization as a result of long-held formal and informal structures, expectations, and traditions (Denison, 1996). Culture is created through an evolution of a system (Denison). Organizations are a form of system, that can be defined as “an environment in which each interaction between members produces outcomes that affect each individual and subsequent interactions and outcomes” (Komives, et al., 2007, p. 251).

Fraternities and sororities have existed within U.S. higher education since the founding of the first Greek-letter fraternity in during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Many influential leaders of the United States have been members of Greek letter organizations—including all but two presidents (DiChiara, 2007). At the turn of the millennium the number of students involved in Greek letter fraternities and sororities was approximately 350,000 (Abowitz & Knox, 2003). “Fraternities and sororities have always been established to meet specific needs, both cultural and academic, for various campus subcultures” (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998, p. 8).

## **Literature Review**

The body of research related to student involvement in Greek letter organizations is extensive. Historically, Greek letter organizations have been controversial (Pascarella, et al., 1994). In their review of the literature, Pascarella, Edison, Whitt, Nora, Hagedorn, and Terenzini



(1994) noted numerous studies related to student satisfaction, leadership, academic success, and campus involvement; however, most of the studies reported negative findings. Arguably because many of the studies were framed as negative topics: academic dishonesty, alcohol abuse, risky sexual behavior, etc. For example, members of Greek-letter organizations have been purported to be more likely to abuse alcohol (Eberhardt, Rice, & Smith, 2003), participate in activities of academic dishonesty (McCabe & Bowers, 2009; Pascarella, et al., 1994; Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2001, 2009), and engage in risky sexual behavior (Eberhardt, et al., 2003). A notable limitation to many of the studies reviewed was the purposive or nonsystematic sampling techniques used in the studies.

Many students involved in Greek letter organizations have faced scrutiny from college administrators and media regarding controversies of alcohol abuse (Kuh & Pascarella, 1996), hazing, and other legal issues (Gose, 1997), in some cases unfoundedly (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). In the 1978 film *National Lampoon's Animal House* (Landis, 1978), John Belushi and others who played roles as Delta Tau Chi fraternity members, portrayed fraternity members as “fat, drunk, and stupid” (Landis, p. n.a.). *Animal House* did not limit their poor behavior to the Delta Tau Chi house; they implied that the entire fraternity system was to blame:

Ladies and gentlemen, I'll be brief. The issue here is not whether we broke a few rules or took a few liberties with our female party guests—we did. But you can't hold a whole fraternity responsible for the behavior of a few sick, perverted individuals. For if you do, then shouldn't we blame the whole fraternity system? (Landis, p. n.a.).

Regardless of scrutiny from Hollywood, the media, administrators, and in some cases researchers, Greek letter organizations continue to thrive despite controversy by providing their members with a strong social network, philanthropic opportunities, high standards and expectations, and plentiful leadership opportunities (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998). Astin (1993) suggested that among other items, students realize their desires through satisfaction with school, participation in student organizations, and persistence in college; all of which are highly consistent with involvement theory of student retention. Kuhs (2007) found through his work with student engagement that the amount time and energy students devote to both in class and out of class activities has a positive influence on grades and persistence to finish college. “By being engaged, students develop habits that promise to stand them in good stead for a lifetime of continuous learning” (p. 12). Chickering & Reisser (1993) suggested students who join a student organization, such as sorority or fraternity, will be involved at college. Moreover, members of Greek letter organization are more likely than non-Greek letter organization members to be involved in student organizations in general (Whipple & Sullivan, 1998).

According to the North-American Interfraternity Conference (IFC), the association representing 73 international and national men's fraternities, fraternity standards include "success, service and philanthropy within our community, leadership development, and social skill development..." (IFC, 2010, ¶ 1). The National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), the association representing 26 international and national sororities, noted that sororities exist to "provide a good democratic social experience; give value beyond college years; create, through their ideals, an ever-widening circle of service beyond the membership; develop the individual's potential through leadership opportunities and group effort; and fill the need of belonging..." NPC, 2010, ¶ 6). The National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) and the National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC) share similar goals to those of the IFC and NPC while adding cultural emphasis. Therefore, these national organizations and their member organizations can broadly be described as organizations that support opportunities for leadership, academic success, civic engagement and social development.

### Theoretical Framework

Astin's (1985) involvement theory served as the theoretical framework for this study. Astin suggested the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to the academic experience is positively related to the impact of college on that student; therefore, students benefit from becoming involved. Involvement theory has four basic ideas:

1. Involvement occurs along a continuum—different students exhibit different levels of involvement in different activities at different times;
2. Involvement has both quantitative aspects—how much time a student spends doing something, and qualitative aspects, how focused the student's time is;
3. The amount of personal development and learning that can occur is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement; and
4. The effectiveness of educational policies, practices, or programs is directly related to the policy, practice, or program's commitment to increasing student involvement (Astin, 1984, p. 298).

Astin provided an illustrative example of an involved student: "a highly involved student is one who ... devotes considerable energy to studying, spends lots of time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students" (Astin, 1985, p. 134).

### Purpose and Research Objectives

Leadership is in many cases expected of outstanding students (Ogawa & Bossert, 2000). Being a leader in a student organization has been shown to be associated with higher levels of developing purpose, educational involvement, and life management (Cooper, Healy, & Simpson,

1994; Foubert & Grainger, 2006). Foubert and Grainger purported that students in leadership positions had higher levels of development than those who just attended meetings. Additionally, DiChiara (2007) identified that one area in particular that is directly proportional to meaningful student growth is the experiences of leadership within campus organizations.

An individual's ability to make a meaningful difference is enhanced by leadership development; more specifically, the variety of activities, perspectives, and experiences that leadership development provides. Students are subjected to planning, organizing, managing, and decision making when serving as a peer leader (Kuh, 1995). College students have numerous ways to become involved in student organizations and take advantage of leadership opportunities on their respective campus (DiChiara, 2007).

Ortiz (1999) suggested that arguably, the idea that the college ideal is a good thing, and it is necessary for the effectiveness of colleges and universities. Being involved in clubs and organizations, and joining a fraternity or sorority are ways in which students participate in the college ideal (Ortiz, 1999). The college ideal has far greater implications than the levels of student involvement in organizations. "In many cases, a student's ability to identify with his or her college is key to student retention and achievement, and ultimately institutional persistence and livelihood" (Ortiz, 1999, p. 47).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to describe how Greek-letter organization members' perceive leadership skills and if they attribute their leadership life skills development to being a member of a Greek-letter organization. This study was guided by four research objectives:

1. Describe selected characteristics—gender, class standing, class standing when joining a Greek-letter organization, membership in other student organizations—of student members of Greek-letter organizations at [a Land Grant] University.
2. Describe Greek-letter organization members' perceptions of leadership skills.
3. Describe Greek-letter organization members' leadership life skills development.
4. Describe the percentage of leadership development that Greek-letter organization members attribute to their involvement in their fraternity or sorority and other leadership courses.

## **Methods and Procedures**

### **Population and Sample**

As part of a larger study, the research design of this quantitative study was descriptive in nature. For this study, the target population was student members of an IFC, NPC, NPHC or NMGC Greek-letter organizations at [a Land Grant] University in the spring academic semester of 2010. The frame used to identify subjects was received from the [University] Department of Greek Life, and included 3890 individuals. The frame was scrutinized to eliminate duplications or omissions that would be potential sources of frame error.

According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) a population size of 4000, would require 351 participants as a reflective sample that yields a  $\pm 5\%$  margin of error. The sampling procedures for the larger study required a larger random sample ( $n = 500$ ) be taken in an attempt to

compensate for low response rates reported in other similar recent studies (Asel, Seifert, & Pascarella, 2009; McCabe & Bowers, 2009). The names of the Greek Students from the frame were entered into a Microsoft Excel spread sheet in alphabetical order. Each member of the population was numbered in order, beginning with the number one corresponding with the first name of the alphabetized list. A simple random sample of 500 individual numbers was obtained from [www.randomizer.org](http://www.randomizer.org) and was matched to the corresponding number on the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to determine which subjects had been chosen to participate.

### Instrumentation

The data collection instrument used in this study was researcher developed after consulting previous studies that used the *Leadership Skills Inventory* (Brick, 1998; Townsend, 1981) and the *Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale* (Dormody, Seever, & Clason, 1993). The first section was composed of a single matrix structure containing 21 statements representing leadership competencies from the Leadership Skills Inventory (Brick, 1998). Brick's instrument consisted of five internal scales for analysis: working with groups, understanding self, making decisions, communicating, and leadership. Individuals were asked to respond to each item using a five-point Likert-type scale using one of the following scale anchors: 1 = *Not at All*, 3 = *Some*, 5 = *Very Much*. The second section was composed of the 30-item unidimensional *Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale* (Dormody & Seever, 1994; Dormody, et al., 1993) used to measure leadership life skills development. Individuals were asked to respond to each item using a seven-point Likert-type scale using one of the following scale anchors: 1 = *No Gain*, 3 = *Slight Gain*, 5 = *Moderate Gain*, 7 = *A Lot of Gain*. The third section consisted of demographic questions including gender, class standing, class standing when joining a Greek-letter organization, membership in other student organizations.

Construct validity for items in the first section of the instrument was determined by Townsend in her 1981 study. Similarly, construct validity for items in the second section of the instrument was determined by Dormody, Seever, and Clason in 1993. Therefore, because the items used in this study did not deviate from the studies conducted by Townsend or Dormody and his associates, the constructs were deemed valid. The design and format of the data collection instrument was guided by the suggestions of Dillman (2007). The electronic Web-based questionnaire was created and distributed to a panel of experts using Web-hosted software provided by Hosted Survey™ to assess face validity. The panel of eight experts consisted of three faculty members from a Land-Grant University, and five students not included in the study who were considered representative of the population.

Estimates of reliability were reported in previous studies that used the Leadership Skills Inventory (Brick, 1998; Carter & Spotanski, 1989; Rutherford, Townsend, Briers, Cummins, & Conrad, 2002; Townsend, 1981; Townsend & Carter, 1983) and Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (Dormody & Seever, 1994; Dormody, et al., 1993); however, the population for this study was varied from the previous studies. Thus, reliability of the instrument was estimated by conducting a pilot test using individuals who were considered representative of the population; in this case, members of Greek-letter organizations ( $n = 100$ ) who were not chosen in the random sample. The electronic Web-based questionnaire was created and distributed to each individual in the pilot test using Web-hosted software provided by Hosted Survey™. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for the scales, Leadership Skills Inventory and Youth

Leadership Life Skills Development Scale, yielding coefficients of .89 and .96 ( $n = 31$ ) respectively.

### Methods/Procedures

Dillman's (2007) data collection protocol was followed for this study. E-mail invitations were sent using the Hosted Survey™ software to each of the individuals in the sample ( $n = 500$ ) of members of Greek-letter organizations. Each e-mail invitation invited members to share their experiences and opinions about Greek-letter organizations, and included a personalized link to the Web-based electronic questionnaire. As electronic questionnaires were completed the names of the individuals who had responded were removed from the correspondence list to avoid sending additional e-mail correspondence. After four points of contact, a response rate of 29.0% ( $n = 145$ ) was obtained.

Non-response error was a relevant concern; therefore, procedures for handling nonrespondents were followed as outlined as *Method 1* in Lindner, Murphy, and Biers (2001). Respondents were dichotomously split into early and late respondent groups (Miller & Smith, 1983) to compare variables of interest: working with groups, understanding self, making decisions, communicating, and leadership. An independent samples t-test was used to compare the variables of interest and yielded no significant differences ( $p > .05$ ) between early and late respondent data. Therefore, external validity did not threaten the generalizability of the findings of this study to the population (Lindner, et al., 2001; Radhakrishna & Doamekpor, 2008).

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS® version 17.0 for Windows™ platform computers. In determining the appropriate analysis of the data, the primary guidance was scales of measurement as outlined by Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, and Sorensen (2006). Research objective one sought to describe selected characteristics of student members of Greek-letter organizations at [a Land Grant] University; thus, frequencies and percentages for gender, class standing, class standing when joining a Greek-letter organization, membership in other student organizations were reported. Research objective two sought to describe Greek-letter organization members' perceptions of leadership skills. Subjects were asked to respond to 21 statements regarding leadership skills using a five-point Likert-type scale to reflect levels of importance. Mean, Mode, and standard deviation were reported. Mode was included as a more conservative descriptor of central tendency. Research objective three sought to describe Greek-letter organization members' leadership life skills development. Subjects were asked to respond to 30 items using a seven-point Likert-type scale to reflect levels of gain. Mean, Mode, and standard deviation were reported. Research objective four sought to describe the percentage of leadership development that Greek-letter organization members attribute to their involvement in their fraternity or sorority and other leadership courses; thus, frequencies and percentages were reported.

### Findings

Research objective one sought to describe selected characteristics of student members of Greek-letter organizations at [a Land Grant] University. A majority of the subjects were female (56.3%); upperclassmen (57.2%); joined a Greek-letter organization when they were a freshman (75.4%); belonged to an organization other than their fraternity or sorority (84.7%); held an

elected, appointed, or selected leadership position in fraternity or sorority (81.4%); had attended a formal leadership training sponsored by their fraternity or sorority (69.5%). Conversely, subjects on average, had not attended a formal leadership training offered on campus, e.g. Covey, Leadershape, Strength Quest (68.6%); been enrolled in a university offered leadership course (61.0%), or attended a professional conference (68.6%). The results are further summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

*Characteristics of student members of Greek-letter organizations at [a Land Grant] University*

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>	%
Gender	119		
Male		52	43.7
Female		67	56.3
Current Class Standing	119		
Freshman		12	10.1
Sophomore		24	20.2
Junior		37	31.1
Senior		31	26.1
Other		15	12.6
Class Standing When Joined Greek-letter Organization	118		
Freshman		89	75.4
Sophomore		17	14.4
Junior		8	6.8
Senior		4	3.4
Member of an Organization besides Greek-letter Org.	118		
Yes		100	84.7
No		18	15.3
Held an Elected, Appointed, or Selected Leadership Position in Fraternity or Sorority	118		
Yes		96	81.4
No		22	18.6
Attended Formal Leadership Training Sponsored by Fraternity or Sorority	118		
Yes		82	69.5
No		36	30.5
Attended Formal Leadership Training Offered on Campus e.g. Covey, Leadershape, Strength Quest	118		
Yes		37	31.4
No		81	68.6
Enrolled in a Formal University Leadership Course	118		
Yes		46	39.0
No		72	61.0

(continued)

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>	%
Attended a Professional Conference	118		
Yes		37	31.4
No		81	68.6

Research objective two sought to describe Greek-letter organization members' perceptions of leadership skills. Findings are presented in Table 2 ordered by the mean score of the Greek-letter organization members' perceptions of leadership skills importance. The overall scale mean for the leadership skills was 4.63 ( $SD = 0.35$ ). Twelve of the 21 items had a mean score greater than the summated mean that ranged from 4.64 to 4.86. The other nine items had associated mean scores that ranged from 4.36 to 4.61 (see Table 2), indicating that Greek-letter organization members' perceived all of the leadership skills as having more than some importance.

Table 2

*Perceptions of Members of Greek-letter Organizations at [a Land Grant] University Regarding the Importance of Selected Leadership Skills (n = 139)*

Scale Items	<i>M</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
can cooperate and work in a group.	4.86	5	0.37
believe that all group members are responsible.	4.81	5	0.43
use information in making decisions.	4.78	5	0.47
feel responsible for their decisions.	4.75	5	0.53
feel responsible for their actions.	4.73	5	0.56
feel comfortable being a group leader.	4.71	5	0.62
can give clear directions.	4.70	5	0.59
consider all choices before making a decision.	4.67	5	0.63
are good listeners.	4.67	5	0.57
listen carefully to opinions of group members.	4.67	5	0.56
get along with people.	4.65	5	0.61
can lead a discussion.	4.64	5	0.65
can follow directions.	4.61	5	0.73
are sure of their abilities.	4.60	5	0.63
can run a meeting.	4.56	5	0.78
feel comfortable teaching others.	4.55	5	0.67
respect others of the same age.	4.53	5	0.72
understand themselves.	4.51	5	0.71
use past experiences in making decisions.	4.50	5	0.74
accept people for who they are.	4.46	5	0.73
believe in dividing the work among group members.	4.36	5	0.70
Summated Mean for Scale	4.63	--	0.35

*Note.* Scale: 1 = Not at All Important; 3 = Some; 5 = Very Much Important

Research objective three sought to describe Greek-letter organization members' leadership life skills development that the member attributed to their Greek-letter organization involvement. Findings are presented in Table 3 ordered by the mean score of the Greek-letter organization members' perceptions of their leadership life skill development gain. The overall scale mean for the leadership life skill development was 5.66 ( $SD = 1.11$ ), indicating that Greek-

letter organization members perceived to have at least moderate gain in leadership skill development from their experience in their fraternity or sorority. Greek-letter organization members most frequently indicated that they experienced a lot of gain from being a fraternity or sorority member on 27 of the 30 leadership life skill development items. The leadership life skill development items that did not have a mode of at least 7 were *can use information to solve problems* (Mode = 6), *am sensitive to others* (Mode = 5), and *am sensitive to others* (Mode = 5), which would indicate members experienced on those three items at least a moderate amount of gain from being a fraternity or sorority member.

Table 3

*Perceptions of Members of Greek-letter Organization Members' Leadership Life Skills Development (n = 129)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>Mode</i>	<i>SD</i>
get along with others	6.03	7	1.23
can set priorities	5.97	7	1.41
show a responsible attitude	5.95	7	1.25
can be flexible	5.92	7	1.43
can delegate responsibility	5.91	7	1.34
respect others	5.84	7	1.37
can listen effectively	5.84	7	1.36
can be tactful	5.81	7	1.33
consider input from all group members	5.81	7	1.31
can handle mistakes	5.80	7	1.37
have a friendly personality	5.77	7	1.54
can set goals	5.74	7	1.46
have a positive self-concept	5.74	7	1.32
have good manners	5.72	7	1.63
create an atmosphere of acceptance	5.70	7	1.52
use rational thinking	5.69	7	1.49
am open to change	5.67	7	1.64
recognize the worth of others	5.67	7	1.43
can be honest with others	5.65	7	1.49
can consider alternatives	5.63	7	1.51
can solve problems	5.62	7	1.52
trust other people	5.61	7	1.71
an open-minded	5.60	7	1.61
consider the needs of others	5.58	7	1.48
can clarify my values	5.57	7	1.60
can select alternatives	5.38	7	1.52
can use information to solve problems	5.30	6	1.57
am sensitive to others	5.22	5	1.45
can express feelings	5.02	7	1.76
Summated Mean for Scale	5.66	--	1.11

*Note.* Scale: 1 = No Gain, 3 = Slight Gain, 5 = Moderate Gain, 7 = A Lot of Gain

Research objective four sought to describe the percentage of leadership development that Greek-letter organization members attribute to their involvement in their fraternity or sorority, or



other leadership courses. Sixty-percent (60.1%) of Greek-letter organization members attributed *50 percent or more* of their leadership skills as being gained directly from their involvement in their fraternity or sorority. Conversely, nearly 85 percent (84.8%) of Greek-letter organization members attributed *50 percent or less* of their leadership skills as being gained directly from leadership education courses, training programs, or conferences.

Table 4

*Perceptions of Members of Greek-letter Organizations at [a Land Grant] University Regarding Percent of Leadership Skill Development (n = 118)*

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Leadership Skill Development Gained From Being a Member of a Fraternity or Sorority		
10% or Less	7	5.9
20%	5	4.2
30%	17	14.4
40%	18	15.3
50%	24	20.3
60%	10	8.5
70%	20	16.9
80%	12	10.2
90%	3	2.5
100%	2	1.7
Leadership Skill Development Gained From Leadership Education or Training (e.g. course, program, conference)		
10% or Less	30	25.4
20%	18	15.3
30%	24	20.3
40%	12	10.2
50%	16	13.6
60%	4	3.4
70%	4	3.4
80%	7	5.9
90%	3	2.5
100%	--	--

### Conclusions

A majority of members of Greek-letter organizations were female and had achieved a junior or senior status. Most joined their fraternity or sorority early in their college experience and held leadership positions in their fraternity or sorority. Most were also involved in other organizations, but had not enrolled in or attended formal or informal leadership courses or training besides those offered through their fraternity or sorority.

Members of Greek-letter organizations, on average, believe that leadership skills are important. Overall, the selected leadership skills were indicated as being *very much important*, based on mode. Members of Greek-letter organizations believe that they have gained at least a moderate amount of their leadership abilities directly from being involved in their fraternity or sorority. Conversely, Greek-letter organization members did not attribute much of their

leadership skill development as being gained directly from leadership education courses, training programs, or conferences.

### **Implications**

It is evident that from the members' perspectives Greek-letter organizations are addressing the leadership aspect of their mission. Greek-letter organizations should be praised for providing fraternity and sorority members the opportunity to develop leadership skills. However, the question remains: Do the members of Greek-letter organizations know how much they do or do not know? Leadership educators must develop a better understanding of how leadership skills and concepts are being taught, and how deep the concepts are being understood and retained. Perhaps an even more perplexing question is how do leadership educators convince members of Greek-letter organization to enroll in formal leadership courses when it is likely that many of the members believe that they already possess and understand leadership?

### **Recommendations**

Greek-letter organizations have a unique opportunity to develop a leadership framework. Such a framework would provide a set of identified leadership skills; thereby providing a clear criterion to measure and document how members develop leadership skills. Greek-letter organizations could then provide other student organizations and leadership educators an example for how to better develop our students' leadership skills. Providing intentional development behind an informal structure would improve the leadership development that already occurs within Greek-letter organizations because it will occur with a theoretical underpinning. This type of intentional development would allow students involved in Greek-letter organizations (and perhaps others) an opportunity to provide future employers an actual description of their understanding and application of the skills learned.

The literature related to Greek-letter organizations is prolific and spans decades. However, much of the literature is based on the results of studies conducted with small-scale or limited populations. Making inferences from the findings of these studies to the broader population of members of Greek-letter organizations would not be responsible. The absence of studies conducted using a sample of members of Greek-letter organizations on a national scale is evident. A more reasonable approach may be to work with the IFC, NPC, NPHC, and the MCGC to conduct national studies of each organization's members. Although an undertaking of national scale would be daunting, the findings could provide a more in-depth understanding of the positive outcomes Greek-letter organizations provide students.

The leadership data collection instrument used in this study was adapted from instruments developed for other populations. There would be merit in developing a specific data collection instrument to measure Greek-letter organization members' leadership skill development and administer the instrument in a longitudinal manner to annually monitor leadership development of members of Greek-letter organizations from their freshman year until graduation.

Further, focus groups should be conducted to learn how the organizations are so effective at developing these selected skills. With this kind of success, there are a number of other organizations, both collegiate and corporate, that would like to get these kinds of results.

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2. Title: Defining Leadership: Social Integration of First Year Female Students
3. Presentation Track: Research Paper
4. Abstract: (50 words)

The researchers employed qualitative methods to evaluate first year female students' definition of leadership through involvement in the Women's Learning Circle. The findings of the study revealed students defined leadership in two dimensions, traits and behaviors. The qualitative findings explore a multidimensional approach to the voice of fifty-four female students.

5. The proposal can be considered as a poster.

6. Bios:

Tammie Preston-Cunningham currently serves as the Coordinator of Leadership and Community Involvement at Texas A&M University in the Department of Greek Life. She has worked in the Department of Greek Life for eight years and higher education for a total of eighteen years. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Poultry Science, Master of Science in Higher Education Administration, and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication at Texas A&M University. Ms. Preston-Cunningham has held numerous professional positions in higher education, to include positions in recruitment, research, and academic advising. She is a member of NASPA and ACPA. Her research interest lies with leadership within underrepresented student populations.

Kim E. Dooley is a Professor in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications at Texas A&M University. She has conducted professional presentations and numerous distance training programs around the globe. Her publications include 50 refereed journal articles and a book titled *Advanced Methods in Distance Education: Applications and Practices for Educators, Administrators, and Learners*. She was the 2005 recipient of the regional award for excellence in college and university teaching in the food and agricultural sciences given by the United States Department of Agriculture. Dr. Dooley

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Chanda D. Elbert received her Ph.D. in Agricultural and Extension Education from The Pennsylvania State University in 2000. She joined the Department of Agricultural, Leadership and Communications at Texas A&M University in 2000. Dr. Elbert has worked on integrating teaching, research and service by exploring and working on various topics such as women's leadership, multicultural leadership, program evaluation and organizational accountability. She serves as a joint faculty member with Texas Tech working with the Doc@Distance program offered in the department. Dr. Elbert is a member of the Association for Leadership Educators, Southern Association of Agricultural Education, American Association for Agricultural Education, and the Society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences.

## Defining Leadership: Social Integration of First Year Female Students

### Introduction

According to Chickering (1993), the transition to college is a time for students to explore themselves and develop an identity. However, college students develop identity in multiple layers and through various outlets, such as sorority membership. In a study conducted by Adams and Keim (2000), it was found that sorority chapter presidents more so than their male counterparts, took a more participatory/collaborative approach and practice of developing a trusting and supporting environment while encouraging others to develop leadership skills. Sorority membership for many women has become a successful method of social integration and creation of support systems. For instance, sorority membership has been observed as a method to meet other women that share common goals and values.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the perception of leadership among female freshmen sorority members in higher education. According to Thorp, Cummins, and Townsend (1998) greater amounts of exposure to leadership courses and prior leadership activities in high school leads to increased confidence in female's perceived leadership skills in college. Therefore, the authors discuss findings concerning the definition of leadership among freshmen sorority women upon entry to college. This issue is important as the number of women attending college continues to grow making it necessary to develop effective leadership training programs that increase leadership role attainment among women.

### Literature Review

In the field of student affairs, the co-curricular plays an intricate and important role in the overall success of the college student. This study utilizes the social integration framework as a guide to understanding the perceptions and expectations of leadership within a sorority centered



student program. However, because there are numerous terms and/or constructs used throughout the document some explanations are in order. The following terms are integral to assist the reader's clarification and understanding of the subject matter; social integration, leadership, behavioral leadership traits, transformational leadership, and gender based leadership.

### *Social Integration*

According to the works by Tinto (1993), individuals may struggle to integrate into both the academic and social realms of the university while integrating smoothly into only one realm. Presumably, students who have integrated into both the university's social and academic realms will have greater institutional commitment than those who have not integrated into the institution. The goals and intentions that are related to the attainment of a college degree will be reaffirmed by successful integration. Tinto (1993) argues that the vast majority of departures are tied to the quality of the experience that the student has after entering the university, in others words, the extent to which experiences serve to integrate the student into the academic and social realms of the institution. He also postulates that social integration can be met by a myriad of methods but is primarily met through involvement with student organizations. As students become involved in an organization it is a natural progression for those students to become leaders.

### *Leadership*

According to Northhouse (2007), leadership is a process whereby one individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Taking into account the context of leadership within an organization, Nahavandi (2006) describes a leader as a person who influences individuals and groups within an organization, helps them in the establishment of goals and guides them toward achievement of those goals, thereby allowing them to be effective.

As researchers continue to delve deeper into the process of leadership, Kouzes and Posner, (2008), identified Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership: 1) model the way, 2) inspire a shared vision, 3) challenge the process, 4) enable others to act, and 5) encourage the heart. These practices have been characterized as personal leadership experiences. For instance, while modeling the way, one should behave in a way in which they would expect others to behave. In order to inspire a shared vision, one must see further than the present and have knowledge about others dreams, hopes, aspirations, visions, and values. In challenging the process, when obstacles arise a leader continues to strive to succeed. When enabling others to act, one must first build trust as a team and encourage others to become leaders. To encourage the heart is to show an appreciation for others contributions and celebrate their accomplishments. As the practices of leadership were discussed, behavior is an essential feature that intertwines within all five practices. The five practices echo the behaviors seen in the theory of transformational leadership.

#### *Leadership Behavior Based on Traits*

While identifying leadership based on traits, Nahavandi (2006) expressed that behavioral theorists focus on the behaviors and thus it is important that a leaders' behavior is based on their traits and skills. In this regard, Lussier and Achua (2007) have identified nine traits of effective leaders: 1) dominance, 2) high energy, 3) self-confidence, 4) locus of control, 5) stability, 6) integrity, 7) intelligence, 8) emotional intelligence, and 9) flexibility and sensitivity to others. Similar research by Northouse (2007) identified a set of behavioral traits based upon a historical perspective. These traits were intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability. The review of the literature related to practices of leadership and behavior led the authors to the similar framework of transformational leadership.

#### *Transformational Leadership*

Elias, O'Brien, and Weissberg (2006) describe transformative leadership as a "leadership that is willing to realign structures and relationships to achieve genuine and sustainable change.

Northhouse (2007) states transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. Likewise, Elias, O'Brien, and Weissberg (2006) describe transformative leadership as "leadership that is willing to realign structures and relationships to achieve genuine and sustainable change" (p.11). According to Lussier and Achua (2007) effective transformational leaders see themselves as change agents, visionaries, and risk takers with the ability to articulate core values; they possess cognitive skills, are able to show sensitivity, flexibility, and are open to learn from experience. Bass (1974) expressed it best, stating:

Transformation leaders asks their followers to transcend their self-interest for the good of the organization; to consider the long term needs to develop themselves, rather than their needs of the moment; and to become more aware of what is really important. (p. 53)

### *Gender and Leadership Issues*

Bass (1990) states women in the past had limited leadership opportunities; typically women were relegated to women's issues and jobs in institutions such as sororities, nunneries all girl schools, and telephone operators or supervisors. Currently, leadership opportunities for women have increased; however, the glass ceiling continues to exist between upper-middle management and the executive level (Lussier & Achua, 2007). In relation to gender and traits, Hoyt (2007) has concluded that it is unclear how important traits are to leadership. However, he expresses that gender is integral to contemporary notions of effective leadership styles that have morphed from a traditional masculine, autocratic style to the more feminine and androgynous styles of democratic and transformational leadership. Although gender was not found to explain differences in the impact of participation in leadership development programs (Endress, 2000) or to account for differences in leadership behaviors (Posner, 2004), others have reported that males

and females respond to different leadership paradigms (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Dugan (2006), for example, found that college women scored higher than did their male counterparts across all eight of the constructs associated with a social change model of leadership.

### Methods and Procedures

The current study utilizes qualitative methodology to evaluate the emerging themes and capture the nuances within the population (Hughes & DuMont, 1993). In qualitative research, the possibilities for generating new ideas and paradigms as well as lending a voice to the research participant ensures a more complex and multifaceted exploration of the topic. Thus, the researchers focused on the question related to how participants define leadership. The definitions were gathered from a pre-program application that served as a baseline of the initial concept of “leadership” before participation in this program. A content analysis was conducted from this archival data. “Content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way, through an analysis of their communications” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1999, p. 405).

### *Participants*

The researchers used women from the Women’s Learning Circle (WLC), an annual event hosted by the Collegiate Panhellenic Council (CPC). CPC hosts recruitment activities prior to the first week of classes and traditionally accepts only first semester freshmen women who have been involved in high school organizations and held leadership positions prior to enrolling in the university. The population consisted of 54 first semester women, approximately 8% of the freshmen women involved in CPC sororities. The WLC members were reflective of the general population of TAMU with sorority members comprising approximately 7% of the undergraduate female student population. Female students were selected and encouraged to apply to the

program by chapter presidents and organization advisors. The women were selected based upon their application and interest in future leadership positions. However, none of the participants held leadership positions at the college level.

### *The Program*

WLC was developed as a peer mentoring program that provided opportunities for freshmen CPC sorority women to meet regularly to discuss issues pertinent to college life, leadership, and involvement. The WLC program utilized critical reflection and experiential learning through the medium of conversation and media. Each learning circle contained six women from various chapters. The groups were formed based on the applicants stated interest and hobbies. The students received various modules discussing topics ranging from leadership, body image, to self-esteem. The small group learning circles viewed an assigned film associated with the module topic and utilized a literature circle method to explore the information (Stein & Beed, 2004). The literature circle assigned individual roles (i.e., connector, illustrator, passage master, questioner, and summarizer) based on the task required to influence learning and synthesize the information.

### *Analysis*

The qualitative data will be analyzed by using a deductive approach with a set of archival data responses. Data was de-identified, coded, and sorted according to the learning circle groups. A confidential code number using a letter to denote the small group (A-H) and a number corresponding to the total number of participants in each group was provided on each respondent card. First –level coding, meaning carefully examining the data and selecting phrases, words, or stories which taken individually contain a single meaning. For the purpose of this study, first level coding involved reading half of the applications and making line-by-line notations in the margins. The notations indicated key words or phrases. The coding was manual with hand-

written notes being made on the application. During the coding process, memos will be written to detail emerging themes or concepts, which required further exploration. The codes were then distilled, abbreviated, and written on individual note cards. The data cards listed the comments along with participant identification code.

During second-level coding, this means, examining and collapsing codes into categories or higher-level concepts. As data collection and analysis continued, comparison indicated commonalities and differences between categories. After review, data cards were created and sorted based on the common themes that emerged from the respondents. The researchers developed a master list of common themes and categories, and then compiled the themes accordingly. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the third and final stage of coding is defined as when relationships between categories are formed and ideas develop that lead to hypotheses. Further coding of the remaining applications tested the hypotheses. Theoretical triangulation was considered as final categories and representative quotes were selected to give voice to the participants.

## Results and Findings

The participants were asked to “define leadership.” There were two overarching themes that emerged, which were related to a leader’s traits and behaviors. In particular, respondents stated that leaders needed to possess a certain set of characteristics that were maintained by their beliefs, morals, and value system. Within the theme of leadership traits, the subthemes were (1) belief in self/cause, (2) integrity (ability to do the right thing), (3) being genuine, (4) inspiring others, (5) selflessness, (6) passion, (7) mutual respect, (8) ability to unite a group and work with others, (9) ability to compromise, (10) dependability, and (11) confidence. One respondent emphasized several of these traits (emphasis added):

I define leadership as the occurrence of your own *belief in yourself* and your *ability to do the right thing*, being so *genuine* that it *inspires others* to look at you and look to you for help in their own struggle for self-worth and achievement. The greatest leaders are not the ones who went looking for power but the ones whom it was given to because of their *selfless* personal achievement as an individual (A4).

Other respondents mentioned this notion of selfless leadership but added subthemes of passion and working hard for others for a greater cause:

To be a good leader a person must be willing to *selflessly serve a cause* that they have an extreme *passion* for (G3).

A leader does not work hard to be glorified, but *works hard for others* and for something greater than themselves (A5).

The female respondents in this study believed that mutual respect was an important leadership trait:

Leadership in my mind is defined as *mutual respect*. You can lead people all you want, but how the people you are leading actually respond to you is the true test. You need to be respected as a leader; you need to respect the people you are leading (D2).

Other respondents focused on the ability to unite a group and to be someone others could trust and depend upon. This included that constructs of being able to work with others, listen, and compromise to accomplish a goal as a team:

Being able to lead means you must be able to *unite a group, create compromise, and be dependable*. A leader should never be controlling. As a leader, one should always be able to *work and listen to others* (B4).

Sometimes a leader has to exude courage and confidence and do “the right thing” even when it is not popular. Women leaders recognize the importance of speaking up—having a voice:

(A leader is) somebody who is *not afraid to step up and say something*, even if others may disagree, a leader does not care what others will think of them (E5).

The second theme was leadership behaviors. Respondents overwhelmingly spoke to the issue of leaders being role models or those who set an example for others to follow.

I believe leadership is being an active role model for another person. It is present in every facet of our lives and one must not be proclaimed a ‘leader’ in order to show leadership abilities (H2).

Some respondents believed leaders should be competent (knowledgeable), proactive and inspiring.

Leaders exhibit positive qualities so that people choose to behave like them, but are also able to take on the responsibility to being a *role model*. They are *knowledgeable* and *proactive* acting for a purpose. Leadership is about *inspiring others for a mutual goal* and direct everyone until the goal is accomplished (H5).

Interestingly, the respondents also associated leaders with being able to take responsibility, take charge, administer authority, be visionary, and be goal-oriented with their followership. Below is a sampling of respondents who lend voice to the behaviors necessary for leaders as well as the distinctions made between terms.

I think that leadership involves having a *clear destination in mind*, knowing where you are and where you want to be and *taking the steps to achieve that goal* (D6).

I believe leadership is the ability to *take charge* of a situation and administer the correct level of authority and *responsibility* that comes with the role of being a leader (F4).

The respondents illuminate several traits and/or active behaviors they believe are essential to be a good leader. For example, leaders are to be genuine, inspiring, and selfless servants who promote followership through role modeling. Leaders are to be mutually respectful with the ability to be uniting, a person who creates compromise in others, is able him/her self to be dependable, work well with others, and listen while stepping up and having something to say. In addition, leaders are not power seekers but rather take responsibility, are knowledgeable, proactive, goal oriented, and productive.

## Discussion

This study confirms findings similar to those Northouse (2007) put forth when capturing a set of five behavioral traits (e.g., intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability). Each of these dimensions was clearly identified within this study creating the



distinctive viability of continued study concerning leadership within this population. Moreover, while Hoyt (2007) found that gender was essential to the contemporary notions of effective leadership styles in its various forms the current study found definitions of leadership closely aligned with leadership theory. Interestingly, Hoyt (2007) concluded that it was unclear how important traits were to leadership while the current study found leader's traits to be an essential part of the respondent's ideals of an effective leader.

Women respondents in this study embody transformational leadership. That is, respondents described the traits and behaviors postulated by leadership theorists who study transformational leadership. For instance, leaders were to be the farsighted, risk takers, role models, and change agents much like Lussier and Achua, (2007) describe. Respondents found that a leader's beliefs, morals, and values needed to align with those of their followership particularly when making decisions for the group. Respondents ask would be leaders to put their beliefs into action. Self-esteem, achievement, willingness to work but not for glory or power was critical as well as embracing a higher purpose than one's self. In addition, leaders were asked to provide the voice for those who may be afraid to speak up for themselves without regard for self.

The current study confirms the research of Adams and Keim (2000), who found sorority chapter presidents took on a more participatory/collaborative approach and practice of developing a trusting and supporting environment while encouraging others to develop leadership skills. In fact, the TAMU sorority chapters who participate in the WLC program may serve as a model for other sororities and/or programs wishing to create transformational leaders.

According to Tinto (1993) as students become involved in an organization such as a sorority it is a natural progression for those students to become leaders. The current study features freshman sorority women with previous leadership experience who as first-year college

students have sought out a student organization (sorority). As seen in their responses, it is reasonable to assume these women have high expectations for leaders and likely are striving to acquire and/or maintain the type of leadership skills they expect from others. The leadership skills they appear to seek requires a certain amount of assertiveness, self-awareness, self-confidence, commitment, stability, integrity, intelligence, flexibility and sensitivity to the needs of others much like the traits Lussier and Achua (2007) identified and similar to those Northouse (2007) specified. The expectations may have far reaching implications when it comes to programming on a collegiate level for women.

### Implications, Conclusions and Recommendations

The respondents featured here expect their leaders and seemingly themselves to strive toward being transformational leaders. Elias, O'Brien, and Weissberg (2006) notes that transformational leaders use structures and relationships to achieve and maintain change. Likely, the respondents sought out the particular structure and relationships that a sorority offers as a way to become socially integrated into the academic and social environment as suggested by Tinto (1993). The implication here is that females entering college with leadership experience will intentionally seek out structures and relationships that foster leadership development. As such, institutions of higher learning and/or programs interested in creating change for women may consider what types of structures, programs, and student organizations foster the building of relationships and the development of leadership skills. As Tinto (1993) points out, a majority of early terminations from college are tied to the student's quality of experiences after entering college and having programs designed specifically for this population may lead to program and university sustainability and integration.

Further research should also be conducted with sorority chapter presidents who have had members participate in WLC programs to evaluate the students' performance over time. The influence of transformational leaderships and the relationship to female college student's perception of leadership should be further explored due to the many characteristics, traits, and behaviors that are consistent with transformational leadership descriptions.

Based upon the findings of this study, there is a need to determine how the traits and behaviors are transferred from leader to participant. Additional research is needed to tease apart the interplay of the dynamics at work. The current study focuses solely on first semester freshmen; continued enrollment and study organizational involvement may influence further perceptions of leadership over time. Longitudinal research that follows students throughout their collegiate tenure and focuses on how perceptions of leadership change over time may shed light upon the understanding of leadership dynamics. In addition, it is unclear how comments from the study participants may affect the future leadership selection for sorority chapters given that participants articulate their expectations of their leaders and how those leaders may or may not display specific characteristics, traits, and behaviors. Additional research concerning women leading other women and mixed gender organizations would also be also enlightening.

As the number of women attending college continues to grow, it is necessary to develop effective leadership training programs that align its structures to promote relationships and leadership development. Attention must be paid to the intertwining of various leadership theories, gender, and social integration to create not only well intentioned but also well planned and implemented women's leadership programs. Women should be encouraged to become involved in campus sponsored activities, be exposed to other women in leadership positions, and assisted in the building of relationships and leadership development skills during their first year

of college. Thus, institutions should consider embracing the unique yet effective roles women assume as community leaders by addressing the different leadership expectations in the development of leadership training curriculum for student organizations.

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2. “The Feeling’s Mutual”: Student Participation in Leadership as Reciprocal Exchange
3. Research Paper
4. This grounded theory study builds understanding of leadership from the followers’ perspective in an educational organization. Data collected from twenty incoming college freshmen indicate that students conceptualized their participation as a process of reciprocal exchange. The findings suggested that organization members contribute significantly to the organization’s total leadership capacity.
5. Dr. Owens’ scholarly interests relate to leadership and followership, school culture, and organizational socialization issues within schools and other educational agencies. In particular, he is interested in how members of educational organizations participate in and reciprocally influence leadership practice, especially in organizations serving children in urban settings.
6. Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings, if accepted.
7. Yes, please consider the proposal for a poster if not accepted.
8. Yes, I am willing to serve as a reviewer for this conference.
9. Yes, I am willing to serve as a session facilitator at the conference.

## “THE FEELING’S MUTUAL”: STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP AS RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE

### Introduction

In recent years, educational leadership scholars have examined the impact followers have on educational leadership and leadership practices (e.g., Leithwood, 2007; Spillane, 2006). Even so, relatively few studies have set out to build understanding of educational leadership from the followers’ perspective. Understanding how the led perceive their relationships with school leaders may provide important insights into our conceptual understanding of educational leadership, our understanding of constituents’ contributions to school leadership, and our ability to predict followers’ responses to the actions of those who lead them. This study uses constructivist grounded theory methods to develop a model of how leadership looks from the perspective of students in Western University’s Upward Bound (UB) Program. This study contributes to the field of leadership education by looking at how followers affect leadership in educational organizations. Understanding leadership from a follower’s perspective may help leaders of educational organizations to build collaborative leadership capacity. The following question guided the study: How do students enrolled in an educational opportunities program participate in the program’s leadership practice?

#### *Study Description and Rationale*

This study used constructivist grounded theory methods to build theoretical understanding of leadership by examining how students in the UB Program at Western University described their contributions to the program. The author conducted semi-structured interviews with participants, asking participants about leadership, whether they thought they participated, and (if so) how they participated in the leadership of the organization. Data were put together to form an incipient theory of student participation in leadership.

### Sensitizing Literature Review

This study is focused primarily on examining leadership from the perspective of the led. Traditionally, followers are seen as those to be influenced rather than having capacity to influence in their own right. Moreover, several types of leadership have been proposed (Leithwood, et al., 2004). Literature relating to organizational, transactional, and distributed leadership brings out the role members play in the overall leadership capacity of organizations. Some of that work is briefly examined here to set this study within an existing research context.

#### *Organizational Leadership*

Literature on organizational leadership offers insight into concepts, categories, and relationships that seem relevant to this study’s key research question. Leadership in groups has been described in the literature as *shared leadership*, *collective leadership*, *systemic leadership*, and *distributed leadership*. Although the nuances differ, the general focus of this work seems to center on where leadership resides and on how leadership happens among constituents. According to literature foundational to current work in educational leadership, leadership may be viewed as an organizational quality that goes beyond the actions of a single leader into shared



organizational action and influence (Birnbaum, 1992). Studies that shed new light on this foundational claim are needed. Firestone (1996) noted that leadership is comprised of functions and tasks that must and can happen in many ways by many people. By examining leadership functions and tasks Upward Bound students do to promote the functionality of the organization, Firestone's claims may be tested. Ogawa and Bossert (1995) declared that organizations conduct activities to facilitate the development of shared meaning and values (i.e., culture). Pounder, Ogawa, and Adams (1995) built on this foundation and found that school leadership shapes the organization of the work, develops solidarity among members of the organization, manages schools' relations with the external environment, and builds member commitment to the school. More empirical evidence from a member perspective may verify or refute these assertions.

### *Transactional Leadership: Leader-Member Exchange*

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen, 1976), views leadership as an *exchange process* that takes place in leader-member dyads. This view seems helpful when studying student participation in leadership practices because it capitalizes on the importance of relationships and mutual influence to the exercise of leadership both on the part of leaders and on the part of their members. Moreover, it may provide useful clues about how participation varies from one member to another. Graen, Novak, and Sommerkamp (1982) noted that research on role-making in vertical leader-member dyads has revealed a consistent pattern of member commit to higher degrees of involvement in the unit's functioning (Dansereau, et al., 1975; Graen, 1976; Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Each supervisor-subordinate dyad results from the leader and each follower mutually establishing a unique interpersonal relationship through a social exchange, and the quality of the relationship the leader has with each subordinate affects the leader's efficiency and effectiveness (Burns & Otte, 1999). Krone (1991) described LMX theory as comprising subordinate relationships embedded in groups: the in-group and the out-group. In-group members enjoy greater work-related support and responsiveness from leaders, handle more administrative activities, and have greater communication with superiors. In-group relationships show high levels of reciprocal influence, friendliness, and trust. Out-group members develop more formal and restrictive relationships with supervisors and perform only routine tasks. Later studies (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993) emphasized the importance of high-quality leader-member exchanges in reducing employee turnover, enhancing organizational commitment, and garnering greater leader support and attention. Krone (1991) pointed out that subordinates use of upward influence tactics such as open persuasion, strategic persuasion, and manipulation when engaging in leader-member exchanges. Upward influence tactics are motivated desires for some alternative condition than what is already in force within an organization. Work that sheds light on whether and how upward influence tactics play themselves out may provide better understanding of how constituents exercise leadership in groups.

### *Distributed Leadership*

Expanding beyond the confines of discrete exchanges between leaders and followers, the distributed leadership perspective (e.g., Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006) sees leadership as the aggregated goal-oriented behavior of some, many, or all organizational members. In other words, leadership is dispersed, not concentrated, and the sum of the actions of all organizational members. Work relating to distributed leadership opens the door to the possibility that all

members of an educational organization have roles to play in contributing to the total leadership of that organization. By studying how students both understand and practice leadership, a clearer picture may develop of the component parts they contribute to the collective sum of school leadership. Gronn (2002) noted that leadership is found in the relationships between people in organizations. Relationships that emerge over time as members develop close working relations and come to rely on each other comprise intuitive working relations. A shared role space emerges in the relationship. Spillane (2006) asserted that leadership is emergent in the work-related interactions of organizational members and is not confined to particular roles. Data from group members' experiences could either support or criticize these ideas. Spillane explained that leadership practice is what results from the interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation. Empirical evidence that students develop close working relationships with formal leaders and make their own contributions to the leadership capacity of an educational organization would support the idea that those members are participating in a type of distributed leadership. Identifying what types of work-related activities group members do that contribute most to leadership would extend the value of the above ideas to the field.

The above literature frames the current study and suggests that leadership is a deliberate goal-oriented social influence process that happens among all members of organizations. It suggests that actions of both leaders and followers contribute to an organization's overall leadership capacity. Understanding what leadership actions are undertaken by followers would help educators develop a comprehensive view of leadership in school organizations. This study attempts to identify such conscious acts of social influence on the organization's goals in one group and relate them to the leadership practice of an educational organization.

## **Methods**

This study aims at exploring students' participation in leadership in educational organizations serving urban youth by looking at the experiences of one such group by using data drawn from the lived experiences of program members to explain how these youth show leadership within a program designed to assist them to achieve academic success.

### *Description of the Upward Bound Program*

The Upward Bound Program refers to one of several grant-funded initiatives put in place by the federal government as part of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Upward Bound is one of six programs collectively known as the Federal TRiO Programs. These programs provide educational outreach designed to support students from underprivileged backgrounds. The classic Upward Bound (UB) program serves high school students from low-income families, high school students from families in which neither parent holds a bachelor's degree, and low-income, first-generation military veterans who are preparing to enter postsecondary education. UB's goal is to increase participants' post-secondary enrollment and graduation rates. The UB Summer Program is one of several academic supports UB offers. The UB Summer Program offers enrolled students an intensive immersion into the college experience by placing students in university dorms and giving them the chance to take classes for high school credit or remediation in a university setting.

### *Participants/Co-researchers*

Twenty-four graduating high school seniors/incoming college freshmen enrolled in UB's 2006 Bridge Program at Western University the summer before their college freshman year. Of these students, twenty volunteered to participate in the study from which data were drawn for this analysis. Key informants were chosen from among the program staff. A majority of this study's participants were young women (75%, or 15/20), and nearly all participants were students of color (90%, or 18/20). Total students of color at the study site (comprising Bridge, pre-Bridge, and JumpStart students) were present in similar proportions, but the proportion of total young men and women at the site was roughly equal. Study participants represented a broad spectrum of racial and ethnic backgrounds (e.g., African (2), African American (1), Latino/a (3), Pacific Islander (4), Eastern European (1), Southeast Asian (4), Central Asian (1), White (3), and Multiethnic/Multiracial (3)). Moreover, many study participants were first generation Americans on one or both sides of their families (14). In attempting to capture the students' experiences in their own words, the author spent two summer Academic Enrichment Program sessions (2004 and 2005) and Saturday mornings throughout the 2005-2006 school year informally interacting with the study participants as a teacher and tutor prior to conducting the interviews. During the interview period and data analysis phases, students acted as co-researchers to derive meaning from interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2003).

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

Data were collected using procedures consistent with a constructivist qualitative approach (Creswell, 1998). Using tested interview protocols, in-depth interviews were conducted with the students and staff members starting at the beginning of the summer and followed up with individuals from both groups throughout the summer once interview transcriptions had been made. Multiple data sources were used to triangulate findings and identify disconfirming evidence (Creswell, 1998; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Daily site observations were conducted in areas where UB students and staff congregated. The author reflected on the data collection and analysis processes throughout the process with the aid of reflexive journals. Documents that related to students' experiences at the site were analyzed, including newsletters, correspondence with peers and administration, and students' personal journal entries relating to their experiences both within and outside the field site. During the process, coding techniques were used that developed and refined conceptual categories and their properties to develop a running theoretical discussion (Creswell, 1998; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

## **Results**

Results show a complex picture of the interactions that constitute student participation in leadership practices at UB and point to a model of participation in leadership that centers on *reciprocal (give-and-take) relationships*. Concepts emerging from the data produced a theoretical framework to describe student participation in leadership practices from their own perspective. Taking student's understanding of leadership into account, the question remained as to whether their actions constituted a type of leadership, or intentional social influence to help the program achieve its mission. In order to understand what participation in leadership practices meant from the perspective of students, the author examined the direct actions students described themselves doing that related to the conception of leadership they described above. Techniques

of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing were used to build a narrative picture (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data tell a fascinating story of how students saw their participation in Upward Bound's leadership practices as a *negotiated relationship* with program staff and administrators. Students shared that their participation in the program developed over time from primarily a set of receiving behaviors to a mix of giving and taking practices. Typically, students indicated that they initially participated by taking or receiving program-initiated services, then after a period of time they gave back in ways that contributed to the program. This may imply that student participation in leadership develops within the context of a series of reciprocal interactions. Students shared that their participation in the program came from a *take-then-give* interaction. In other words, student participation changed or developed over time from primarily a set of receiving behaviors to a mix of giving and taking leadership practices. Typically, students indicated that they initially participated by taking or receiving program-initiated services, then after a period of time they gave back in ways that contributed to the program. The description of results is written here with that developmental chronology in mind. By both *giving* and *taking*, students felt that they engaged in leadership practices that allowed them to act independently rather than react to their environment. Other more academically sophisticated terms exist for constructs such as giving, taking, and give-and-take, but their use in this work reflects the attempt to ground this work in the participants' own language and experience.

### *"Taking" Participation in Leadership*

In the context of student participation in leadership, student participants described several behaviors that indicated a willingness or desire to take services offered by program staff and administrators. Students' taking activities fell under three broad categories: taking as signing up, taking as receiving support, and taking as taking advantage. The behavior of practicing leadership by taking demonstrated students' confidence that the program would be willing and able to provide students with promised services and supports.

#### *Taking as Receiving Support*

As described above, it appears that participants anticipated that by becoming involved with UB, they would receive some form of support. As would be expected from an academic outreach program, the primary support students took from the program was educational in nature; however, students interviewed also noted other supports they received from the program. As far as receiving academic support, students reported that on Saturdays during the school year they got tutoring, applied for scholarships, and received college entrance exam preparation. During the summer program, they completed assigned homework, studied, learned about scholarships, developed academic skills, attended late night informal tutoring sessions with TLs, attended classes, and participated in job internships. Students participated in these academic activities in order to schedule high school and college classes, find a career, receive remediation or extra credit, receive motivation to enter and finish college, get assistance filling out applications for scholarships and financial aid, connect with scholarship providers, and otherwise generally "do good" in school. Receiving tutoring and financial aid seemed to be a high priority for students. Receiving academic support seemed to be an essential part of students' experience in the program, and leadership practices that fall under this category denote the participants' activities that enabled them to receive academic support. Other supports received went beyond the academic. Students worked to receive these other supports. These nonacademic supports

comprised a part of the program that they could hope to receive. Participants noted that they played the role of beneficiary or recipient of things the program gives. Students seemed to understand that, if they asked for it, UB staff, especially TLs, would advise them, listen, and be available to go to for opinions and guidance.

### *Taking Advantage in a Negative Way*

From the field observations, it seemed apparent that once involved with the program, students tended to receive a high degree of freedom, and some students felt tempted to engage in taking practices that took unfair advantage of what the program offered them. In terms of participation, such actions are described here as taking advantage in a negative way. Taking advantage in a negative way seems to be a taking leadership behavior that indicates a confidence in the goodwill of program staff and administrators, and such behavior may imply that the willingness to participate in leadership in other ways may result from confidence in the continued goodwill of others as limits are tested. This idea receives some support from evidence in the data of participating in leadership that denote resistance.

### *“Resisting” Participation in Leadership*

Participants described a few leadership practices that indicated resistance to program staff, administrators and rules. These behaviors may be described as breaking the rules, vandalizing, rebelling, emotional distancing, and resisting. These leadership behaviors offer a glimpse into how complex and contradictory participation can be. Students acknowledged that they sometimes deliberately broke the rules: participants noted that some students would skip class, sleep in, party, or fall asleep in class. Resistance also demonstrated itself in acts of rebellion. Finally, resistance came up in resisting acts. Students would ask to be left out of an activity, comply just to avoid punishment, be resistant to or refuse to attend extracurricular activities, or complain. Within the context of understanding student participation in leadership, the above described leadership practices seem to show that students engaged themselves in behaviors that demonstrated resistance to the program’s efforts to build relationships and instill compliance. They highlight that participation in leadership can demonstrate itself in ways that empirically test the goodwill and capacity of the organization to meet students’ needs.

### *“Giving” Participation in Leadership*

Study participants described several giving behaviors that indicated participation in leadership within the program. From analysis of the field observations and interviews, it seemed that these leadership practices tended to happen after students had spent a period of time taking from the program and resisting its rules and guidelines (Author, 2007). In many ways, the giving leadership practices described here denote “traditional” leadership behaviors in that these leadership practices overtly helped the program function and survive. Students’ giving activities fell under several categories that included making an effort, demonstrating academic progress, obeying the rules, participating in activities, taking responsibility, showing respect, giving input, advocating and recruiting, and strengthening the program. In a vague way, the data seemed to indicate that students’ giving leadership practices started with behaviors that focused internally and moved into behaviors that focused beyond themselves to assist the program as a whole. Students stated that they gave back to the program by taking advantage in a positive way, taking

things seriously, making an effort, taking responsibility, participating in activities, showing respect, obeying the rules, demonstrating academic progress, giving input, making friends in the program, helping others, advocating and recruiting, and setting expectations and strengthening the program. In the context of student participation in leadership, these giving actions demonstrate students' willingness or desire to give once they have developed confidence in the program's benevolence in their behalf.

### *Taking Advantage in a Positive Way*

The idea of taking advantage showed up in student conversations as a giving type of participation. In this sense, taking advantage meant being disposed to "feel lucky," "have good attitude," and "realize what an opportunity this is." For students, taking advantage meant recognizing that being in the program was a gift.

### *Taking Things Seriously, Making an Effort, and Being Responsible*

For students interviewed, to take the program seriously, like taking advantage, meant recognizing the value of the program. Participants felt that it was vital to know that this is important and not goof around. Taking things seriously resulted in students developing personal behavior norms. Some students interviewed described giving leadership practices that denoted a desire to try or to make an effort. Frequently, this giving behavior came as a result of a sense of obligation students felt toward program administrators because of the work administrators did on students' behalf. Students described actions that gave back to the program through taking responsibility. Taking responsibility meant different things to different study participants, but acting in positive ways seemed to be a common thread. By taking responsibility, students interviewed demonstrated a willingness to act on their beliefs that they should take advantage of the program and take things seriously. By so doing, they behaved in ways that gave back to the program.

### *Showing Respect, Obeying the Rules, and Making Academic Progress*

For students interviewed, showing respect to program staff and administrators represented a clear way they could give back to the program. Students gave back to the program by placing themselves in a position to be guided by program staff and administrators. Obeying the rules seemed to be a handy way students could behave in giving ways. All students interviewed mentioned "obeying the rules" as a key leadership activity they demonstrated. The program places strong emphasis on obeying the rules, particularly during the summer program, as rule violations translate into liability issues that affect whether the program continues to be allowed to house students on the Western University campus. Participants emphasized obeying rules relating to performance in school. These leadership behaviors highlight the understanding students had of behaving rules relating to their classroom preparation and comportment and of how the program's longevity depended on their obedience. Students in the study showed awareness that demonstrating academic progress not only benefited them personally, but it was a giving leadership practice that affected staff and peers. Students recognized that the present work they did in school would affect future educational opportunities. Participants also showed awareness that demonstrating academic progress had effects outside the program. Showing

academic progress functioned as a giving leadership activity that helped the program in addition to providing students with personal benefits.

### *Providing Input and Helping Others*

Providing input to the program seems to serve as an important giving leadership behavior students could use to assist the program in completing its mission. Students frequently noted how they give input by choosing activities, voting, evaluating, expressing their opinion about how the program should be run (both formally and informally), giving input to change classes and activities, providing feedback when asked, suggesting activities, and telling TLs what to do. Giving input may be a way the program tries to remain relevant to students. The program regularly solicits student input. Students gave input during student discussions with TLs at team meetings, and giving input also happened among peers. Providing input may allow students to give current and future peers an experience more tailored to their needs and may help them develop stronger bonds with program staff. More specifically on the subject of helping others, student data showed ways of participating that gave to the program by helping peers and program staff as well as by helping out in the community. Students interviewed gave back to the program and helped it meet its goal of providing students with educational opportunities by helping each other. Helping others extended beyond peers and staff within the program. Community service forms an integral part of the UB experience. The data suggested that, as students continue to give community service, they begin to recognize the value of serving others around them. Eventually, for some students interviewed, giving community service becomes intrinsically valuable. Giving community service becomes a way of giving back and of recognizing the program's efforts on their behalf.

### *Advocating/Recruiting and Setting Expectations/Strengthening the Program*

Two other broad giving leadership behaviors drawn from the study data, *advocating/recruiting* and *setting expectations/strengthening the program*, encompass ways of participating that students used to deliberately build up the program for people beyond themselves. These leadership practices exhibited a move from self-interest to community interest and seemed to indicate that students felt high levels of confidence in the program's capacity consistently and competently serve their needs and the needs of people students knew. Advocating and recruiting happened in terms of students acting to refer other people into the program. Students interviewed understood that their advocacy was a potent means for building membership in the program. This advocacy extended beyond recruiting local students to encouraging friends and family outside the study city to join. UB is under constant threat of losing funding. Students interviewed felt they help it continue by advocating to the federal government. This advocacy came both by letter and through academic progress. As students reached out to others outside the program, they seemed to behave in ways that gave to the program and showed their confidence in its capacity to help themselves and others successfully prepare for college.

Study participants described several expectations they had for themselves and others that were intended to build the program and showed their belief that the program could help students get into college. Many of these expectations focused on peer behavior and attitude. The data showed that as students develop a personal appreciation for the program after having received its

services, they seemed to want other students to catch that same sense of gratitude. These students indicated a dissatisfaction with the behavior of some of their peers, and felt that students in the program should “take personal responsibility” for their own success and that of the program. Setting expectations involved persuasion and collaboration. In group settings, students realized they could contribute to establishing order and getting people on task. Many participants believed that giving back to the program involved being examples to others both within and outside the program of the benefits associated with being part of UB. Strengthening the program involved helping UB function in the present and continue into the future through student efforts within the program. Participants seemed to feel the impression that they had a legacy to preserve, that once they graduated from high school, they needed to “come back and help the program.” The concepts described by study participants that fell under the category of setting expectations and strengthening the program seemed to show that students gave back to the program by establishing norms of behavior and anticipating that by their efforts they could help the program in the future.

### Discussion

The information cited above seems to indicate that student participation in the UB seemed to happen through actions that both took from and gave to the program. Three major themes that arose from the research questions (*taking*, *resisting*, and *giving*) were described and connected together into a broad theory sketch of how students participate in educational leadership. Taking, resisting, and giving actions by students each contributed to their participation in the program’s leadership in unique ways that aligned with its core purposes. By accepting UB’s invitation to join and initially taking part in the program’s services, students used what the program was made for: they became members of UB, experienced college life, and became more involved in school. On the negative side, by not taking advantage in a positive way, some students adversely influenced both their own and others’ experience in the program and negatively affected the program’s ability to meet its goals. Likewise, resisting leadership practices resulted in students influencing the program. Behaviors such as resisting, breaking the rules, and vandalizing property tested the program and caused staff and administrators to make changes in order to fulfill the program’s goals for *all* students. Because students resisted, TLs became angry, staff members changed or eliminated activities, program administrators developed more rules, and staff and students established new social boundaries, and each behavior resulted in some necessary change in the program to ensure its continued success.

Students participated in UB’s leadership in “traditional” ways by giving to the program. As students engaged in giving leadership behaviors, the program reaped many direct benefits that enabled it to fulfill its primary goal of encouraging students to attend college. By making an effort, student felt they would become successful in school and at college. As students demonstrated academic progress, they felt they would help the program successfully remain funded and help future students. By obeying the rules, students believed they would keep the program going and preserve it from liability issues that would cause it to be removed from its university site. As they participated in activities, they became oriented to the program. By taking advantage in positive ways, they recognized the opportunities the program gave them. By taking things seriously, they believed they helped fulfill the program’s end goal by preparing themselves for college. As they took responsibility, they felt they became willing to do what they



were assigned to do in the program and overcoming limitations to their college entrance. By showing respect, students demonstrated a willingness to be led. As they made friends in the program, students built a community to support them on their way to college. As they gave input, they believed that they directed the program to meet student needs and developed bonds with staff. By advocating and recruiting, they felt they contributed to keeping the program funded and adding new members. Finally, by setting expectations for themselves and their peers and strengthening the program, they believed they helped the program stay and become stronger. By putting together both sets of behaviors, a more complete description of student participation in leadership emerges. For these students, participation in leadership meant entering into deepening give-and-take relationships with program administration and staff as confidence in the program's capacity to act for their benefit grew with time. For students, a cycle of *take-then-give* (not give-then-take) interactions or relationships built as students became more involved in relationships with program staff and administration over time.

### **The Give-and-Take of Participation: Relational Reciprocity**

The core concept of *reciprocity* emerged as a central idea from the data. This mutual exchange constituted the way in which things got done in the program, and the strength, direction, and timing of shared actions described how students participated in the UB Program's leadership practices. Participants' comments seemed to imply that program staff members engaged in give-then-take interactions, rather than take-then-give. It appears that *both* students and the organization seem to have participated in giving and taking leadership practices over time, and these behaviors appeared to complement each other. *Reciprocal feedback over time* may describe the way student leadership capacity developed in the program, and the strength, direction, and timing of these patterns also may describe how students became conscious of how they participated in leadership over the long-term. This piece adds to our understanding of what leadership looks like in practice by proposing a mechanism for constituent participation in leadership. This piece has brought to light how some self-interested activities that ultimately work for the organization's good may also be seen as forms of leadership. In the vernacular, leadership is seen by participants as a selfless, strong, dominant trait done by authorities. This work points out that members not only exert influence on formal leaders, but make their own decisions, both "selfish" and selfless, that bind the organization together and affect its work (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

#### *Balanced Reciprocity*

Distributed leadership theory emphasizes the reciprocal interdependency that exists among leaders and followers (School of Education and Social Policy, 2007). Literature from various social science fields that clarifies and expands on the idea of reciprocity lends insight into the way students participate in UB's leadership. From the cultural anthropology literature, Sahlins (1972) identified balanced or symmetrical reciprocity as a social relationship that happens when one party gives to another expecting a return at some future date. It is an informal expectation that the giver will be repaid based on trust and social consequences. Balanced reciprocity involves a moderate amount of trust and social distance. From students' responses, it appears that *balanced reciprocity* describes the social interaction that occurred between students and program administrators. Students received benefits from the program and returned favors to

the program based on egoistic as well as altruistic motives that (from an organizational perspective) allowed both their and the program's goals to be met. The structure of the organization created conditions of social distance that reinforced pre-established relationships and social norms of conduct. While students felt close to UB staff (TL particularly), enough social distance existed to allow students a degree of autonomy and voice into how some aspects of the program should be run and to allow the program to impose restrictions on students' behaviors that detracted from its overall goals. In this study, reciprocal exchange involved student and program practices that enhanced the students' capacity to receive college preparation and preserved the organization's longevity. In this case, student participation in leadership boils down to the intentional exchange of acts of influential goodwill that promote the maintenance of the UB Program and the future prospects of its participants.

### **Conclusion**

Findings from this study highlight the ways constituent members contribute to organizational leadership and hint at how leadership as reciprocal exchange may happen through individuals' attempts to blend personal and social needs. This study makes a unique contribution to the field by using empirical data to describe concepts and relationships that define participation in educational leadership from the perspective of the led. Understanding how students influence educational leaders is vital to understanding how to prepare educational leaders for their roles in schools and other educational organizations and for empowering these organizations to develop their leadership practices to reflect the wants and needs of those they serve. In the UB case, to the extent that the program needed students in order to continue functioning, it responded to student inputs. It is possible that in order for organizations to work generally, they must strike a balance between being too personal and being too formal with their constituents: too familiar, and social barriers that permit needed social consequences dissolve; too reserved, and personal interactions that build trust fail to materialize. As UB fostered trust in students by consistently meeting their personal needs, these individuals in turn considered acting in ways that contributed to the social needs of their peers and the organizational needs of the program. As students made demands from the program, they tested its capacity to do its job. By doing its job, the program proved its mettle and provided students with necessary motivation to contribute in turn. Taken up to a broader level of abstraction, organizations cannot exist without a context, purpose, or set of necessary activities that provide social benefits to members. In this case, students participated in leadership by demanding that the program perform its functions as advertised and by contributing to its continued capacity to perform those functions over time. This study provides evidence for the notion of leadership as a purposeful mutual influence relationship that enhances organizational functionality and goal achievement. Findings from this study imply that having a formal academic description of leadership may not be as important for the success of educational organizations as having a comprehensive understanding of constituents' knowledge and expectations of leadership and the leadership roles they play. Part of understanding constituents' contributions to leadership in educational organizations is learning how to appreciate leadership in the vernacular. By describing student participation in leadership in those terms in this study, it is hoped that our understanding may develop of how all members build the leadership capacity and success of their educational organizations.

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2. Testing Relationships Between Servant Leadership and Leader Member Exchange (LMX)
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4. Servant leadership dimensions were tested for relationship to leader member exchange (LMX) quality. Strong correlations were found, tested for collinearity, and the best predictive model identified via regression analysis. Limitations and suggested areas of future research are discussed
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## Testing Relationships Between Servant Leadership Dimensions and Leader Member Exchange (LMX)

### Introduction

Leader member exchange (LMX) describes the strength of relationships between leaders and members in organizational settings. Research testing the antecedents of LMX has been extensive (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), with variables including gender (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Wayne, Liden, & Sparrowe, 1994), similarities of attitude and personality (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Wayne & Ferris 1990; Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993; Phillips & Bedeian, 1994), work values (Steiner & Dobbins, 1989), liking (Dockery & Steiner, 1990; Liden et al., 1993), personality (Burns, 1995), and locus of control (Kinicki & Vecchio, 1994; Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki, & McNamara, 2005). These studies have contributed to broader understanding of the antecedents of LMX quality.

As evidenced from prior studies of its antecedents, LMX results from a variety of factors. The role that leadership plays in predicting the quality of LMX has been understudied. Testing the relationships between leadership style and the resulting LMX is an important piece for identifying the style best suited for improved relationships. If certain leadership styles are found to be solid predictors of LMX, then leadership practices may be strategically chosen and leadership development initiatives will be better informed. Therefore, studying leadership style as an antecedent of LMX is both a timely and necessary effort.

Recently the field has seen an insurgence of servant leadership research prompted primarily from a clarified construct and measure (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). This was followed by other efforts to study the construct and its organizational impacts (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008; Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko, & Roberts, 2008). Now that the construct is measurable and testable – the impact of servant leadership can be more fully realized. This study tests the relationship between servant leadership and LMX.

#### *Leader Member Exchange (LMX)*

Leader member exchange (LMX) refers to a unique relationship quality that leaders develop with each subordinate. LMX was originally termed Vertical Dyad Linkage (Dansereau, Cashman & Graen, 1973), but was later renamed leader member exchange (Graen, Novak & Somerkamp, 1982). Strong LMX measures the extent to which leaders and followers have developed a trusting, autonomous, and mutually beneficial relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). As shown by the variety of studies above, many different factors may affect the development and quality of LMX. It is important to research the unique qualities each member of the dyad may bring to the relationship, for these qualities of the individuals in the dyad may be antecedents of the relationship. In this study the followers' view of the leader's servant leadership is tested as a predictor of the resulting LMX. Further analyses (via stepwise regression) determine which dimension(s) of servant leadership best predict LMX.

#### *Servant Leadership*

Servant leadership, first theorized four decades ago (Greenleaf, 1970), was originally described as a leadership philosophy that values service to others over self-interests. This work



carried with it intuitive appeal and subsequent popular press publications glorified the construct (e.g. Spears, 1995). Spears' identified ten dimensions of servant leadership, but no empirical tests of these dimensions were conducted. Consequently, servant leadership was viewed primarily as a conceptual albeit rather elusive construct, lacking any consensus framework or empirical rigor (Bass, 2000). The construct was rejuvenated by a clarification and scale development procedure that operationalized a testable theory of servant leadership (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). This clarification and measure has stimulated subsequent empirical works on servant leadership (Liden et al., 2008; Neubert et al. 2008; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008). Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) identified and confirmed five dimensions of servant leadership, which are used in this study- *altruistic calling, emotional healing wisdom, persuasive mapping, organizational stewardship*.

#### *Altruistic Calling*

Altruistic calling was defined as the fundamental conscious choice to serve others (Greenleaf, 1977). This desire to positively influence others through service was deemed central to servant leadership ideology (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Servant leaders embraced service to followers, and sacrificed self-interest for their followers' development (Bass, 2000; Graham, 1991). Servant leaders desired positive development in individuals, organizations, communities, and societies (Liden et al., 2008). The necessity for altruism in leadership has been recognized by many scholars (Avolio & Locke, 2002; Block, 1996) as has the altruistic nature of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008). Leaders demonstrating a willingness to put followers' interests ahead of their own will likely garner great trust and dedication from followers, leading to higher quality of exchanges.

*H<sub>1</sub>: Leaders' Altruistic Calling will be positively related to LMX*

#### *Emotional Healing*

Emotional healing described an ability to recognize when and how to facilitate the healing process. This included a leader's ability to foster spiritual recovery from hardship and trauma (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Servant leaders were viewed as highly empathetic and were able to show sensitivity to others (Liden et al., 2008). They created an environment with their followers that enabled them to voice personal and professional concerns (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Scholars have recognized the need for leaders able to help followers recover hope, and overcome broken dreams and severed relationships (Dacher, 1999; Sturnick, 1998). Leaders capable of producing emotional healing in followers will be more likely to have strong relationships with them.

*H<sub>2</sub>: Leaders' Emotional Healing will be positively related to LMX*

#### *Wisdom*

Wisdom described an ability to pick up cues from the environment and to recognize possible consequences and implications of their observations (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Servant leaders are observant and anticipatory across multiple contexts enabling them to translate their knowledge into forward action (Bierly et al., 2000). Scholars have recognized the need for leaders with a strong sense of awareness (Sosik & Megerian, 1999) coupled with an ability to apply the knowledge gained through observation (Kant, 1978; Plato, 1945). Leaders that are

keenly aware and insightful will garner followers' respect and trust, which is necessary to develop strong dyadic relationships.

*H<sub>3</sub>: Leaders' Wisdom will be positively related to LMX*

#### *Persuasive Mapping*

Persuasive mapping described an ability to use mental models and sound reasoning to encourage lateral thinking in others (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Servant leaders high in persuasive mapping were skilled at articulating issues and conceptualizing possibilities by sharing their train of thought (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). They possessed the necessary knowledge to assist and support their followers effectively (Liden et al., 2008). Researchers have reported persuasiveness-based models to be more productive than authority-based models on positive outcomes (Druskat & Pescosolido, 2002). Leaders capable of consistently using persuasive mapping rather than legitimization will develop stronger relationships with followers.

*H<sub>4</sub>: Leaders' Persuasive Mapping will be positively related to LMX*

#### *Organizational Stewardship*

Organizational stewardship described the extent that leaders prepared their organization to make a positive contribution in the community and society (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). A servant leader demonstrates a strong sense of social responsible and encourages organizations to implement moral and ethical actions that benefit all stakeholders (Liden et al., 2008; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008). This emphasis was accomplished by reaching out to the community through community development programs, outreach activities, and facilitating company policies that benefited the surrounding community, society and environment. Servant leaders' ideology advocated that their organization create value for the community (Liden et al., 2008). Those leaders capable of uniting an organization for greater purpose and community citizenship will garner the trust and respect that fosters strong dyadic relations.

*H<sub>5</sub>: Leaders' Organizational Stewardship will be positively related to LMX.*

## **Methods**

This paper's goal was to assess whether a measure of servant leadership can predict a strong (positive) LMX, and if so, which of the servant leadership measure's subscales is the best predictor of LMX. Data was collected from elected public officials in Midwestern counties and their raters.

#### *Subjects*

The participants were 80 community leaders (treasurers) and 368 raters. All were from the Midwestern U.S. The leaders attended a leadership development workshop for elected officials and were members of a statewide professional organization which sponsored the event. Their average age was 51. Fifty percent had earned bachelor's degree while 20% had earned master's degree or higher. Sixty-five percent of the leaders were women. Raters were colleagues or employees of the leaders and reported an average age of 46. Forty-two percent of

the raters had earned bachelor's degree while less than 10% had earned a master's degree or higher. Fifty-three percent of raters were women.

In this study the follower (rater) servant leadership data was used with the follower (rater) LMX data. The rationale was that raters may be more objective in the assessment of true servant leadership qualities of their leader than the leader (participant) might be in assessing him/herself. It may be that a leader views being a servant leader as socially desirable, thus potentially injecting bias. In addition, there was a much larger *n* for raters than participants (388 versus 80), enhancing the reliability of any findings.

### *Tests*

Data included rater versions of the SLQ and the LMX-7. The servant leadership questionnaire (SLQ) consisted of 23 items on a Likert-type 1-4 scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=somewhat disagree, 3 somewhat agree, 4=strongly agree) - measuring five dimensions – *altruistic calling* (“This person puts my best interests ahead of his/her own”); *emotional healing* (“This person is one I would turn to if I had a personal trauma”); *wisdom* (“This person is good at anticipating the consequences of decisions”); *persuasive mapping* (“This person offers compelling reasons to get me to do things”); *organizations stewardship* (“This person believes that the organization needs to play a moral role in society”). Reliability analysis revealed acceptable subscales ranging from .82 to .92. The LMX-7 was used to assess the strength of LMX. This measure is a 7-item Likert-type scale with anchors at 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). The LMX has been used extensively in research and seems to be regarded as the gold standard measure for LMX (Gerstner & Day, 1997).

### *Procedures*

Data were collected from the intact group of elected officials as part of a full-day leadership-training seminar. Each participant was asked to distribute the raters' version of the LMX-7 to all of their colleagues. Instrument forms were coded in advance to protect the confidentiality of raters. Procedures were conducted in accordance with University Compliance oversight. Instruments were returned by U.S. Post Office.

Participants and their raters were provided letters detailing their participation and rights, which included the right to withdraw at any time during the research. None of the participants withdrew from the study. Because of preregistration the response rate was high; 80 of the eligible 92 elected officials participated.

## **Results**

Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations were calculated for all variables examined in this study (see Table 1). Significant correlations were found between all five dimensions of SLQ and LMX (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Correlation Matrix Simple Statistics and Inter-correlations (N=368)**

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Altruistic Calling	2.76	0.79	<b>.82</b>					
2. Emotional Healing	2.71	0.97	.71	<b>.91</b>				
3. Wisdom	3.24	0.71	.51	.49	<b>.92</b>			
4. Persuasive Mapping	2.58	0.80	.62	.69	.49	<b>.87</b>		
5. Organizational Stewardship	3.12	0.73	.68	.62	.58	.47	<b>.89</b>	
6. LMX	3.15	0.69	.70	.73	.55	.61	.67	<b>.89</b>

Scale reliability estimates ( $\alpha$ ) along the diagonal.

All correlations significant at  $p < .01$

Because all five dimensions of servant leadership showed such strong correlations, the researchers opted to test for collinearity among the independent variables. Table 2 shows the results. These results do not indicate a collinearity problem, particularly with the first three models. The last variable (included in model 4), which accounts for less than one percent of the variance change, may be somewhat collinear. However, overall, the Variable Inflation Factors (VIF) are low, and Condition indexes are below 15 (a general rule of thumb indicating the potential for collinearity) except for the last variable.

**Table 2. Collinearity diagnostics**

Dimensions	Eigenvalue	CI	Tolerance	VIF	Sig .
<b>Model 1</b>					
Constant	1.940	1			
Emotional healing	0.060	5.697	1.000	-	.000
<b>Model 2</b>					
Constant	2.919	1			
Emotional healing	.060	6.957	.595	1.680	.000
Organizational stewardship	.021	11.761	.595	1.680	.000
<b>Model 3</b>					
Constant	3.895	1			
Emotional healing	.062	7.950	.449	2.226	.000
Organizational stewardship	.025	12.480	.478	2.093	.000
Altruistic calling	.018	14.647	.390	2.563	.000
<b>Model 4</b>					
Constant	4.869	1			
Emotional healing	.067	8.527	.441	2.265	.000
Organizational stewardship	.025	13.861	.407	2.456	.000
Altruistic calling	.023	14.682	.389	2.574	.000
Wisdom	.016	17.407	.594	1.683	.005

To determine the best predictive model using these significant findings, the five SLQ variables were entered into a step-wise hierarchical regression model. The test included followers' assessment of leader's servant leadership dimensions as independent variables and

LMX as the dependent variable (see Table 3). The best predictive model included all dimensions of servant leadership except *persuasive mapping*. The dimension *wisdom* added less than 1% to the predictive model, and another variable (altruistic calling) less than 3%. However, the model containing four of the five dimensions of servant leadership explained more than 62% of the common variance in the data ( $r = .795$ ;  $r^2 = .632$ ; Adj.  $r^2 = .628$ ;  $SE = 2.96$ ;  $\text{sig}F_{\text{change}} = .005$ ).

**Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Servant Leadership Dimensions Predicting Leader Member Exchange (N=368)**

Dimensions	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	SE	Sig. F Change
Step 1						
Emotional healing	.727	.528	.527	.528	3.344	.000
Step 2						
Emotional healing						
Organizational stewardship	.774	.599	.597	.071	3.087	.000
Step 3						
Emotional healing						
Organizational stewardship						
Altruistic calling	.790	.624	.621	.025	2.994	.000
Step 4						
Emotional healing						
Organizational stewardship						
Altruistic calling						
Wisdom	.795	.632	.628	.008	2.966	.005

Model explains approximately 63% of the variance in Leader Member Exchange.

Excluded dimension: Persuasive Mapping.

## Discussion

### *Summary of Findings*

The findings of this study include strong positive relations between followers' assessments of leader's servant leadership and the quality of LMX. All five dimensions of servant leadership had significant relationship to LMX. The strongest predictor of LMX was the emotional healing component of servant leadership. This means that leaders who are perceived as able, and willing, to connect to colleagues at an emotional level (specifically in a healing context) build stronger relationships with these colleagues. This infers that followers who view their leaders as possessing servant leadership qualities and using servant leadership skills develop strong, positive exchanges with them.

### *Limitations*

The interpretations of the results of this study are limited by the sampling procedures used in the study – creating a snow ball sampling effect. However, all followers were asked to participate in the study – as opposed to more typical sampling procedures that may have given

leaders the latitude to select 4-6 raters to participate. Inviting participation from all dyadic relationships, versus selected dyads, reduced some of the sampling bias that would have resulted. Future studies should also sample from as wide a target population as possible and continue to eliminate leaders' discretion in the process of member/rater selection.

The results of this study explained approximately 63% of the total variance in the data. Single method variance seems likely to have inflated these relations. However, test of collinearity confirmed a multi-dimensional model with unique individually contributing subscales of servant leadership. This was also evident in the stepwise regression, which identified incremental increases in variance accounted for cumulatively with four servant leadership subscales contributing significantly to the predictive model. The results of this study provide powerful and useful information about the antecedents of LMX.

### *Future Research*

Future research should study other impacts of servant leadership to better quantify its value to leadership practices. Testing such outcomes as followers' autonomy, wisdom development, emotional health, and propensity to exhibit servant leadership attributes themselves - will all be salient research objectives.

Future research should continue to evaluate antecedents of LMX – especially in longitudinal research designs- to evaluate the timing, intensity, and endurance of LMX. These may include person-centered variables as well as contextual influences. Researchers may consider other dispositional variables of both leaders and followers when testing the predictors of LMX.

### *Summary*

This work tested relationships between servant leadership and LMX, resulting in strong relationships across the dimensions of servant leadership. The variance accounted for should not be taken lightly as most studies rarely exceed  $r^2 > .3$ , even with single method sampling procedures. It is our hope that others will continue to study servant leadership and LMX, collectively, and in separate research designs – to test the antecedents and impacts of each construct.

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2. The Intended Outcomes and Impacts of Agricultural Leadership Development Programs
3. Research Paper
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6. Yes
7. Yes
8. No
9. Yes

# **The Intended Outcomes and Impacts of Agricultural Leadership Development Programs**

## **Introduction**

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation developed Agricultural-Based Leadership Programs in the 1960s “to increase the participant’s understanding of political, social and economic systems to develop social skills, to be effective spokespeople for their industry or community, to expand individual networks, and to develop future political, civic and organizational leaders” (Howell, Weir, & Cook, 1982). Following World War II, individuals at Michigan State University (MSU) identified a need for effective rural leadership (Miller, 1976). Dr. Arthur Mauch at MSU in agricultural economics, organized public policy workshops to deal with agricultural production, community affairs, and international development in the 1950s. Along this same time period, other variations of rural and community development programs were developed which eventually led to the development of the Kellogg Farmers Study Program (Lindquist & McCarty as cited by Mathews & Carter, 2008). Since then, there have been approximately 40 other programs developed in the United States, Canada and Australia based on the Kellogg Model.

Despite the fact that there are over 40 programs today, few in-depth evaluations have been conducted to determine the impacts of these programs. Therefore, program effectiveness becomes more difficult to determine when the outcomes of these programs are still unknown. Program evaluations have been conducted for many programs on various levels, most of which only measure short and medium-term outcomes (Abbington-Cooper, 2005; Black, 2006; Carter & Rudd, 2000; Dhanakumar, Rossing, & Campbell, 1996; Kelsey & Wall, 2003; Whent & Leising, 1992). Further evaluation is needed for the programs to better understand the outcomes, including short, medium and long term (Rohs & Langone, 1993).

Diem and Nikola (2005) recommend further evaluation of leadership programs to determine long-term impacts in regards to the agriculture and natural resources industries. Russon and Reinelt (2004) suggested that there is knowledge about how leadership programs affect individuals in terms of skills, capacities, and knowledge. However, there is little research to suggest the development of leadership over time (Russon & Reinelt, 2004). Additionally, an evaluation of agricultural-based leadership programs on a national scale has not been conducted in over 20 years, which was based on four of the original Kellogg Model programs in Pennsylvania, California, Michigan and Montana (Howell et al., 1982). Before understanding what the outcomes of the programs are, it is important to understand what the expected outcomes are as communicated by the leadership program directors. The purpose of this study was to describe the intended impacts and outcomes of agricultural leadership programs as perceived by program directors.

## **Literature Review**

The Kellogg Farmers Study Program assumed that many Michigan farmers were well developed in technology and management, but lacked in social science and liberal arts knowledge and understanding (Miller, 1976). The advisors of the program felt that through a broad background in humanities, social sciences, and a better understanding of world economics and politics that the individuals would be more equipped to solve problems facing the rural areas. Along with this

concept, the program advisors believe that concentrated training experience would enhance and accelerate the leadership development process (Miller, 1976). The Kellogg Model of agricultural-based leadership programs was based on three main goals 1) “increase participation in public affairs activities on the part of young men and women from rural areas who show potential for leadership, 2) improve problem-solving and leadership skills of farmers and persons residing in rural areas and 3) expand extension programming at land grant universities in the areas of public affairs education and rural leadership development” (Howell et al., p. 5, 1982).

Since the development of the Kellogg Farmers Study Program, there have been approximately 40 other programs developed in the United States, Canada, and Australia based on the Kellogg Model. Today, there are 37 programs within the United States that are members of the International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership (IAPAL) along with three others outside of the United States (Lindquist, 2010). In 2000, Helstowski reported more than 7,200 alumni for all of the programs. Today, there are more than 9,800 alumni within the United States (Alcorn, et al., personal communication, March 2010). While each of these programs has unique characteristics, the core and fundamental structure of these programs are the same (Mathews & Carter, 2008).

The original Kellogg programs were developed to assist in changing or enhancing participants’ knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviors through participation in the programs. Miller (1976) conducted an evaluation to determine the extent to which the programs led to involvement in community roles, improved decision-making, and communication skills. More recent program evaluations have identified similar program outcomes such as increased networks, increased self-confidence, and further development and understanding of leadership responsibilities within communities (Dhanakumar, Rossing, & Campbell, 1996).

Carter (1999) conducted an evaluation of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources (WLIANR) and found that participants broadened their perspectives through exposure to different cultures, increased their networks, and further developed their critical thinking skills. Kelsey and Wall (2003) found similar results with the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program such as an increased awareness of communities needs. Abbingtion-Cooper (2005) conducted a study of the graduates of the LSU AgCenter’s Agricultural Leadership Development Program and found they had increased their leadership skills and had a better understanding of U.S. agricultural systems and state issues. There are other similar results (Black, 2006; Horner, 1984), but few are able to measure the long-term outcomes and impacts of these agricultural leadership development programs even though more than \$111 million have been spent on these programs (Helstowski, 2000).

Agricultural leadership development programs “are held accountable for planned program outcomes and impacts, and the effectiveness and efficiency of their efforts or inputs in producing the intended outcomes (Boone, Safrit, & Jones, p. 231, 2002). An outcome is the “state of the target population or the social conditions that a program is expected to have changed” (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, p. 204, 2004). These outcomes may be short-term, medium-term, long-term or program impacts. Boone et al. (2002) identify knowledge, attitudes, skills and aspirations as short-term outcomes and behavioral changes as medium-term outcomes. Long-term outcomes may also be referred to as program impacts on the social, economic and environmental

surroundings (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). Determining each type of outcome can be challenging for programs such as the agricultural leadership development programs, but necessary to continue to gain support from program sponsors.

Leadership program theory has been difficult to identify in a majority of the current literature on agricultural leadership development programs. Black and Earnest (2009) identified social learning theory by Bandura (1986) and adult learning theories of Birkenholz (1999), Caffarella (2002), and Knowles (1984) that can be applied to leadership development programs. Other theories and models that can be applied to agricultural-based leadership development programs include experiential learning (Roberts, 2006) and Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Social learning theory suggests that people are perceived to learn best by observing others (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) and upon reflection they will modify their own behavior (Birkenholz, 1999). Black and Earnest (2009) identified participants of leadership development programs that suggested “the ‘group’ influenced personal growth” (p. 185). Bandura (1986) states that through modeling, individuals can develop skills, attitudes, values, and emotions. Additionally, an individual’s self-efficacy increases as they learn through interactions with others and the environment (Bandura & Lefrancois cited in Merriam et al., 2007). Agricultural leadership development programs organize groups of individuals to create cohorts or classes in which this social learning or modeling can occur.

Adult learning theories identified by Merriam et al. (2007) all take a different approach to a similar end goal of behavior change. Knowles (1984) theorized that adults learn through experience and use a problem-solving approach to gain knowledge. Learners should feel able to utilize and apply the material outside of the educational setting (Merriam et al., 2007). Birkenholz (1999) believes that adult learning occurs because the learner is motivated to learn. The learner will select a learning experience because of an intrinsic desire for self-improvement and will continue to strive for that growth after reaching each level of Maslow’s Hierarchy (Birkenholz, 1999).

Roberts (2006) developed a model of the experiential learning process. The process begins with the initial focus and an initial experience. Once a learner has an experience, reflection on the learner’s observations should follow. The learner then makes generalizations, which are used to experience the phenomenon again (experimentation). This cycle continues to include four basic steps: initial experience, reflection, generalization, and experimentation. Agricultural leadership development programs provide a similar experiential learning process through guest speakers, hands-on training, travel, and reflection.

The Theory of Planned Behavior was used in this study, specifically focusing on identifying the salient beliefs of the directors. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, one’s behavior is a function of certain salient beliefs to that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Behavior is guided by three kinds of salient beliefs: behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs. Behavioral beliefs are the beliefs about expected outcomes produced from a targeted behavior. Normative beliefs are the beliefs about normative expectations of important individuals or groups in regards to a targeted behavior. Control beliefs are the beliefs concerned with the potential factors that may facilitate or impede the performance of the targeted behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The behavioral

beliefs are assumed to produce a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the behavior. Normative beliefs result in subjective norm or perceived social pressure; and control beliefs determine perceived behavioral control. The three variables, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, predict the behavioral intention of an individual (Ajzen, 1991).

## **Methodology**

This study used a convenience sample of one focus group with 24 participants comprised of directors of agricultural and rural leadership development programs internationally with a wide range of experiences within the programs. Focus groups typically average in size between one and 20 participants (Creswell, 1998). These were the directors, which attended the International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership (IAPAL) annual conference. The directors were from programs throughout the U.S., Scotland, New Zealand, and Canada; most were directors of programs within the U.S. Experience with their respective programs ranged from six months to 35 years.

The moderator used a guide to question the participants about what the intended outcomes and impacts of the agricultural leadership programs are, what activities or experiences lead to specific outcomes, and when participants and alumni begin to demonstrate certain intended behaviors. Additionally, the questions sought to determine what types of leadership roles and responsibilities alumni were assuming and if alumni were seeking out additional leadership and educational opportunities up graduation.

The focus group was then transcribed and imported into Weft QDA software to be analyzed. The researcher then open coded the transcript for possible themes. In qualitative research, validation is determined through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2006). Low-inference descriptors, such as direct quotes were selected to enhance the credibility of the study. To reduce bias in the procedures, the interview guide was reviewed by multiple sources.

## **Findings**

### *Intended Outcomes and Impacts*

Three major themes emerged from the directors concerning their beliefs on what the outcomes and impacts are of agricultural leadership programs: 1) improved social skills, 2) development of networks and 3) increased understanding and acceptance.

The participants reported many characteristics and examples of improved social skills such as increased communication skills both verbally and written, better negotiation skills, and “enhanced communication proficiencies.” Multiple participants identified alumni as becoming better communicators, better listeners, and better spokespeople for the industry. One participant shared the story of an alumni member, “As a result of the program, he makes better deals with the businesses, his negotiation skills are better, and he has totally different conversations with people than he had before.” These social skills also include media skills and media relations.

The participants also stated a creation and use of networks as an outcome of agricultural leadership programs. “We’re creating networks of leaders that can work together with each other and draw upon each other,” stated one participant. How program alumni are using these networks was also identified as participants stated there was “more collaboration among the different commodity groups in our state.” The improved social skills and networks also “enhances their confidence” which encourages alumni to take on more leadership roles within their businesses and organizations.

The participants continually identified understanding and acceptance of the issues and varying opinions as an outcome. This understanding and acceptance is in regards to agricultural and political issues as well as cultures, economics, and leadership. The participants provided examples of this understanding and acceptance as “being politically astute and understanding the importance of compromise” and as an “enhanced awareness of diversity issues.” Alumni develop a “more positive and proactive approach toward change” whereas in the past most individuals are resistant to change. This awareness also includes an awareness of the self and one’s strengths and weaknesses as well as an appreciation for others contributions to a family, business, or organization.

Other outcomes identified included increased confidence and more empowered leaders. “The impact that our program had on at least one of the individuals, prior to applying for the program, he stuttered, and he got the confidence and the coaching skills and overcame the disability that he had,” is an example shared by one participant in regards to developing confidence in program participants.

### *Activities and Experiences*

The activities or experiences, which lead to these outcomes, were also identified by the program directors. These activities and experiences cover vary greatly but may include business and dinner etiquette, personality assessments, speaking assignments, media training sessions, wilderness experiences, and homework. One participant stated that “the act of application and participation in the selection process” also leads to the development and change of leadership program participants. Focus group participants also described experiences such as eating in foreign countries as an experience that “opens up a whole world” to leadership program participants.

These experiences such as eating foreign foods, speaking in front of a camera with a microphone, writing a bill for the state legislature were described as “multi-sensory bombardment” which allows the individuals to “hear it, taste it, touch it, smell it, teach it, and do it.” Finally, the activities and experiences were described by one participant by stating, “There’s a pattern that generally emerges in whatever we’re trying to teach of training, practice, feedback and reflection.” The participant continued by describing this pattern as a “cycle” used to improve and assist in the learning process.

### *Time*



Participants were also asked when they believe the leadership program participants begin to effectively implement the various skills learned through the program. One participant summed the answer up as “from immediately to forever.” A specific example given by one director was, “The worse student I had in my 20-year career has become the best advocate as a management team member. But it didn’t happen until two years ago. So we have those who immediately went to work, applied, and we have those who later came up.” Another described the implementing of the skills as a puzzle with “aha” moments:

“You give them these pieces to a puzzle and some of them have the puzzle completed when they finish and some of them are still trying to find some of the pieces of the puzzle five, ten years down the road, but they still have those “aha” moments when that last puzzle piece fits...Everybody’s different. They’re individuals and you just never know when the light bulb’s going to click on and they can find that last piece of the puzzle.”

While there were many formal activities and experiences identified, there was also discussion of informal experiences described as “unplanned serendipity.” The participant explained this as an “unintended outcome” while another participant elaborated on this point by stating “about 15 percent of what they’ve learned is from each other.”

### *Organizations*

Similar to program activities and experiences, there were also numerous types of organizations in which alumni have assumed leadership roles and responsibilities in after completing an agricultural leadership development program. These roles were at multiple levels beginning at the local level all the way up to the national level. A majority of these organizations were within the agriculture or governmental spectrums, while other organizations were charities, school boards, civic and volunteer organizations, or businesses. Examples of these leadership roles included mayors, school board members, state senators or legislators, volunteers of Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and executives in their businesses.

Along with this participation in organizations, one participant mentioned a decrease in the activity of alumni immediately following the program. “There’s a dip in activity where they caught up on some things and then they selectively chose what they wanted and so they became less involved in fewer organizations but more effectively involved in the ones that they were involved in.” Additionally, one participant described this concept of a leadership role as being an “engaged and responsive leader.” This notion of being engaged and responsive was considered to be more important than the actual position as stated here “the important thing is that they are much more engaged after the program.”

### *Lifelong Learning*

Finally, the participants were asked what other types of education activities or programs alumni participate in after completing a leadership program. Participants reported formal education such as MBA programs or other higher education opportunities. Participants also reported additional leadership programs such as the International Leadership Alumni, Center for Creative

Leadership, [State] Political Leadership Program or other state, commodity, or community leadership programs. Further education may also include short courses or seminars.

The desire to learn more was described as an unintended outcome by one participant. Others agreed by stating, “They read more. Where some of them would not read anything but a technical or trade magazine, now they’re reading leadership books.” Another participant stated, “One thing in [State], I’ve noticed, is that the alumni are committed to life-long learning.”

## **Conclusions**

The outcomes as identified by the participants are consistent with many of the outcomes identified in previous research (Abbington-Cooper, 2005; Black, 2006; Carter & Rudd, 2000; Dhanakumar, et al., 1996; Horner, 1984; Kelsey & Wall, 2003; Whent & Leising, 1992). Many of these outcomes are short and medium term outcomes rather than long-term outcomes and impacts. Improved social skills, development of networks and an increased understanding and acceptance were the primary outcomes identified or “salient beliefs” of the focus group participants that potentially lead to the intended behavioral changes of leadership program participants.

Many activities and experiences are conducted with the intentions of developing leaders for the agricultural industry. However, while most of these are formal and planned out activities and experiences, there are also many unplanned or informal experiences, which also assist in developing leadership such as the interactions between participants and applying and interviewing to participate in the program. “Leadership happens. It happens as much among them as it does from anybody we ever place in front of them,” stated on participant to express the nature of how these activities and experiences, both planned and unplanned, effect the program participants. The pattern identified by one participant is closely related to the experiential learning process: initial experience, reflection, generalization, and experimentation (Roberts, 2006).

“It’s a life-long journey, and I think so much of our product is that life-long journey.” This quote describes how long the directors believed it might take for program alumni to begin to demonstrate and effectively use the leadership skills and knowledge gained by participating in the program. Ultimately, it depends on the individual. The program directors discussed how each individual comes in at a different place as a leader, so the time it takes to become effective and apply the knowledge gained, will depend on that individual. Each individual will put together their “puzzle” and have their “aha moments” from immediately following the program to forever.

Alumni of agricultural-based leadership development programs are heavily involved in a wide array of organizations. The level of involvement ranges from the local to the national level. As one participant described it, “a vast majority of our alumni serve in local leadership roles or organizations, and lesser numbers serve in state level leadership roles, and lesser serve in national level leadership roles. But they’re present in all those levels.” Alumni are actively engaged and participating in organizations throughout their respective communities, counties, states, provinces, or countries. Many of these are identified formal roles, but others are serving in

less formal positions as volunteers. Directors do not have a preference as to what the leadership role, title or position is called, but prefer that alumni are only engaged and providing leadership to others. Related to both the time and leadership roles, one participant stated, "Several of my alumni say...they would have gone into those leadership roles but what the program did was it accelerated and shortened the time frames." Agricultural leadership development programs are providing this acceleration of more effective leaders in the industry.

Seeking out further and additional educational opportunities was identified as an outcome of participating in an agricultural leadership development program. Alumni read more, seek out higher education, and participate in other leadership programs at various levels. The program directors believe that by participating in this educational leadership program experience, program alumni increase their desire to learn and become life-long learners. Alumni of these agricultural leadership development programs have an intrinsic motivation to learn and grow (Birkenholz, 1999).

### **Recommendations/Implications**

Understanding what the intended outcomes and impacts of agricultural leadership programs as perceived by the program directors will help to evaluate these outcomes through program alumni. Additional research with the directors of agricultural leadership programs should be conducted to identify more long-term outcomes and impacts. A majority of the outcomes identified were directly related to the alumni of the programs, which would be considered short and medium-term outcomes (Rossi et al., 2004). Further research should be conducted to better understand long-term outcomes. An evaluation of how alumni are using the skills, networks and knowledge gained is important to be able to communicate to outside sponsors of leadership programs to continue to gain funding and the resources needed for these leadership programs. More qualitative research should be conducted with the alumni members, as a majority of the research has been quantitative which has not been able to identify outcomes beyond short and medium-term outcomes.

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The Impact of 4-H on Leadership Life Skill Development: A College-Level Alumni  
Perspective  
Research Paper

**Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the contribution of 4-H experiences to leadership life skill development of college-level 4-H alumni and to determine the effect of those skills on collegiate alumni's desire to continue involvement in 4-H. The research methods included semi-structured interviews. Major findings of the study noted that the interviewees' 4-H experiences positively contributed to leadership life skill development, closely following the pattern of the four essential elements which serve as the foundation of 4-H programming. Also

identified was a strong desire of college-level 4-H alumni to continue their participation with 4-H. Recommendations include targeting this generation of alumni specifically for a greater utilization because of their strong desire to stay connected.

### Biographical Sketch

Jessica Anderson is a graduate student at North Carolina State University in Extension Education. Her interests include livestock programming, 4-H, and youth development. She received her undergraduate degree also at North Carolina State University majoring in Animal Science. Jessica is a native of Fayette County, Pennsylvania where she was an active 4-H participant and loyal Polled Hereford cattle enthusiast. As with other college-level students, as seen in this study, Jessica continues to have a strong desire to continue involvement in the 4-H program.

Lauren Mouton is a graduate student at North Carolina State University in Extension Education. She is a native of Louisiana and a lifelong 4-H member. She received her undergraduate degree at Nicholls State University in Family and Consumer Sciences.

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6. Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings, if accepted.
7. Yes, please consider the proposal for a poster if not accepted.
8. No, I am not able to serve as a reviewer.
9. No, I am not able to serve as a facilitator

# THE IMPACT OF 4-H ON LEADERSHIP LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT: A COLLEGE-LEVEL ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

## Introduction

4-H has long been hailed as the premiere youth organization of the United States and is known as the most recognizable part of the Cooperative Extension Service (Radhakrishna, 2005). At 108 years old, 4-H has a long history of preparing the youth of America by developing life skills through projects and educational activities. Youth, ages 5-19, benefit greatly from the development provided through the 4-H program that extends into their adult lives (Radhakrishna, 2005). Astroth & Haynes (2002, 7) found that “4-H kids are... more likely to contribute to their community by taking on leadership roles in their school and community.”

Many studies have been conducted to determine the role of 4-H on leadership and life skill development (Meyers, 1978; Fitzpatrick, et al., 2005; Radhakrishna, 2005; Boyd, Herring, & Briers, 1992; Ladewig & Thomas, 1987; Goodwin, et al., 2005; Seevers & Dormody, 1995). These studies cumulatively conclude that 4-H members have developed critical life skills through the program including social skills, personal development, leadership, and responsibility. While there have been numerous studies undertaken to identify life skill development of members and alumni, no studies have investigated the early program alum (college students).

## Literature Review/ Theoretical Framework

Goodwin, Barnett, Pike, Peutz, Lanting & Ward, (2005), ask the question, “Will there be a 200-year mark observed for the 4-H program in your state in 2102?,” in response to the centennial anniversary. The answer to that question lies in the ability of the 4-H program to demonstrate to citizens and elected officials the continued relevance and worth of this 100-plus-year old institution (Goodwin, et al., 2005). As a way to ensure the continuation of 4-H, it is critical to continually assess the impact of 4-H upon the leadership life skill development of its members. It is important to understand the three areas of frame for this study: 1.) the programmatic essential elements that provide the foundation for life skill development through 4-H, 2.) the prior studies of the impact of 4-H on life skill development and 3.) the uniqueness of the college student population.

### *The Essential Elements of the 4-H Program*

The foundation of 4-H programming is rooted in four essential elements: belonging, independence, mastery and generosity (4-H National Headquarters, 2009). The National 4-H Organization suggests that a sense of belonging may be the single most powerful positive ingredient programs can add to the lives of children and youth because youth need to know they are cared about and accepted by others. Through independence, youth gain valuable life skills



such as personal responsibility and discipline. Mastery invokes not only skill and knowledge acquisition but self-efficacy to take positive risks and accept challenges to focus on self-improvement. Generosity is most often used as a synonym for service; however generosity goes beyond service to include the development of personal values such as compassion and tolerance (4-H National Headquarters, 2009). These four elements provide the foundation from which all 4-H programming stems.

#### *4-H Impact Studies*

Cooperative Extension states that the 4-H program develops leadership and life skills among its members (National 4-H Council, 2003 as cited in Bruce, Boyd, & Dooley, 2005). To support this, Goodwin, et al. (2007) found that 4-H youth were more likely to demonstrate life skills than their peers (as cited in Lam & Harder, 2009). In the same vein, Meyers (1978) specifically looked at leadership skills and found that participation in the 4-H program significantly increased leadership performance in 4-H youth.

Another study focusing on leadership development through the 4-H program conducted by Seevers & Dormody (1995), found that participation in 4-H leadership activities had a positive relationship with youth leadership life skill development. They also found that most 4-H members participated in many different leadership activities. Boyd, Herring & Briers (1992) found that participation in the 4-H program positively relates to perceived leadership life skill development. As expected, the level of leadership life skill development was found to increase as the level of 4-H participation increased.

A national study performed by Ladewig & Thomas (1987) found that 4-H alumni were satisfied with 4-H's contribution to their personal development. Ladewig & Thomas also concluded that life skill development formed in 4-H carries into adulthood. Another study that looked at 4-H alumni was performed by Fitzpatrick, Gogne, Jones, Lobley, & Phelps in 2005. This study asked alumni to identify life skills gained as a result of 4-H club participation. Common themes emerged including self-esteem, teamwork, responsibility, planning/organizing, and cooperation, similar to those findings from Radhakrishna (Fitzpatrick et al., 2005). These researchers also posed the question, "Can the impacts of 4-H really be measured?" The answer, according to Fitzpatrick et al., (2005), is yes, life skills learned can be tracked through the use of project records, fair exhibits, 4-H stories, testimonials, and interviews with 4-H alumni.

Radhakrishna (2005) conducted a study with 4-H alumni to determine the contribution of 4-H experiences to leadership, personal development and communication skills. In the area of community development, including service and citizenship skills, Radhakrishna found that 4-H greatly contributed to 4-H alumni's development. Radhakrishna also found that 4-H alumni perceived that their 4-H experiences greatly contributed to developing group interaction skills, leadership and decision making skills. Finally, Radhakrishna concluded that 4-H influence them

to finish high school, job/career selection, and continuing education beyond high school (Radhakrishna, 2005). In addition, alumni also indicated that 4-H participation influenced them in preparing for future leadership role and responsibilities.

### *College Students*

When discussing the uniqueness of college aged individuals, a dichotomy emerges, reflecting their self-focused nature while retaining compassionate and considerate characteristics (Arnett, 2006). Specifically this generation has been labeled as: 1) conventionally motivated and respectful; 2) structured rule followers; 3) protected and sheltered; 4) cooperative and team-oriented; 5) talented achievers; and 6) confident and optimistic about their futures—all of which have implications for educators at all levels (Strange, 2004 as cited in Elam, Stratton & Gibson, 2007). Because this generation is typically very active, this group often searches for opportunities to stay connected to the community through service needs (Elam, Stratton & Gibson, 2007).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), 30.4% of individuals between the ages of 16 and 19 years, and 19.5% of the population between the ages of 20 and 24 years engage in volunteer activities. A national survey of undergraduate college students, however, reported that two-thirds of students volunteered in community service activities (The Institute of Politics, 2002), illustrating the prominence of volunteer work within the collegiate community (Kustanowitz, 2000). However the average age of volunteers is 65+ followed closely by the 55-64 demographic (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010). From these statistics, college-aged individuals engage in many service activities well into their adult lives but aren't necessarily being utilized within the 4-H program. The desire of college-aged persons to volunteer should be recognized and utilized by the 4-H program because the average age of volunteers is well above the average age of a college student.

In the area of study on the impact of 4-H on leadership life skill development, college level 4-H alumni are a population left unstudied. College level alumni bring a unique perspective to the reflection of the impact on their development because they are not far removed from the 4-H program.

Clearly, the statistics demonstrate that college aged students still have a desire to serve in their communities. As the nation's premiere youth organization, 4-H has a large group of alumni that could be utilized and recruited to continue as volunteers in the 4-H program. By assessing what programs or parts of programs alumni perceive had great influence on their development, they become great candidates for volunteers to extend the influence of 4-H to others. While this study focuses only on the 4-H program, the implications could lead to a new level of volunteer recruitment for other youth organizations as well.

## **Purpose**

There is strong evidence that youth develop leadership life skills as members of the 4-H program. However, no studies have specifically identified college-level alumni to determine their perspective of life skill development. Alumni of college age were used in this study because there is research that indicates college-aged individuals maintain a desire to perform in service opportunities. As a service opportunity, 4-H alumni were used to determine the desire to continue involvement in the 4-H program. The purpose of this study was to determine the life skill development of college-level alumni and determining if that life skill development led to a continued desire to serve the 4-H organization.

## **Methods**

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) tell us that random sampling is not the preferred method when doing qualitative research because the major concern is not to generalize the findings of the study to a larger population, but to maximize discovery of the issues and nuances under study. In this case, the context being studied is early (5 or fewer years out) 4-H program alumni. The researchers used purposive sampling, intentionally seeking out these individuals because of certain qualities including: were programmatic alumni in good standing, were currently enrolled in an institution of higher education, represented a variety of states and programmatic areas and were willing to share their experiences for purposes of research. The names of participants for this study were obtained from the Advisor of the National 4-H Conference Collegiate Facilitator program. Within qualitative research, there is no concrete rule for sample size. This study focused on 13 individuals who had participated in the National 4-H Conference Collegiate Facilitator program. The sample was made up of three males and ten females, from 10 states.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted and coded to retain confidentiality. These codes are included in the results section, in parenthesis after the quotations, as part of the trustworthiness confirmability and the audit trail. Data analysis followed the traditional methods of constant comparative analysis described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) for use in naturalistic inquiry. The researchers' methodology is outlined as follows: unitization of data, categorization of units, merging categories, and journaling. Peer debriefing and member checking was done to help establish the credibility of the research. Peer debriefing occurred three times throughout the data collection and analysis process. Member checking was done with each interviewee, by allowing each to review their individual interview transcript and allowed full editorial control to ensure that the transcripts accurately reflected the content of the conversations. An audit trail and journaling were used to establish dependability and confirmability.

## Findings

The researchers found that 4-H alumni had experiences that demonstrated the four essential elements as outlined by 4-H National Headquarters. In addition 4-H influence was found to be the foundation of the acquisition of critical skills. A pictorial representation of this phenomenon can be found in Figure 1 below and is used as an outline for the findings of this study. The four essential elements remain as a model for the life skill development, however, the pictorial image more clearly defines the findings. As a reminder the codes found in parenthesis correspond to the individual or individuals who made the statements and the corresponding page number of the transcription.

Figure 1: Pictorial representation of findings.



### *4-H Influence*

Many of the college level 4-H alumni interviewed had a positive belief about the influence of 4-H on their professional and personal development. This contributes to the *4-H influence* seen at the base of the theoretical model (I1-I13).

4-H is probably one of the main reasons I am the way I am (I5. 1).

The 4-H experience showed me that agriculture wasn't all about pigs and pickles or cows and cooking. But it was about feeding the world, clothing the world, and providing the world furniture... Agriculture is ... a lifestyle for me. It is not something that is down the road from my house. It is not something that I visit once a year at a county fair. It is the person that I am and the person I want to be (I5. 3).

I think that [4-H] kind of influences the way that I behave in different situations (I13. 3).

Several of the individuals interviewed discussed how their 4-H experiences had a direct impact on their career choice (I1, I5, I6, I9, I10, I11, I12, I13).

I'm studying to be an athletic trainer or motivating others to succeed in athletics and I think that 4-H motivates you to succeed in life and that has inspired me to work with others so that they can succeed as well (I6. 2).

4-H helped me to see that event planning was something that I really wanted to involve in my career path. Without 4-H I would not have decided that was something I wanted to do. So, that clearly was life changing (I11. 3).

I'm majoring in Family Studies and Human Services. I have a minor in Animal Science and Leadership and I'd like to be an Extension Agent. Obviously 4-H had an impact on this. If I hadn't been in 4-H I wouldn't want to be an extension agent because I probably wouldn't know what they were (I1. 4-5).

### *Essential Element #1: Belonging*

Upon the base that is 4-H influence, sits the four essential elements for youth development as outlined by the 4-H National Headquarters. The first of these critical life skills is *belonging*, the development of an inclusive learning environment. Many of the 4-H alumni interviewed cited *relationships with adults, relationships with peers and networking* as having a large impact on their sense of belonging (I4, I5, I6, I7, I11).

Learning how to be part of a group, how to feel that unity, but also how to develop into where I am becoming a participant and giving something (I7. 1-2).

Friendships. Personal Relationships. Just with the adult leaders and with the youth, so many aspects of 4-H you just become a family through the stuff that you're doing (I11. 1).

Another theme that emerged that contributes to a sense of belonging was the *mentoring* of younger 4-H members (I2, I4, I9, I10, I11, I12).

It is very fulfilling to be a part of youth recognizing their abilities and their talents and being able to use those... through 4-H (I11. 2).

There was the youth in general that we reached out to without programming. So, I think that I was able to have more of a reaching experience and impact than I realized (I10. 3).

### *Essential Element #2: Independence*

*Independence*, as the acquisition of personal responsibility and discipline, was identified through the interview responses. Common themes that were identified under the heading of independence included *confidence* (I1, I2, I4, I6, I8, I10, I11, I12, I13).

A theme that emerged from the experiences of the 4-H alumni was the idea of *confidence*, specifically self-confidence and self-efficacy (I4, I7, I10, I11, I12).

Even though I have some natural confidence in the stuff that I do, I think that 4-H instilled in me a sense of confidence, knowing what I want to do and what I believe in (I11. 1).

4-H really helped me to come out of my shell, because as I got involved on that state level I was thrown into many situations where I didn't know a single person. So, that really helped me, to push me to meet people by myself and develop my interpersonal skills (I10. 1-2).

### *Essential Element #3: Mastery*

The concept of *mastery* is key in the development of life skills. Mastery includes the basic knowledge and skill acquisition that 4-H is known for through its projects and activities. Also involved in mastery is the recognition of self development and the ability to take risks and chances (I1, I4, I7, I13).

I like to learn. And so 4-H lets me do that. And it's not like school where you have to learn all about this or that. Some stuff in school you really don't want to learn. 4-H is not like that (I1. 5-6).

I think 4-H is really key in it's your choice in how much you want to learn (I13. 2).

Every alum interviewed credited 4-H to some success or accomplishment they had achieved. Many interviewees gave multiple examples of how 4-H had led them to portray the element of mastery in their lives, in and outside of 4-H (I2, I4, I5, I7, I11).

Makes you realize that anything you set your mind to, you can do. And it really just makes you feel, gives you that wonderful feeling of achievement like wow, I did this and I deserved it (I4. 2).

You see how achievable goals are when you put your mind to it and how rewarding it is when you finally get it done and when you finally see it come to fruition (I11. 3).

Another component of mastery that arose quite often in interviews was the concept of communication and speaking abilities. Many alumni contributed their communication skills solely to the 4-H program (I2, I5, I9, I11).

I speak the way I do because I was in 4-H (I5. 1).

One thing that I noticed all through high school, teachers would comment and ask me if I had been in 4-H because they could tell when I did speeches or presentations (I2. 2).

#### *Essential Element #4: Generosity*

The final essential element is *generosity*, encompassing service as well as compassion and tolerance. Many alumni cited specific service completed as well as the service that they wish to give to their local communities. Numerous participants cited their desire to give back to the organization that gave them so much (I2, I4, I7, I8, I9).

Service to the community via projects and teaching was a key part of developing life skills in alumni.

And personally I think it's helped me to be able to put other people's priorities, especially when I'm in a service situation, before mine because that's really what makes you a good leader and makes you more effective and can definitely make a bigger impact on people's lives when they see you doing that and will give them more of a reason to maybe change theirs (I9. 3).

Service to the organization was emphasized throughout the alum's interviews. Many stressed the point that they still would like to give back to 4-H, because they personally have received so much from the program (I1, I5, I7, I10, I12, I13).

I feel like 4-H doesn't stop. If something becomes part of your identity, it's hard to remove a part of your identity. I don't want to stop because there is so much that I can give back. There's so much that I can still receive from 4-H and for me to leave 4-H doesn't make that much sense. It's my life (I12. 1).

I continue to be involved in 4-H here at my university and even on the county level because 4-H gave me so much and I feel like it is my duty to give back.... Not only to benefit to myself but how I can give back to others. And if I can make an impact on somebody else's life as a friend, as a professional, then that's important to me (I5. 2).

I really do have this desire to give back and to make sure that these programs are offered to the youth of today. I know it was such a big part of my childhood and my development and so that is something I hope to give as well (I7. 2).

#### *Life Skill Development*

The pinnacle or culmination of the development of the four essential elements is life skill development as a whole, as seen through Figure 1. Many of the individuals interviewed stated that life skill development was a main asset attributed to 4-H (I4, I6, I7, I9, I12, I13).

Responsibility that it forces its members to have and accountability for your actions and knowing that when you are in the position of being a 4-H member you are a role model for others (I13. 3).

It [4-H] teaches you to be focused, organized, driven, but always know where your roots are (I5. 4).

It has taught me the importance of being proactive, not being very passive. Not just being comfortable with good, but expecting great and then pursuing it and being active in that (I7. 5).

### **Conclusions**

The desire of college level 4-H alumni to continue their experiences with 4-H was overwhelming. The 4-H influence as well as the culmination of the four essential elements into total life skill development is predominant throughout the interviews, supporting many researchers on the positive influence that 4-H has on members' leadership and life skill development. (Ladewig & Thomas 1987; Fitzpatrick et.al, 2005; Radhakrishna, 2005; Seevers & Dormody, 1995; Boyd, Herring & Briers, 1992).

Within this study, the researchers found that involvement in the 4-H program develops life skill development which leads to a desire to continue involvement in the 4-H program. The life skill development is in agreement with all four essential elements as outlined by 4-H National Headquarters (2009), who believes that these elements are critical for positive youth development.

Through the interviews, the researchers found that college-level alumni credit much of their leadership and life skill development to 4-H. Beginning with the 4-H influence, the base of the life skill development in the program, many of the individuals interviewed stated that the 4-H program had impacted their lives in a positive manner. The impact of the 4-H program went so far as to impact many of their careers and aspirations.

Through the essential element of belonging, many alumni believed that 4-H provided them with opportunities to build and foster relationships with peers and adults through friendships and networking. Another skill related to the sense of belonging was mentoring, including both, what they received and what they gave. Independence is another of the essential elements that emerged through the interview process. Alumni cited self-confidence as a benefit in skill development through 4-H. Mastery is a concept heavily associated with the 4-H program. The knowledge and skills acquired through projects and events is a predominant focus. However, mastery goes further, pushing members for self discovery and taking chances and risks.



Generosity also pushes the limits, extending past service projects and encouraging members in the life skills of compassion and tolerance.

College students are a unique population that can be recruited to promote the goals of 4-H. According to research, as counselors, advisors, educators, and administrators, we can nurture college student's "can-do" attitudes, civic-minded proclivities and empathic concerns in hopes they may ultimately lead to large-scale societal improvements (Elam, Stratton & Gibson, 2007). The research conducted in this study supported research on college aged students stating their need for an interconnected environment. Because the pool of college students in the study are typical of other college students in their desires to be connected, the 4-H program should take advantage of the connection with their alumni to recruit volunteers.

The combination of 4-H influence and the essential elements culminates in the total life skill development of an individual as a result of the 4-H program. From these results, 4-H college alumni continue to have a desire to be involved in service opportunities and the 4-H program.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

There is an opportunity to incorporate college-level volunteers with their desires to continue service to the organization of 4-H. By utilizing this powerful force, 4-H can ensure a new generation of volunteers to guarantee the longevity of the 4-H program to the youth of America. By targeting this specific audience at volunteer recruitment, 4-H will secure its position as the leading youth organization in America. The authors recommend this level of research be continued to assess the impact of 4-H on college-level alumni and their desires to continue their involvement with 4-H.

From this study, other youth organizations can look at their college aged alumni as a source of volunteers because of their desire to stay connected. Many other youth organizations, including but not limited to FFA, Boys and Girls Club and Scouts, can utilize this generation of alumni to capitalize on their volunteer recruitment. The college-aged generation wants to serve, youth organizations just need to provide the opportunity.

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|----|---|---|--|
2. Identifying the Influencing Factors Affecting Professional Volunteer Leadership in Extension
  3. Research Paper
  4. Organizations often go through a period where developing the leadership potential of its members is difficult. This study sought to examine the factors which affect individual's perceptions of leadership opportunities.
  5. Alexa Lamm is currently a doctoral student at the University of Florida studying Extension Education with a focus on program development and evaluation. Her background as an extension agent in 4-H youth development, and time spent recruiting members to serve in leadership positions, inspires her leadership research.
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6. Yes, proceedings okay
  7. Consider for poster, Yes
  8. Will/Can serve as reviewer
  9. Will/Can serve as session facilitator

## **Abstract**

Many organizations have been faced with the question of getting more members, or new members to participate in leadership opportunities offered through the organization. Many studies have tried to understand this from a variety of perspectives including motivations, barriers, perceived needs, and now influential factors. Ajzen's (2002) theory of planned behavior takes into consideration three categories of perceived beliefs which place value on different actions, Behavior Beliefs, Normative Beliefs, and Control Beliefs. This study sought to examine the perception of members of a large, member-driven organization as to their perceptions regarding specific leadership actions. What was found was the single act of taking on a leadership position alters individuals' perceptions of leadership. These perceptions drive individuals' desires to be involved, or not, with different opportunities. Actively recruiting and encouraging new members to participate in the leadership of the organization can greatly improve the quality of the leadership experiences these individuals have, reinforcing the desire to affiliate and identify with the normative belief of being part of an organization.

## **Introduction**

In most professional organizations members serve as the governing body in a volunteer capacity. In the case of the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents (NAE4-HA), the board is made up of volunteer Extension agents representing all regions of the United States. The vision of NAE4-HA is to be the national professional development association of 4-H Youth Development professionals. These professionals make up the 4-H program team, which operates the youth development arm of the United States Department of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension system (NIFA, 2010). The governing board of NAE4-HA is responsible for establishing, managing, and communicating professional development opportunities for 4-H professionals nationwide. While it is imperative for organizational operations to have a board in place that is charged with fiscal and managerial responsibilities, it is difficult to recruit and retain leaders from the general membership (Davis, personal communication, October 23, 2008).

Hesselbein (1997) outlined barriers to leadership as personal and related more to perception than reality. These barriers were divided into self-imposed and institutional. Self-imposed included lack of understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses, playing "chicken little" instead of the "little engine that could," and not taking charge of one's own personal learning. Institutional barriers include a culture which does not reward leadership, fuzzy lines of accountability, and no established mentoring plan for leadership.

Nistler, Lamm, and Stedman (2010) found that current leadership within NAE4-HA chose to lead because of a strong need for affiliation and a strong need to achieve. Affiliation need focused on a need to give back to the organization, to give back to the profession, and a strong belief in the association mission. Achievement need focused on personal growth and fulfillment as well as a need to make a difference. The need for power was also indicated within leadership and was expressed as a vested interest in the association and a belief they had something to contribute to the organization.

Zinn (1997) found that teachers' expressed barriers to leadership were varied based on the setting and perceptions of the individual. Zinn found that teachers cited a strong network of friends as a source of support. It was also determined that administrators provided a strong source of support. Support from areas, network, and administrators, supported leadership as opposed to providing barriers. When support was not present barriers to leadership were perceived by teachers.

Developing new organizational leaders aids in the performance of an organization by establishing and creating opportunities for members to enhance their decision making skills (Barnes, Haynes, & Woods, 2006). To sustain an organization long-term, leadership teams must be proactive about engaging and training new leaders (Collins, 2001). Professional development opportunities have been emphasized by both the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Cooperative Extension, as the umbrella organizations of NAE4-HA, in an effort to build competencies within professionals across the national system (Stone & Bieber, 1997). When the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals surveyed their membership on why they chose to maintain membership in the organization they found a strong need to belong, working with others who have similar interests, and networking were their main motivators (Jackson et al., 2004).

Without new members motivated to step into leadership positions, organizations like NAE4-HA which serve pivotal roles in extension professional development efforts, will cease to exist in their current capacity. While there are many reasons driving personal motivation, there is little research done on why Extension professionals choose not to take on volunteer leadership roles at the national level. This study examined why members of NAE4-HA have not chosen to advance into leadership positions within the organization as compared to those who have made a choice to lead. Further, it seeks to uncover the barriers which exist regarding engaging in a leadership experience, either real or perceived, and how those barriers can be overcome.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for the study was based on Ajzen's (2002) theory of planned behavior. According to Ajzen, human behavior is guided by three beliefs: behavioral, normative, and control. A person's behavior can be modified; increasing the chance the person will perform a desired action, through the manipulation of any or all of these components (Francis et al., 2004). This study focused on the identification of an individual's beliefs as they related to volunteer participation in leadership positions within a professional organization.

#### *Behavioral beliefs*

Behavioral beliefs represent likely outcomes of the targeted behavior and the associated evaluations of these outcomes (Ajzen, 2002). An individual's behavioral beliefs correspond to a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward the targeted behavior. It is expected that if an individual believes the potential favorable outcomes of a behavior outweigh the potential negative outcomes they will engage in the behavior. In general, most extension agents will have a positive view of leadership, as they are placed in the role of change agent on a regular basis within their own communities and expected to lead change efforts (Rogers, 2003). 4-H extension agents in particular are charged with the task of enhancing leadership skills within the volunteers and

youth they serve and therefore should exhibit a positive attitude towards leadership (Kleon & Rinehart, 1998; Boyd, 2001; Seevers & Dormody, 1995).

### *Normative beliefs*

Normative beliefs represent what the individual believes other important individuals or groups expect in regards to the targeted behavior. Normative beliefs are linked with how an individual develops their perception of the subjective norm of the targeted behavior (Ajzen, 2002). If a behavior is established as a norm for those who align themselves with a specific group it is expected those individuals will pursue engaging in the behavior. While conducting a Delphi study to determine why extension agents take on leadership roles, Nistler, Lamm, and Stedman (2010) found the need for affiliation was the strongest motivator in running for office. Extension agents in leadership roles wanted to give back to the organization and pursued their leadership role because they enjoyed being a part of a team. This suggests, the belief that serving in a leadership capacity within a professional extension organization, such as NAE4-HA, is an established social norm.

### *Control beliefs*

Control beliefs represent the potential presence of factors that may aid or impede an individuals' performance of a specific behavior (Ajzen, 2002). If an individual believes there are factors in place keeping them from being able to carry out a specific behavior they will be less likely to engage. This includes an individuals' perceived power over those factors (Ajzen). If an individual feels they have enough power to address and circumvent that impeding factor, they are more likely to engage in a behavior than if they feel they have little control of the impediment. Control beliefs are believed to have a direct effect on an individual's perceived behavioral controls as well as these impeding or aiding factors will likely alter their attitude surrounding the specific behavior.

Within Extension there are many factors extension agents have reported as impeding their enhanced engagement in activities such as leadership roles. When examining why extension agents did not engage in in-service education, Mincemoyer and Kelsey (1999) found time was the largest barrier. Franz, Peterson, and Dailey (2002, P12) found "county [agents] most often mentioned a lack of material and human resources such as internal staff capabilities, relationships between campus and county units, lack of time, and financial resources as important limiters of Extension engagement."

Through a review of the theory of planned behavior, it has been established that an understanding of behavioral, normative, and control beliefs must be reached in order to make research based recommendations on how to modify an individual's attitude towards a specific behavior (Francis et al., 2004). This purpose of this research was to identify what influenced Extension agents decisions regarding volunteering for leadership positions within a national professional Extension organization. The research was guided by the following objectives:

1. Describe the differences in personal characteristics of members who have taken and those who have not taken leadership positions.



2. Determine how Extension agents perceive organizational items associated with being a leader.
3. Determine if members who have taken a leadership position vary in how they perceive organizational items associated with being a leader from those who have not.

## **Methods**

In order to identify what influenced Extension agents decisions regarding volunteering for national leadership positions a survey of the members present during an annual NAE4-HA business meeting was conducted. The study was limited to those members in attendance at the annual meeting because they make up the pool of candidates for leadership within the association, as you are unable to run for office if not present at the time of elections. 4-H agents were selected as the population of interest due to the fact that they represent not only youth development, but are typically assigned to work in another aspect of Extension as well (agriculture, family and consumer science, natural resources, etc.) and are most likely to have membership in other Extension related professional organizations offering them multiple opportunities to run for office.

The survey instrument for this study used twelve of the thirty items making up the motivation sources inventory developed by Barbuto and Scholl (1998). This instrument was designed to identify the organizational items which motivate individual's choices towards participation and leadership. A LISREL analysis was conducted on the original 30 question inventory and resulted in a reliability score of .92 (Barbuto & Scholl). The revised, twelve item instrument was reviewed by an expert panel from the University of Florida for content and face validity.

The instrument was distributed to 406 participants with 376 returned containing usable data ( $n=376$ ) for a 92.9% response rate. As the survey was completed during a general administration to a purposive sample, no follow-up procedures were employed. The survey results were evaluated for reliability, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .78 (Huck, 2008).

On the instrument itself, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement on a five point Likert-type scale with specific items related to participating in and taking on leadership roles within an organization (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 5 = *Strongly Agree*). In addition, participants were asked to identify their age, gender, marital status, whether or not they have children, the number of hours they spend per month on professional development activities, years of service to Extension, years of membership in NAE4-HA, the number of national NAE4-HA meetings they have attended, and whether or not they have held a national leadership position.

The general demographics collected in the survey are displayed in Table 1. The frequency distributions of the members who have not served in a national leadership capacity show these individuals are female (83.0%), are married (66.5%), and have children (59.8%).

Most spend less than ten hours a month on professional development (86.2%). Their ages are equally distributed over all categories. The amount of time they have worked for Extension varies and represents all categories. The amount of time they have been members of the association also varies a great deal, ranging from less than five years (35.7%) to 21 years or more (27.2%).

Table 1.

*Demographics of Respondents*

Characteristics	Non-leaders ( <i>n</i> = 224) %	Leaders ( <i>n</i> = 152) %
Age:		
≥ 60 years	11.2	8.6
51-60 years	32.1	39.5
41-50 years	20.5	25.7
31-40 years	21.4	22.4
≤ 30 years	12.5	2.0
Male	17.0	29.6
Married	66.5	67.8
Have children	59.8	56.6
Hours spent on professional development/month:		
1-5	50.0	40.1
6-10	36.2	43.4
≥ 11	10.7	13.2
Tenure in Extension:		
≥ 21 years	27.2	50.7
11-20 years	25.4	26.3
6-10 years	19.2	17.8
≤ 5 years	27.2	4.6
Years of NAE4-HA Membership:		
≥ 21 years	17.0	46.7
11-20 years	22.3	27.6
6-10 years	24.1	17.1
≤ 5 years	35.7	7.2
# of national NAE4-HA meetings attended:		
≥ 21	2.2	21.7
11-20	13.4	33.6
6-10	25.4	28.3
2-5	38.4	13.2
1	19.6	1.3

The members who have served in leadership positions are female (69.7%), are over the age of 40 (73.8%), are married (67.8%), and have children (56.6%). They have also been employed by Extension for at least six years (95.4%), have been members of NAE4-HA for six or more years (92.8%), and have attended a minimum of six national NAE4-HA meetings (85.5%).

Data were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics including independent *t*-tests, means and standard deviations to address the three research objectives. Responses were coded for computer analysis using SPSS. A level of significance of .05 was established *a priori*.

## Findings

### *Comparison of personal characteristics*

Significant differences in personal characteristics existed between members who had served in a national leadership position and those who had not (see Table 2). The number of national meetings attended ( $t = -11.36, p = .00$ ), years of membership in the organization ( $t = -8.50, p = .00$ ), length of tenure in Extension ( $t = -6.28, p = .00$ ), and gender ( $t = -2.92, p = .00$ ) were all significantly different. The individual's age, marital status, whether or not they had children, and the amount of time they spent on professional development each month were not significantly different.

Table 2.

### *Comparison of personal characteristics*

Characteristic	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
# of national meetings attended	-11.36	.00**
Years of membership	-8.50	.00**
Tenure in Extension	-6.28	.00**
Gender	-2.92	.00**
Age	-1.87	.06
Hours spent on professional development/month	-1.73	.08
Have children	.55	.58
Marital status	-.28	.79

Note. \*\* $p < .01$ .

### *Perceptions of items associated with leadership*

Survey participants were asked to rate their level of agreement as it related to their perceptions of twelve leadership items identified as essential to leadership within an organization. Their responses can be viewed in Table 3. The membership felt most comfortable with seeking out alternative solutions to problems ( $M = 4.25, SD = .67$ ), using technology ( $M = 4.25, SD = .78$ ), and working effectively with individuals and groups ( $M = 4.22, SD = .62$ ). The membership did not agree as strongly with the perception that leadership was a social obligation ( $M = 2.87, SD = 1.07$ ) or that they would enjoy the recognition of being a board member ( $M = 2.87, SD = 1.10$ ).

Table 3.

*Perceptions of leadership items*

Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Able to seek out alternative solutions to problems	4.25	0.67
Comfortable with technology	4.25	0.78
Work effectively with individuals and groups	4.22	0.62
Comfortable speaking to individuals and groups	4.20	0.73
Willing to help recruit more members	3.96	0.85
Importance of attending all organizational functions	3.89	0.87
Believe the leadership board is active in accomplishing its goals	3.87	0.72
Satisfied with the goals of the organization	3.83	0.72
Understand politics and the policy development process	3.63	0.88
Desire to be more involved in the organization	3.37	0.97
Enjoy the recognition of being a board member	2.89	1.10
Leadership is a social obligation	2.78	1.07

*Comparison of perceptions of items associated with leadership*

Significant differences existed on how tasks associated with leadership were perceived by those who have chosen to serve in a leadership role and those have not (see Table 4). Those who had chosen to take on leadership roles were more willing to help recruit members to the organization ( $t = -4.88, p = .00$ ), had a stronger feeling that leadership was a social obligation ( $t = -4.77, p = .00$ ), enjoyed the recognition of being a board member ( $t = -3.90, p = .00$ ), and felt they had a greater understanding of politics and the policy development process ( $t = -3.53, p = .00$ ) than those who had chosen not to take on leadership roles. They also felt it was more important to attend all organizational functions ( $t = -3.46, p = .00$ ), had a stronger desire to be more involved in the organization ( $t = -3.09, p = .00$ ), were more comfortable speaking to individuals and groups ( $t = -2.98, p = .00$ ), and felt they worked more effectively with individuals and groups ( $t = -2.76, p = .01$ ) than their counterparts. Areas where the two groups did not have significant differences include their comfort level with technology ( $t = .30, p = .76$ ), their satisfaction with the goals of the organization ( $t = -.90, p = .37$ ), their abilities to seek out alternative solutions to problems ( $t = -1.60, p = .11$ ), and their belief the leadership board is active in accomplishing its goals ( $t = -1.65, p = .10$ ).

Table 4.

*Comparison of perceptions of leadership items*

Items	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Willing to help recruit more members	-4.88	.00**
Leadership is a social obligation	-4.77	.00**
Enjoy the recognition of being a board member	-3.90	.00**
Understand politics and the policy development process	-3.53	.00**
Importance of attending all organizational functions	-3.46	.00**

Desire to be more involved in the organization	-3.09	.00**
Comfortable speaking to individuals and groups	-2.98	.00**
Work effectively with individuals and groups	-2.76	.01**
Believe the leadership board is active in accomplishing its goals	-1.65	.10
Able to seek out alternative solutions to problems	-1.60	.11
Satisfied with the goals of the organization	-.90	.37
Comfortable with technology	.30	.76

*Note.* \*\* $p < .01$ .

## **Conclusions**

As indicated through the theoretical framework selected for this study, understanding why individuals believe what they do about participating in voluntary leadership opportunities will help illuminate strategies for addressing a decreasing number of people electing to take on leadership positions in member-driven organizations. By characterizing beliefs as either behavioral, normative, or control practitioners will be able to systematically address these concerns. However, the researchers' recommend the findings of this study be generalized only to the population to which it was designed to address.

The first objective sought to establish the homogeneity of the study respondents. What researchers found were differences existed among respondents by the number of national meetings attended, years of membership, length of tenure in extension, and gender. This further establishes that fundamental differences in the respondents could alter subsequent findings.

The second and third objectives specifically addressed members' beliefs about leadership within an organization. Of those items included, the concepts related to advancing the organization versus those associated with personal fulfillment, either achievement or affiliation, were most important (Nistler, Lamm, & Stedman, 2010). Those associated with functions of motivation were scored lowest, including "leadership is a social obligation," "enjoy the recognition of being a board member," and "desire to be more involved with the organization." This indicates there is some dissonance between the motivations of current board members (Nistler, Lamm, & Stedman, 2010) and perceptions of members regarding their leadership opportunities.

Further comparison of these items indicated the act of taking on a leadership position alters ones perceptions about leadership (social construction). These leadership roles often provide members with a better understanding of the organization ("greater understanding of politics and policy development process") and thus elicit a stronger feeling of membership ("stronger feeling of that leadership was a social obligation," "enjoyed the recognition of being a board member") and alliance ("recruit members to the organization"). Additionally, they sought to "be more involved with the organization", "attend all organizational functions", and "speaking to individuals or groups." The greatest conclusion identified is that those who take on leadership opportunities perceive leadership differently than those who do not. The findings revealed in this study reinforce feelings of affiliation (Nistler, Lamm, & Stedman, 2010) associated with leadership roles which also supports the idea of normative beliefs identified by Ajzen (2002).

## **Recommendations**

Recommendations from this study are categorized into two distinct areas: research and practice.

Research recommendations:

- Conduct qualitative interviews or focus groups with members to further elicit information regarding their election to participate in leadership opportunities.
- Identify further the relationship between the specific leadership experiences and beliefs or perceptions developed from those leadership experiences.
  - Evaluate specific experiences for their outcomes/impacts
- Conduct an analysis of the culture within the organization as it relates to leadership.
  - What is it about the culture of the organization which drives these varied perceptions?
- Study more specifically the relationship between specific demographic factors (other leadership positions/experiences, etc.) and perceptions about leadership.

Practice recommendations:

- Actively recruit new individuals into leadership roles. Many times, the same individuals are invited (or volunteer) to participate in leadership positions. This can often be seen as an elite group. All members should feel encouraged to participate.
- Have current board members more actively share their *positive* experiences with members.
- Highlight a board member each month, include their responsibilities, but also their backgrounds – who they are, what they do, and how they feel motivated to contribute.
- Invite members to sit in on board meetings to view or observe the process.

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# **Impact of Group Development Knowledge on Students' Perceived Importance and Confidence of Group Work Skills**

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## **Abstract**

*This study explored the impact of emphasis on the group development process, as developed by Tuckman and Jensen (1977), on the perceived importance of and confidence in group work skills, as well as students' perception of group work use in the collegiate classroom. The purposive sample utilized in this study included 33 undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory leadership and service course at a southern, land-grant institution. Knowledge of the group development process enhances a student's perceived importance and confidence in group work skills. The emphasis on group development process also positively impacted students' perception of group work being utilized in the collegiate classroom. The importance of group work skills continues to be reflective of the demand from employers; educators must continue to develop these transferable skills in today's students. Although relevant across disciplines, leadership educators should take a leading role in developing such skills in students.*

## **Introduction**

Expectations of today's college graduates continue to emphasize leadership and experience, as top entry-level positions carry high standards for students regarding strong transferable skills to be competitive. Employers desire job candidates to have polished communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork skills, initiative, interpersonal and social networking skills, problem solving skills and analytical skills, among others (NACE, 2010). As the facilitator of knowledge acquisition, higher education must realize the responsibility colleges and institutions have to provide each generation of students with the knowledge and experiences necessary to succeed in today's American society (Astin & Astin, 1999). Leadership educators recognize the importance of leadership coursework and programming to prepare students to enter society. Mu and Gnyawali (2003) emphasize the crucial step development of effective team work skills with all



walks of people is to career success. Blackwell, Cummins, Townsend, and Cummings (2007) note the numerous formal and informal opportunities available at universities to enable students to connect experience and theory in the educational setting. Educators across many disciplines choose to incorporate group projects or other forms of collaborative or team-based learning in an effort to create formal group experiences for transferable skill development. Ricketts, Bruce, and Ewing (2008) express a key benefit of including group projects in core classes is the development of team building skills; however, the authors emphasize that students may be missing an important connection between developing team building skills in the classroom environment and their transferability to the workplace. The purpose of including group learning in the classroom is, in essence, to prepare students for real-world experiences (Siciliano, 2001).

Cooperative learning encourages the development of skills, such as working with a diverse array of students, that individual assignments do not offer (Bobbitt, Inks, Kemp, and Mayo, 2000). A dual purpose is also served when group projects are based in service-learning. Burkhardt and Zimmerman-Oster (1999) highlight the use of co-curricular experiences that connect to formal learning for students, which creates a strong impact on both the student and the community (as cited in Astin and Astin, 1999). With such projects, students are able to experience a relatively unstructured project and develop the initiative that will be required of them in the future (Holter, 1994). Thus we take notice of the importance of group work skill development in students, formally and informally, throughout their college experience and continue to question the most effective means of achieving student acquisition of these career-oriented skills within the environment of higher education. Astin and Astin (1999) note the role of university faculty to influence and carry out research and practice of believed effective methodologies or approaches to leadership education. Extensive research has been conducted on the methods of cooperative learning in the classroom, benefits accrued through the cooperative learning experience, and the role of the instructor in facilitating cooperative learning (Colbeck, Campbell, and Bjorklund, 2000; Hassanien, 2007; Cottell and Millis, 1993; Cooper, Prescott, Cook, Smith, Mueck, and Cuseo, 1990; Kreie, Headrick, and Steiner, 2007; Haberyan, 2007; Halpern, 2000). A minimal but increasing amount of research has been conducted on student perceptions of group work in the collegiate classroom (Payne and Monk-Turner, 2006; Rassuli and Manzer, 2005; Pauli, Mohiyeddini, Bray, Michie, and Street, 2008; Coers and Lorensen, 2009). However, there is a void within the research of how specific group development process theories impact a student's experience with collaborative learning or group work in the collegiate classroom

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of Tuckman & Jensen's (1977) theory of group development process through the following research objective and questions:

1. Describe identified demographic characteristics, including gender, academic status, and previous group work experience.
2. Does knowledge of the Tuckman & Jensen (1977) theory of group development process impact student importance in group work skills?
3. Does knowledge of the Tuckman & Jensen (1977) theory of group development process impact student rating of confidence of group work skills?
4. Does knowledge of the Tuckman & Jensen (1977) theory of group development process impact student perception of group work in the collegiate classroom?

Group projects are utilized in numerous college courses today, many without providing direction on group development to students. Instructors may assume students understand the basic tenants

of working collaboratively with their peers on an assignment, and not considering scheduling difficulties among student group members and potentially multiple class projects. By examining the impact of Tuckman & Jensen's (1977) theory of group development process on student perception of group work in the collegiate classroom, confidence in group work skills, and perceived importance of group work skills, the researcher will determine the role of such knowledge to the practice of using group projects in the college classroom. Today's generation of college students are a connected group of students through multiple medias, thus the intentional and focused use of group work in the classroom is of great importance to prepare students to begin their professional career. The implications of such data could transform the manner in which instructors utilize group projects in the collegiate classroom, and potentially better develop students into the team players desired by businesses across America.

## **Review of Literature**

From the classroom to the boardroom, groups and teams are prevalent in society today. Page and Donelan (2003) emphasize the necessity of professionals to have teamwork skills in order to function well in the business environment. In their annual analysis of the job market for college graduates, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) continues to find teamwork, leadership, and communication skills as prominent qualities desired by employers (NACE, 2010). Cassidy (2006) stresses the presumption that employers deem academic institutions responsible for preparing students in such skills needed for the workplace. By focusing leadership education, as well as other disciplines on the proper development of group work skills, a safe environment is offered for students to practice these social and communication skills while applying course concepts (Haberyan, 2007). Employability skills are interdisciplinary and relevant for any level of position desired; the acquisition of such skills if influenced in academia by many factors, including an instructor's personal characteristics and teaching methods, as well as student involvement (Cassidy, 2006). Hassanien (2007) noted that students are aware of the frequency group work is being utilized throughout higher education, and view it as a crucial component of their studies because teamwork is an "essential employability requirement" (p. 145). Astin and Astin (1999) articulate the role of Higher Education to shape and maintain a high standard of quality leadership in our society. Efforts of connection classroom and work experiences in college have led to a broad range of labels relating learning through group work (Baskin, et al., 2005). Kemp and Seagraves (1995) explored transferable skills –skills for the workplace and education - in five courses at Glasgow Caledonian University. Seventy percent of the students in this study indicated that they had gained a clear understanding of group work and process through the group experience and valued the process of group work as a means to confidence. Collaboration is needed in the organizational context, thus it is essential that students today receive the knowledge and skills needed for success in a rapidly changing, technology-driven society.

## **The College Classroom**

Although traditional lecture may be suitable form of delivery for some disciplines and topics, students today demand variance in teaching methodology. Halpern (2000) emphasizes that the traditional lecture format of the college classroom is failing students by not creating a sustainable transfer of knowledge. Students are not challenged to think about material with the lecture and

recitation methodology, which results in students being physically in class but not mentally engaged (Cottell and Millis, 1993). Holter (1994) expresses the ineffectiveness of the lecture format, as the student is merely an observer in the learning process. In the past decade, researchers throughout the country have explored various teaching methodologies in an attempt to discover which method has the greatest impact on learning (Bobbitt, et al., 2000). Although differences arise in the discourse of methodology effectiveness, most scholars believe that lecture does not facilitate the creative and problem-solving skills students need to develop in their college careers (Rassuli & Manzer, 2005; Bobbitt, et al., 2000). Thus, the trend of teamwork in the classroom setting is evident through the demands of students, potential employers, and professors utilizing cooperative learning pedagogy (Colbeck, et al., 2000). Many academicians support cooperative learning pedagogy due to its impact on students to acquire the skills desired by employers (Rassuli & Manzer, 2005). Kent and Hasbrouck (2003) note the increasing popularity and use of such pedagogy techniques as team projects, group tests, and problem solving among others collaborative learning techniques. However, Riva and Korinek (2004) note that much of the literature on group work in the higher education classroom focuses on the when and how of incorporating the pedagogy into the classroom rather than the theory or connection of the experience to projects beyond the classroom.

### **Cooperative Learning**

Linking educational goals with employability skills to narrow the potential gap for students in an increasingly technologically-driven generation is of great importance today. Hassanien (2007) noted that researchers have demonstrated the positive impacts of collaborative learning, including team work skill development, increased motivation and a more positive attitude, and creation of a diverse cultural understanding. Cooperative learning in the classroom setting has been extensively researched throughout the years. The premise of cooperative learning is for student learning to be more in depth and more interdependent than in the traditional classroom (Knabb, 2000). An important shift in responsibility of learning from the instructor to the student occurs in cooperative learning (Halpern, 2000; Cooper, et al., 1988). As an additional teaching methodology, or supplement to traditional methodologies, collaborative learning offers professors the opportunity to control certain aspects of the assignment while allowing for creative expression and execution of ideas within a group. This may be an application to team exercises, or a case study, but also allows for the team to learn to work together to determine logistics of the problem at hand and utilizes higher-order thinking skills (Holter, 1994). Group work or team assignments are just one strategy of cooperative learning that enables students to become actively engaged in their academic pursuits within that course and the community or organization focused on through the group project (Holter, 1994; Payne, et al., 2006). Payne and Monk-Turner (2006) describe the rising trend in the college classroom toward group projects, noting that the rise is connected to the increase in the general increase of use of cooperative learning in the collegiate classroom.

### **Student Perceptions of Group Work**

This increase of opportunities for students to gain group work experience in the collegiate classroom with a lack of direction from instructors has lead to frustration and a mix of student perceptions regarding the use of group work in the classroom. A common occurrence for

instructors utilizing group work in the classroom is to hear student complaints regarding a group project (Payne and Monk-Turner, 2006). Based on prior experiences, many students groan at the thought of another group project experience where one individual carries the weight of the work and the group struggles to find a common time to meet, which leads to frustration and friction among the group as well as lack of focus on the assignment (Butts, 2000). Although the benefits of collaborative learning are evident, Bolton (1999) notes that student satisfaction with group work experiences in the classroom is less than that of the faculty designers. This frustration with the enthusiasm portrayed by individuals within higher education to provide students with group work experiences is rooted in the lack of instructional support in the group development process to manage the materials and insights desired to be gained from the experience (Bolton, 1999). Mu and Gnyawali (2003) also emphasize the lack of guidance through the group development process or knowledge of how to effectively work together in a group with other students – a skill necessary to fulfill a complex team assignment. Despite this negative perception among some instructors and students, Coers and Lorensen (2009) found a generally positive perception of group work among students; however, the perception of group work became more positive when the group project was accompanied by group process knowledge.

### **Group Work Skill Development**

Baskin, Barker, and Woods (2006) relate to the development of group work skills to other professional or technical skills – a skill “that needs to be developed and learned” (p. 20). Hirst, Mann, Bain, Pirola-Merlo, and Richver (2004) emphasize the disconnect between leadership learning and behavior, suggesting that experiential learning may enable students to develop group work skill in a timely manner focused on the process and long-term development of skills, rather than short training courses on the job. The importance of understanding the process of group development—a process that needs to be learned and developed over time—is evident in the shifting focus on group work within the university setting (Baskin, et al., 2005). Students should be aware of the stages of group development, and fully understand the depth of the group project at hand (Davis, 1993). Ultimately, students need training to be effective and successful at group work (Hassenien, 2007; McGraw and Tidwell, 2001). McKendall (2000) also notes that while students gained a wealth of experience in group work, no class or instruction was focused on effective group work for a simple lack of time on behalf of the instructor to even introduce the process of group development or tips for working in a group. Thus, student frustrations and mixed perceptions of utilizing group projects in the collegiate classroom will continue until some sort of course or training is developed for students and teachers alike.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The Tuckman & Jensen (1977) model of group development provided the theoretical framework of this study. In 1965, Bruce W. Tuckman conducted an in-depth review of 50 articles relating to group development in various settings; distinction between interpersonal and task-related behavior was explored throughout this review. From Tuckman’s (1965) review, four stages of group development were identified: (a) forming, where group members orient with the task and interpersonal boundaries; (b) storming, marked by conflict around interpersonal issues and resistance to task requirements; (c) norming, distinguished by role adoption and cohesiveness; and (d) performing, which is established by the influence of built interpersonal relationships on

the task performance. Tuckman (1965) believed his model was congruent with common sense and developmental theory, and understood that “duration of group life would be expected to influence amount and rate of development” (p. 14). Fall and Wejnert (2005) noted that, “creating a unified, common language for the description and analysis of group dynamics contributed greatly to the understanding of group work” (p. 324-325). The forming-storming-norming-performing-adjourning model is appealing due to its rhyming stages for easy recall, the comfort of conflict viewed as a natural stage to the process of development and lead to norms in a group, and performance of the task.

## **Methodology**

This study utilized a true experimental, posttest only control group design to determine the impact an emphasis on group development theory (Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) may or may not have on a student’s perceived importance and confidence in group work skills, and perception of group work in the classroom setting. The control group, consisting of 16 undergraduate students, received the group service project assignment, as well as a one-hour lecture on the process of group development identified by Tuckman and Jensen (1977). The experimental group of this study consisted of 17 undergraduate students. These students received the group service project assignment, a full class period (approximately 3 hours) lecture and application brief on the process of group development identified by Tuckman and Jensen (1977). In addition to the extended lecture time and application, experimental group students also completed a mid-semester reflection paper on the group development process. A purposive sample was utilized for student participant selection, as data was collected from two sections of an introductory, undergraduate leadership course held during the short, summer semesters.

The population of this study included 33 undergraduate students at (University) who were enrolled in the 2009 summer semester course entitled (Introduction to Leadership and Service). The control group included undergraduate students enrolled in the Maymester course (three weeks in length, daily meetings), and the experimental group included undergraduate students enrolled in the July semester of the course. A purposive sample was utilized for student participant selection, as data were collected from two sections of ALDR 3900 held during the short, summer semesters. This particular sample of participants was chosen due to the nature of the leadership course which included a groups and teams content area, as well as an established service-learning group work component.

The instrumentation utilized in this study was the *Core Group Work Skills Inventory – Importance and Confidence* (CGWSI-IC). The Association of Specialists in Group Work (ASGW) developed training standards related to group work in 1983, and were revised in 1991, 2000, and 2007 (Wilson & Newmeyer, 2007). The instrument consists of 27 items, each matched to one of the ASGW training standards. Wilson & Newmeyer (2007) noted the scaling of the instrument, which includes a four-point summative scale rating for each dimension; the importance scale ranged from “very unimportant to very important” and the confidence scale ranged from “very unconfident to very confident” (Wilson & Newmeyer, 2007). A ‘before’ section was added for this study to create a post-then analysis of the importance and confidence factors of the survey, and constructs developed from the instrument’s 27 statements (See Table 1).

## Measures & Scoring

Frequencies were calculated for the demographic data provided in the questionnaire, including gender, academic status, previous group work experience, previous classroom group experience, perception of group work in the college classroom (before and after this course), and group project involvement in courses. The demographic items relating to perception of group work in the college classroom were further analyzed to determine if a correlation exists between perception and confidence in group work.

In its original form, the *Core Group Work Skills Inventory – Importance and Confidence* instrument corresponds with training standards identified by the Association of Specialists in Group Work. The researcher added a before component to the instrument for both the importance and confidence scales, creating a post-then format for the survey. Although the context in which the instrument was designed for – group therapy – was not the context within the study, similarities in group work skills identified through the instrument are transferable to the context of classroom group work and the group development process. Thus, the researcher identified four constructs within the *Core Group Work Skills Inventory – Importance and Confidence*: group process, collaboration, group development, and leadership (identified in *Table 3.1*). The group process construct included five of the instrument's statements (9, 13, 14, 19, 26), which focus on process and task orientation, as well as the functioning of the group. The collaboration construct also included five statements (8, 10, 11, 15, 17) from the instrument that honed in on cooperation among group members, encouragement of participation, and information exchange among a group's members. A third construct was developed to emphasize group development through fit, feedback, and awareness of group members' contributions, which included four of the instrument's statements (5, 6, 7, 20). The fourth construct consisted of seven statements (1, 2, 4, 21, 22, 24, 25) that focused on leadership through best practices, organization, self-evaluation, and goal orientation. Five of the instrument's original statements were disregarded for data analysis, as the statements did not pertain to the context of group work discussed in this study. The disregarded items included statements 3, 12, 16, 23, and 27, which addressed self-disclosure and disclosure of opinions or feelings in a group work setting.

Table 1

*Core Group Work Skills Inventory – Importance and Confidence, Constructs*

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Construct and Corresponding Items

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***Group Process***

- 9. Identifies group process
- 13. Responds empathically to group process themes
- 14. Keeps a group on task
- 19. Assesses group functioning
- 26. Contributes to evaluation activities during group processing

***Collaboration***

- 8. Works cooperatively with a co-leader
  - 10. Works collaboratively with group members
  - 11. Encourages participation of group members
-

15. Requests information from group members
17. Provides information to group members

### **Group Development**

5. Seeks good fit between group plans and group member's life context
6. Gives feedback to group members
7. Requests feedback from group members
20. Identifies personal characteristics of individual members of the group

### **Leadership**

1. Evidence ethical practice in group membership or leadership
2. Evidences best practices in group membership or leadership
4. Develops a plan for group leadership activities
21. Develops hypotheses about the behavior of group members
22. Develops overarching purpose and sets goals/objectives for the group, as well as methods for determining outcomes
24. Conducts evaluation of one's leadership style
25. Engages in self-evaluation of personally selected performance goals

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## **Findings & Implications**

Demographic information for the student participants of this study describes the similarities between the control and experimental groups of the purposive sample chosen for this study. The participants of this study included 16 undergraduate students in the control group, with 11 males and 5 females. The control group contained a sophomore ( $n=1$ ), juniors ( $n=5$ ), and seniors ( $n=10$ ). The experimental group was represented by 17 undergraduate students – 8 male and 9 female – with sophomores ( $n=9$ ), juniors ( $n=3$ ), seniors ( $n=4$ ), and an additional student ( $n=1$ ).

Participants reported previous group work experiences (external) according to four categories: *athletics, professional organizations, sororities, or fraternities, student organizations, or other* specified means. In the control group, 87.5% reported involvement in group work through athletics ( $n=14$ ), 43.8% had experienced group work through a professional organization, sorority, or fraternity ( $n=7$ ), 56.3% had experience in group work within a student organization ( $n=9$ ), and 6.3% indicated previous group work experience through other means, specifically the participant's job ( $n=1$ ). Regarding participants in the experimental group, 82.4% indicated involvement in group work through athletics ( $n=14$ ), 35.3% had experienced group work through a professional organization, sorority, or fraternity ( $n=6$ ), 41.2% had experience in group work within a student organization ( $n=7$ ), and 5.9% indicated previous group work experience through other means, specifically the participant's church ( $n=1$ ). Experience gained through external group work scenarios within student organizations, professional organizations, athletics, or other means provides additional avenues for engagement in collaborative work to enable further application of course material and develop skills applicable for employment (Astin and Astin, 2000).

Students also responded with the nature of any previous classroom group experience through courses in three categories: *course related to my major, general education course, or elective course*. In the control group, 56.3% designated courses related to their major ( $n=9$ ),

37.5% indicated general education courses ( $n=6$ ), and 75.0% reported elective courses as instances of previous group work experience in the classroom setting ( $n=12$ ). Within the experimental group, 64.7% of participants indicated courses related to their major ( $n=11$ ), 52.9% noted general education courses ( $n=9$ ), and 88.2% identified elective courses ( $n=15$ ) as experiences with group work in the classroom setting. The inclusion of group work experiences in courses throughout the university emphasizes the interdisciplinary relevance for group work and leadership skill development, and reiterates the notion that group activities offer one of the richest opportunities for transferable skill development in the college classroom (Astin and Astin, 2000).

Participants also indicated the number of group work projects completed in academic courses prior to this course, with options ranging from one to five and over. No participants in the control group reported having never taken a course that included group work, 6.3% of the participants indicated having two prior courses with group work ( $n=1$ ), 6.3% had experienced three prior courses with group work ( $n=1$ ), 31.3% reported four prior courses including group work ( $n=5$ ), and 56.3% of the participants stated having five or more prior courses that included group work. Thus, the control group participated in over an average of 4.38 courses which required group work as a component of their curriculum. In the experimental group, no participants indicated having no prior courses that included group work, 5.9% reported having two prior courses with group work ( $n=1$ ), 11.8% had experienced three prior courses with group work ( $n=2$ ), 11.8% also reported four prior courses including group work ( $n=2$ ), and 70.6% of the participants stated having five or more prior courses that included group work ( $n=12$ ). The experimental group participated in over an average of 4.18 courses which required group work as a component of their curriculum. The frequency of group work being utilized in the collegiate classroom as reported by participants suggests alignment with the belief that group work is increasingly being used to meet growing demands of industry for leadership and group work skills in employees (Colbeck, et al., 2000; Siciliano, 2001; Hassanien, 2007).

Participants indicated enjoyment levels of group work in the classroom, which were reported according to four options: *never*, *seldom*, *sometimes*, or *always*. Concerning participants in the control group, 25.0% indicated seldom enjoyment of group work ( $n=4$ ), 37.5% reported enjoyment of group work sometimes ( $n=6$ ), and 37.5% indicated always enjoying group work experiences ( $n=6$ ). For participants in the experimental group, 11.8% reported seldom enjoyment of group work ( $n=2$ ), 58.8% indicated enjoyment of group work sometimes ( $n=10$ ), and 29.4% noted always enjoying group work experiences ( $n=5$ ). The variation in enjoyment levels of group work may be related to each student's previous experience with group work in the classroom in dealing with the common issues that plague groups, including social loafing, scheduling challenges, and personality differences among group members (Colbeck, et al., 2000; Pauli, et al., 2008; Levi, 2007).

Results of paired t-tests for developed constructs of the *Core Group Work Skills Inventory – Importance and Confidence*, with focus on the 'importance' scale of the instrument were reported. Participants rated themselves on items related to each construct on a summative rating scale from one to four (1=very unimportant, 2=unimportant, 3=important, and 4=very important). For the control group, a strong, significant improvement in participants' perceived importance from before the course to after the course was indicated in all constructs ( $t > 2$ ). The importance of Group Process represented the strongest improvement ( $t=4.096$ ) for the control



group, with Leadership ( $t=4.081$ ), Group Development ( $t=3.721$ ), and Collaboration ( $t=3.294$ ) constructs following suit. For the experimental group, significant improvement in participants' perceived importance from before the course to after the course was indicated in all constructs ( $t > 2$ ). The importance of Leadership represents the strongest improvement ( $t=3.891$ ) for the experimental group, with Group Process ( $t=3.396$ ), Group Development ( $t=3.099$ ), and Collaboration ( $t=2.537$ ) constructs following suit.

A comparative analysis of the growth in importance from before the course to after the course in each construct between the control and experimental groups was reported. Summated means for each construct and the corresponding standard deviation are based upon the participants' self-reported rating on items related to each construct on a summative importance rating scale from one to four (1=very unimportant, 2=unimportant, 3=important, and 4=very important). Reported means and standard deviations resulted from the calculated differences of before and after scores, summated for each construct identified by the researcher. Independent  $t$ -tests were conducted to determine the significance in change regarding perceived importance of group work skills. With  $p > .05$  in all four constructs, equal variances were assumed. All four constructs indicate  $t < 2$ , which indicates no significant difference between the control and experimental groups.

The significant improvement in both the control and experimental groups of this study suggests the positive impact that pairing group development knowledge with group work in the classroom on students' understanding of the importance of group work skills. However, the comparative analysis indicates no significance in change between the control and experimental groups of this study. Colbeck, Campbell, and Bjorklund (2000) provided insight through their qualitative analysis of student experiences with group work, stressing that students may appreciate such skill development if faculty stress its importance and relevance to their future endeavors. This may imply that it is not the amount of emphasis placed on the group development process, but rather the inclusion of such knowledge that impacts a student's understanding of the importance of developing such skills for their future career.

The results of paired  $t$ -tests for developed constructs of the *Core Group Work Skills Inventory – Importance and Confidence*, with focus on the 'confidence' scale of the instrument were reported. Participants rated themselves on items related to each construct on a summative rating scale from one to four (1=very unconfident, 2=unconfident, 3=confident, and 4=very confident). For the control group, a strong, significant improvement in participants' perceived confidence in group work skills from before the course to after the course was indicated in all constructs ( $t > 2$ ). The confidence scale for the Leadership construct represents the strongest improvement ( $t=5.578$ ) for the control group, with the Group Process construct also indicating a significant improvement in confidence ( $t=5.222$ ). Group Development ( $t=4.200$ ) and Collaboration ( $t=3.337$ ) constructs also demonstrated a significant improvement in participants' perceived confidence in those identified group work skills.

For the experimental group, significant improvement in participants' perceived confidence in group work skills from before the course to after the course was reported in all constructs ( $t > 2$ ). The confidence scale for the Leadership construct represents the strongest improvement ( $t=4.654$ ) for the control group, with the Group Process construct also indicating a significant improvement in confidence ( $t=3.822$ ). Group Development ( $t=3.453$ ) and

Collaboration ( $t=3.225$ ) constructs also demonstrated a significant improvement in participants' perceived confidence in those identified group work skills.

A comparative analysis of the growth in confidence from before the course to after the course in each construct between the control and experimental groups was presented. Summated means for each construct and the corresponding standard deviation are based upon the participants' self-reported rating on items related to each construct on a summative importance rating scale from one to four (1=very unconfident, 2=unconfident, 3=confident, and 4=very confident). Reported means and standard deviations resulted from the calculated differences of before and after scores, summated for each construct identified by the researcher. Independent  $t$ -tests were conducted to determine the significance in change regarding perceived importance of group work skills. With  $p > .05$  in all four constructs, equal variances were assumed. All four constructs indicate  $t < 2$ , which indicates no significant difference between the control and experimental groups.

The significant improvement in both the control and experimental groups of this study suggests the positive impact that pairing group development knowledge with group work in the classroom on students' confidence in group work skills. However, the comparative analysis indicates no significance in change between the control and experimental groups of this study. Effective instructor guidance for students participating in group projects can also improve confidence in performing the group work skills necessary to have an enjoyable group work experience (Colbeck, et al., 2000; Siciliano, 2001). Prior group work experiences, such as those gained through student involvement in organizations or athletics, may also increase a student's confidence in group work skills when instructor facilitation of cooperative learning lacks direction regarding the group development process (Colbeck, et al., 2000). This may imply that it is not the amount of emphasis placed on the group development process, but rather the inclusion of such knowledge that impacts a student's confidence in applying such skills and knowledge in group work scenarios.

The demographic question regarding participants' perception (positive or negative) of group work in the classroom setting before and after the course was reported. Within the control group, 31.2% of participants indicated a negative perception of group work prior to the course ( $n=5$ ) and 68.8% of participants noted a positive perception of group work prior to the course ( $n=11$ ). After the group work experience in this particular course (ALDR 3900: Introduction to Leadership and Service), 6.2% of the control group participants continued to have a negative perception of group work in the classroom ( $n=1$ ). Thus, 93.8% of control group participants completed the course with a positive perception of group work in the classroom setting ( $n=15$ ). For the experimental group, 5.9% of the participants indicated a negative perception of group work in the classroom ( $n=1$ ). The other 94.1% of the participants in the experimental group indicated a positive perception of group work in the classroom setting prior to the course ( $n=16$ ). Following the group work experience within this course, 100% of the experimental group participants indicated a positive perception of group work in the classroom setting ( $n=17$ ). The results of this study indicate a positive improvement in perception of group work in the college classroom, as also indicated by Coers and Lorensen (2009). Student understanding of group development impacts the group experience; thus, ensuring faculty are aware of group development knowledge and including group development knowledge in the college classroom where group work is being utilized are imperative steps toward developing group work skills and

creating a positive student group work experience (Baskin, et al., 2005; Gillies, 2003; Butts, 2000; Coers and Lorensen, 2009).

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

There is an emergent trend towards utilizing teams and cooperative learning in the college classroom. This trend can be attributed to stimuli provided by prospective employers of students, students themselves, cooperative learning educators, and accrediting agencies (Colbeck, Campbell, & Bjorklund, 2000). The results of this study show it is important for students to understand there is a process of team development, and if this process is followed correctly, better perceptions of teamwork and better products are a result.

A large determination of team success and true cooperative learning lies with the instructor. The facilitation of teams by instructors is essential, but in many classes, team projects are assigned and the only guidance given by the instructor is “good luck”. “Regrettably, [instructors] have been less vigorous in [their] efforts to provide students with the concrete support and systematic guidance they need to effectively navigate their team-based assignments” (Bolton, 1999, p.233). Instructors “have been socialized to believe that [their] primary job is to teach content, and someone else should be responsible for the process” (Bolton, p.235). But, as teams and cooperative learning become more utilized as teaching techniques in the college classroom, the need for instructors to understand the intricacies of team learning increases. Because of this, the following recommendations are designed to offer insight to group work in the leadership education classroom and continue to provide experience for developing group work skills that will transfer to students’ careers:

- University educators choosing to utilize group work in the classroom setting should be trained on the group development process and include such instruction to their students prior to assigning group work projects.
- Given the different contexts of the original survey’s purpose, a survey relating specifically to components of the group development process and skills desired for employees should be developed and tested.
- Additional research should be conducted relating to various group work pedagogies.
- Research regarding the relationship between the amount of support and structure given to students by instructors for a group work assignment and a student’s perception, believed importance, and confidence in group work skills.
- Further research should be conducted to include courses that do not include group process knowledge with group work assignments to determine the full impact of group process knowledge inclusion regarding a student’s perception, believed importance and confidence in group work skills.
- Additional research should be conducted to explore the impact of technological innovations, such as wikis and other online collaboration tools, on the group work process.
- Research pertaining to the use of service-learning as a means to group work skill development to both benefit the student in transferable skill development, as well as the community being served through the project.

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2. The Effects of Teaching Methods in Leadership Knowledge Retention: An Experimental Design of Lecture, Experiential, and Public Pedagogy
3. Research Paper
4. Finding an effective teaching methodology for leadership educators is daunting. In this experimental study, students' retention of knowledge was tested after receiving leadership instruction via lecture, experiential learning and public pedagogy. Results show lecture is an inferior method of teaching leadership, while public pedagogy had effective and consistent results.
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6. Yes
7. Yes
8. Yes
9. Yes

# **The Effects of Teaching Methods in Leadership Knowledge Retention: An Experimental Design of Lecture, Experiential, and Public Pedagogy**

## **Introduction**

Teachers of leadership face the difficult task of explaining abstract concepts and ideas to students. The lecture method has long since failed these educators as an effective way to present their information. Therefore, exploring the efficacy of a variety of teaching methods for leadership educators is important due to the potential to determine a best practices suggestion for classroom delivery.

Popular culture surrounds us in the form of mass media and social interaction. This constant exposure to cultural expression has the ability to teach its consumers, whether they are aware of it or not, in the form of non-formal learning. When non-formal learning from popular culture can, and does, occur daily within the lives of adults, it might be a natural progression to move the site of learning into a formal environment (Callahan & Rosser, 2007). Adult educators have recognized the potential for popular culture to impact education and are subsequently utilizing it as a teaching method. More specifically, leadership educators have established the use of popular media in the classroom in an effort to assist students' learning of difficult concepts such as leadership theory. This utilization of popular media in the classroom relies on the ability of popular culture to act as an educational tool, which is considered "public pedagogy" (Giroux, 2000).

Educators wishing to maintain the full attention of students, particularly those educators teaching subjects that have nebulous concepts such as leadership, may be interested in new methods for instruction. Due to the lack of historical precedence regarding the best method for teaching leadership, further exploration of new teaching methods is required. Public pedagogy is one such new teaching method and has not been researched to determine its effectiveness when applied to leadership. For this study, a static-group comparison design was utilized to test the knowledge retention of three sections of (name of course) students on the Kouzes and Posner (2007) leadership practice of Challenge the Process. The content was delivered to the students via lecture, experiential learning, or public pedagogy design.

## **Review of Literature**

Educators and researchers have repeatedly acknowledged the drawbacks of teaching with a strict lecture format. This format has been referred to as "... a method resulting in long periods of uninterrupted teacher-centered, expository discourse which relegates students to the role of passive 'spectators' in the college classroom" (Cooper, Prescott, Cook, Smith, Mueck & Cuseo, 1990, p. 1).

Having students serve as passive spectators in the classroom may encourage a drop in attention and decreases their retention of knowledge. Young, Robinson & Alberts (2009)



found that the drop in attention "... is avoided when presentation is varied, though this is not necessarily associated with interactive participation techniques" (p. 41). The incorporation of popular culture into presentations provides for a variety in lecture and does not require interactive participation, thus serving as a viable way to avoid a drop in attention.

### ***Popular Culture***

"Recognizing the influence of popular culture in our own lives is the first step to harnessing its educational potential" (Thompson, 2007, p. 83). As Thompson notes, it is important to recognize the influence of popular culture in our own lives, but what exactly is popular culture? A variety of meanings exist, but Lull's (1995) definition is the most applicable to this research: "commercially successful, mainstream, mass mediated cultural artifacts and personalities" (Lull, 1995, p. 190, as cited in Rogers, 2002). These cultural artifacts include newspapers, books, the Internet, music and movies, all which serve to entertain and educate us. The effects of such entertaining and educating gives rise to two views on popular culture and its use for society.

One view of popular culture insists that it is "a space where learners are taught hegemonic ways of being in the world" (Wright & Sandlin, 2009, p. 126). This view, based on Antonio Gramsci's (1971) idea of 'hegemony,' casts popular culture in a negative light due to its influence on consumers. While it is acknowledged that popular culture can have a negative impact on consumers and critical media literacy is suggested, this view is beyond the focus of the proposed research.

A second, and more applicable, view of popular culture is as "a tool to promote learning in the classroom because it is deemed a way to connect with adult learners (Wright & Sandlin, 2009, p. 125). Considering the previously mentioned cultural artifacts and their application to learning has generated the idea of 'public pedagogy' (Giroux, 2000), or education that occurs informally and incidentally (Wright & Sandlin, 2009). Giroux (1992) has found popular culture can help create meaning and aid in the construction of knowledge, whether the consumer is aware of the act of learning or not.

### ***Non-formal Learning***

Learning happens daily, whether it be through formal or non-formal applications. Non-formal learning, also called 'incidental learning,' can happen through activities that are unplanned and informal (Foley, 2001). This non-formal learning can happen daily and through a variety of activities. Kamis, Muhamad, Junoh, Asmuni & Idris (2005) found that 94% of adults in Malaysia participated in non-formal learning by watching television, video and film. Such a high rate of non-formal learning supports Fieldhouse's (1995) assertion that "it is arguable that broadcasting has been the major adult education agency of the twentieth century" (p. 81).

Certainly, the popularity of television has increased the occurrence of non-formal education, particularly through the demand for, and support of, television channels that

serve to educate while they entertain. In a study of women who watched the British television show *The Avengers*, Wright (2006) found multiple instances of non-formal learning. Additionally, Coles & Armstrong (2007) note that historical films and television are shows popular in the United Kingdom where not one, but two history channels are offered to television watchers. Similarly, a quick look through the types of channels offered in the United States, such as Food Network, Discovery Channel, National Geographic Channel and Science Channel, would also support the idea that non-formal education is occurring while audiences are being entertained.

Non-formal learning also takes place via other popular culture media as found by Jarvis (2000). In a case study conducted throughout a cultural studies course examining popular romance books, Jarvis found that “[v]ery few women chose ‘escapism’ as their reason for reading and were much more likely to say that they read ‘in order to learn more about people and the world’ ” (2000, p. 198). This non-formal learning via popular media also occurs through film as “... cinema assumes a pedagogical role in the lives of many people” (hooks, 1996, p.2, as quoted in Rogers, 2002).

### ***Adult Education***

Knowles, Holton and Swanson (1998) assert that adults’ learning is increasingly self directed as they mature. This self directed education occurs via popular media, as seen by Kamis, Muhamad, Junoh, Asmuni & Idris (2005) and Jarvis (2000). Wright and Sandlin posit that educators “...must recognize and use the power pop culture wields in the lives of adult learners if they are to fulfill a meaningful role in the education of adults” (2009, p. 126). Teaching with popular media may help students determine meaning of the material because “...a concentration on words alone is not enough... no single code can be successfully studied or fully understood in isolation” (Hodge & Kress, 1988, p. vii, as quoted in Curry, 1999, p. 20). Wright, (2007) builds upon Knowles, Holton & Swanson (1998) by finding that educators should connect to the learning that occurs outside of the classroom to help learners make sense of their experiences. Educators who do not reflect on their personal engagement with popular culture “...may find themselves ineffective in facilitating learning because they are too far removed from the lived experiences of the adults they seek to instruct” (Wright & Sandlin, 2009, p. 124).

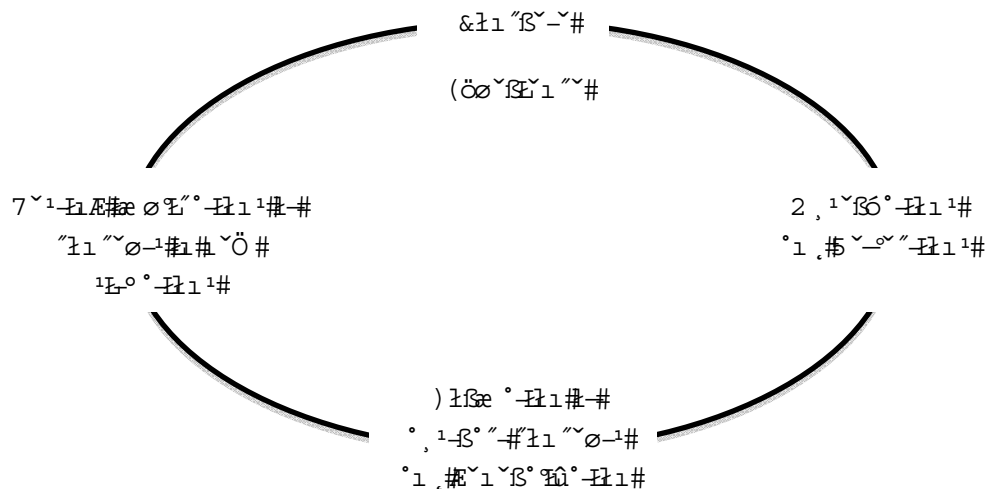
Educators who utilized public pedagogy found that students were able to critically analyze topics seen within the popular media (Marshall, 2001), and became more critically conscious (Jarvis, 2000). Wright’s (2007) findings that a popular British television show from the 1960’s informally educated viewers lead her to determine that “[e]ducators in all disciplines can benefit from incorporating popular culture into their teaching” (p. 70).

## **Theoretical Frame**

The concept of public pedagogy is a variation of the Kolb experiential learning model and the notion of constructivism in education. The theoretical framework of this study is

a combination of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model and Dewey's (1938) theory of authenticity in constructivist education. Basing his work on both Piaget and Dewey, Kolb describes four steps in the experimental learning cycle. Figure 1.1 denotes Kolb's model.

Figure 1.1 Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning



Kolb defines concrete experience as a “here-and-now” incident in which the learner has full involvement. The observation and reflection stage is where the learner reflects on the experiences from multiple perspectives. In the formation of abstract concepts and generalization stage, students integrate theoretical concepts into their actions. The final stage of Kolb's model, testing implications of new concepts in new situations, encourages students to utilize new theories to make decisions and problem solve (Knowles, 1998). Svinicki and Dixon (1987) note Kolb's model integrated into the collegiate classroom has been shown to increase students' retention of material.

Constructivism “stresses all knowledge is context bound, and individuals make personal meaning of their learning experiences” (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson 1998, p. 142). Dewey (1938) stresses the importance of not only contextualizing material, but assuring the contextual frame is familiar to the student. Public pedagogy is a pedagogical tool, which not only contextualizes theories and concepts for the student, but also allows the student to be guided through the Kolb cycle.

## Methods

### *Hypothesis*

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference in the rate of knowledge retention between students taught the leadership behavior of Challenge the Process using lecture, experiential learning, or public pedagogy.

### ***Population and Sample***

The population of this study consists of all students at (University) enrolled in (name of course) (n=80). Students at the (University Name) enrolled in three sections of (name of course) on the (name) campus, representing sophomore, junior and senior classes, comprised the sample population. Subject selection was made by randomly assigning each section of (name of course) one of the three teaching methods: lecture, experiential learning, or public pedagogy. Section A had an enrollment of 18, section B had an enrollment of 20, and section C had an enrollment of 32.

### ***Instrumentation***

Researchers developed the instrument utilizing Challenge The Process (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) material as a basis. Eight questions, 6 multiple choice and 2 fill in the blank, were developed using the sub-constructs highlighted by Kouzes and Posner as essential learning in both the Leadership Challenge (4<sup>th</sup> ed) and the Student Leadership Challenge. The instrument was sent to a panel of experts to test face validity.

### ***Design***

A static-group comparison design was utilized for this study with the groups consisting of the three sections of (name of course) (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). Traditional lecture was treated as the control group while experiential learning and public pedagogy methods were treated as the experimental. To lessen experimental bias, the researchers were not the instructor of record for any class sections in the experiment.

Section A was randomly selected to receive the contextual information of Challenge the Process via public pedagogy. Popular media clips including the music video for “Here it Goes Again” by Ok Go, a College Sports TV story on a deaf NCAA football player, and a Nike commercial featuring Michael Jordan were infused into the base power point to illustrate conceptual points. Discussions on iPods vs Zunes, different symbols of change, and examples of Challenge the Process they have seen on campus were discussed to aid in their assimilation of content to popular culture.

Section B was randomly selected to receive the contextual information of Challenge the Process via traditional lecture. A base power point was created to teach the two main conceptual points of Kouzes and Posner’s Commitment 5: (1) search for opportunities and (2) experiment and take risks, as well as the five sub points: (1) seize the initiative, (2) exercise oversight, (3) treat every job as an adventure, (4) question the status quo, and (5) send everyone shopping for ideas (Kouzes and Posner, 2007).

Section C was randomly selected to receive the contextual information of Challenge the Process via experiential learning. The base power point lecture was used and two experiential activities were added. The Kolb (1984) model of experiential learning was used to process the activities. Students were asked to tell, pair and share an example of

change they have been a part of, and roll-played the children's book "The Little Engine that Could."

The instrument was given to students post instruction as a closed note, closed text quiz by the researcher. Two weeks after the initial experiment, the regular instructor gave the students the instrument again. Four weeks after the initial experiment, the instrument was given a third time to the students by the instructor. Table 1 shows the number of students participating in the treatments and subsequent quizzes.

Table 1. *Participation in quizzes*

Method	Quiz 1	Quiz 2	Quiz 3
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Table 2. *Quiz 1*

Group A	15	12	13
Group B	13	16	12
Group C	25	19	24

### ***Analysis***

Due to mortality of the students over the period of experimentation, 38 students were present in class to take all three quizzes. Data was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 18.0 and means were calculated and compared to delineate differences between and among the treatments.

## **Findings**

The null hypothesis of this study postulated there is no difference in the rate of knowledge retention between students taught the leadership behavior of Challenge the Process using lecture, experiential learning, or public pedagogy. A comparison of the quizzes using descriptive analysis showed a difference between mean scores between treatments. An analysis of summated means showed differences in the mean scores. By both measures, the null hypothesis is rejected.

### ***Retention of Material***

#### ***Quiz 1***

After each class period, students were given the first of three quizzes (instruments). Table 2 shows the descriptive results. Section A, public pedagogy, had the highest mean (76.39), Section C, experiential, had the second highest mean (73.33), and Section B, lecture, had the lowest mean (63.50).

	M	SD	Min	Max	Mdn	
Quiz 1						Quiz 2
Section A (n=9)	76.39	11.60	62.50	87.50	75.00	
Section B (n=9)	62.50	17.68	37.50	87.50	62.50	Two weeks after the exp
Section C (n=15)	73.33	19.97	37.50	100.00	75.00	
Section A (n=9)	73.61	15.87	37.50	87.50	75.00	
Section B (n=9)	48.61	23.75	12.50	87.50	50.00	
Section C (n=15)	76.67	19.40	25.00	100.00	75.00	

eriential treatment, the quiz (instrument) was given to the students by the instructor of record. Table 3 shows the descriptive results. Again, section A, public pedagogy, had the highest mean (73.61), Section C, experiential, had the second highest mean (67.50), and Section B, lecture, had the lowest mean (47.22). There was more than a 30 point range between public pedagogy and traditional lecture.

### Quiz 3

Four weeks after the experiential treatment, the quiz (instrument) was given to the students by the instructor of record. Table 4 shows the descriptive results. Section C, experiential learning, had the highest mean (76.67) followed closely by Section A, public pedagogy, (73.61) and 30 points lower was Section B, lecture, (48.61). It should be noted Section C had completed a test two days prior to the third quiz which may account for the increase in mean between the second and third quiz.

Table 3. Quiz 2	M	SD	Min	Max	Mdn	Teaching Methods
Quiz 2						
Section A (n=9)	73.61	15.87	50.00	87.50	75.00	
Section B (n=9)	47.22	24.83	12.50	87.50	50.00	
Section C (n=15)	67.50	22.56	12.50	100.00	62.50	Analysis

s of the summated means of the three treatments and the three quizzes compared to the grand mean resulted in a discrepancy between public pedagogy and experiential learning and lecture. Public pedagogy's summated mean of 74.54 and experiential learning's summated mean of 72.50 was above the grand mean of 67.68, while the summated mean of traditional lecture fell below the grand mean with a value of 51.04. Table 5 shows the differences between the summated means and grand mean.

Table 5.

Section	Grand M	SD
A	74.54	14.10
B	51.04	22.60
C	72.50	20.60
All	67.68	21.50

### Conclusions/Implications

A main component of leadership development is education. As more colleges and universities continue to add collegiate leadership theory and application courses, it becomes more imperative for pedagogy of teaching leadership to be studied (Williams, 2005). In this study, three teaching methods, lecture, experiential learning, and public pedagogy, were tested to determine the difference in learning and content retention.

The findings of the study showed knowledge retention was highest and most consistent over time for the students who received their information via public pedagogy. This supports the findings of Jarvis (2000), Marshall (2001), and Write (2007) who found students engaged more in the curriculum when public pedagogy methods were used. Kamis et al (2005) noted that for adult learners, engagement equals knowledge retention.

It can also be concluded that traditional lecture utilizing only power points with key information on them is ineffective in the knowledge gain and retention of the leadership practice, Challenge the Process. The dramatic decrease in mean scores for Section B between the first quiz and the subsequent quizzes show a severe lack of retention of the material. This finding supports the work of Young, et al (2009) who found lack of engagement brought on by students being passive spectators in the classroom led to decreased retention in material. The summated mean scores of Section B being lower than the grand mean also shows it is an inferior way of teaching Challenge the Process.

It can be concluded public pedagogy and experiential learning are more effective ways of teaching Challenge the Process, with public pedagogy slightly more consistent and effective. This supports the work of Champoux (2005) who concluded that supplementing lectures with verbal and visual material enhances the learning of the student.

If this study is generalized, the implications for leadership educators are simple: lecture is ineffective. Understanding the teaching methodologies of public pedagogy and experiential learning are paramount in students' learning of leadership. To test this implication, more research should be conducted. Repeating this study on a larger scale, repeating with different leadership content, and looking at the use of public pedagogy with other adult learners will strengthen and add to the results of this study. As leadership

education moves forward, connecting leadership theory to student's everyday world is imperative in the role of leadership educators.



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**2. *Connecting Soft Skill Development and Leadership Education***

3. Research Paper
4. This study utilized quantitative measures to identify soft skill proficiency in graduates of the Organizational Leadership degree from Fort Hays State University. The purpose of the study was to determine if leadership education increases graduates' soft skill capabilities, particularly those skills repeatedly found deficient in employers incoming hires.
5. Christie teaches in the Department of Leadership Studies at Fort Hays State University. She serves as the director of the Kansas Women's Leadership Conference and as a Senior Fellow for the FHSU Center for Civic Leadership. Her research interests are in the fields of gender and leadership. Service-learning, civic engagement, and soft skill development.
6. Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings, if accepted.
7. Yes, please consider the proposal for a poster if not accepted.
8. Yes, I am willing to serve as a reviewer for this conference.
9. Yes, I am willing to serve as a session facilitator at the conference.

## Introduction

Leadership involves a relational process that requires working with others to accomplish a goal or to promote positive change. Education for leadership concentrates on the soft skills, that relationship factor involved in human interaction required to achieve positive outcomes from the leadership process. The notion that soft skills can be taught and learned in an academic environment has led to the proliferation of varied leadership education programs in this nation's colleges and universities (Brungardt, Greenleaf, Brungardt & Arensdorf, 2006; Crawford, Brungardt & Maughan, 2000; Daft, 2002; Funk, 2006). Educational outcomes for these college graduates have the potential to positively impact this nation's organizations.

As the world has changed over the last century, so has the world of work. Yesterday's workers were asked to carry out repetitive tasks within a traditional production operation (Carnevale, Gainer & Meltzer, 1990; Wilhelm, 2002). These organizations were structured in a pyramid style and were supervised by a traditional top-down, hierarchical approach (Carnevale et al., 1990). This command-and-control organizational design required only those at the top of the pyramid to make decisions, interact with others, and solve problems. The remainder of the organization's members, large numbers of people, worked within the same organization yet had little decision-making power and very little need for interaction with one another. They just did as they were told, or else.

Today's knowledge workers have far fewer individual repetitive tasks, much more autonomy, and far more need to work with and through people at every level of the organization (Overtoom, 2000; Smith, 2002). This requires an additional new set of skills for organizational members. As a result of the 'flattening' of the traditional organizational hierarchy, workers at all levels are now required to be proficient in these soft skills. More often these skills are being required of non-supervisory employees which in turn means that everyone in the organization needs development in these skills, not just the 'select' few at the top.

### *Organizational life and leadership education*

Recent studies of U.S. employers (AACU, 2002; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Dwyer, Millett & Payne, 2006; Hart Research Associates, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2006), found that employers recognize the fact that this nation's colleges and universities play a major role in the country's ability to drive innovation and competition in the global economy, yet they see much room for improvement in the level of preparation of today's four-year college graduates. Three skill areas consistently cited as deficient in incoming hires are the ability to collaborate effectively with others in a team environment, critical thinking skills and the ability to communicate effectively across various constituencies (e.g., Dwyer et al., 2006). These skills are needed by members of every level of organizations in order to be more capable in effective teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making and communication.

The culmination of these factors, the changes in both the workplace and the work force, the evolution of leadership as a field of study, and the role of higher education in serving the needs of the nation, has served to rapidly propel the academic discipline of leadership studies forward in higher education. Since Burns' work, *Leadership* (1978), the number of leadership education programs in higher education has grown to nearly 1000 (Brungardt et al., 2006; Eich,

2003; Mangan, 2002; Riggio, Ciulla & Sorenson, 2003). By examining the learning objectives and outcomes of leadership education programs, one can determine the potential for leadership education to fill this void where traditional disciplines in higher education appear to leave gaps.

This study investigated how well college graduates were prepared for effectiveness in today's contemporary workplace. The focus was on the use of soft skills in modern organizations and the impact one university's leadership studies program has on the soft skills of its graduates. The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether Fort Hays State University graduates with an academic background in the discipline of leadership studies were better equipped with essential soft skills required to be successful in contemporary organizations.

## **Literature Review**

As the organizational landscape has changed over the last 60 to 70 years, so has the need for changing member behaviors. Early research focused on individual factors associated with behaviors identified as leadership (Bird, 1940; Stogdill, 1948). In the late 1960's and early 1970's, researchers studied a broader picture by looking at organizations more holistically – not only the individual people involved, but also the situational context, setting and climate where leadership is exhibited. By the mid 1980's, organizations from a wide variety of societal segments called for the increased use of teams to improve organizational life.

In 1990 the American Association of Training and Development published a study explaining the reasons behind the changing needs in the workforce. The study revealed that the characteristics of the new world marketplace would be much different (Carnevale et al., 1990). This new work environment would require workers at all levels to solve problems, engage in problem-solving to improve work methods, and interact effectively with their coworkers (Bailey, 1997; Packer, 1998).

Between 1986 and 2006, numerous studies provided evidence that the skill set known as soft skills would be critical to future workplace effectiveness. This literature provided considerable linkage between the desired skill set commonly referred to as soft skills and those skills cited as necessary for effective teamwork. Dr. Harry O'Neil from the University of Southern California pioneered much of this work. As shown in the work of O'Neil, Chung & Brown (1997), when soft skill proficiency was compared to effective teamwork skills, several similarities emerged. Table 1 lists nine major studies utilized in this literature review, as well as the main workplace soft skill needs cited by employers. This table also shows the close alignment with the six dimensions of the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire (O'Neil et al., 1997), the instrument utilized in this study.

**Table 1: Main workplace soft skill needs reported in nine major studies and alignment of teamwork with soft skills**

SOFT SKILLS		
<b><u>Carnevale 1990</u></b>	<b><u>U.S. Dept of Labor 1991</u></b>	<b><u>AACU 2002</u></b>
Communication Interpersonal Adaptability	Communication Decision-making Problem-solving (Adaptability) Creative thinking Interpersonal Leadership	Communication Problem-solving (adaptability) Work with diverse groups
<b><u>GMAC 2004</u></b>	<b><u>AACSB 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Casner-Lotto &amp; Barrington 2006</u></b>
Communication Interpersonal Leadership	Communication Interpersonal Teamwork skills	Communication Leadership Work with diverse groups Teamwork skills
<b><u>Dwyer et al., 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Learning &amp; Skills 2006</u></b>	<b><u>Hart 2006</u></b>
Communication Creativity Teamwork skills	Communication Problem-solving Teamwork skills	Communication Work with diverse groups Teamwork skills



TEAMWORK SKILLS	
Adaptability	recognizing problems and responding
Coordination	organizing team activities
Decision-making	using information to make decisions
Interpersonal	interacting with team members
Leadership	providing team direction
Communication	exchange of accurate information

*Adapted from O'Neil, Chung, & Brown (1997)*

In summary, regardless of the term used – soft skills or teamwork skills – one fact remains clear. Never before in human history has the importance of these skills been emphasized more for every worker within every organization, regardless of position or authority. The importance of developing each employee's full potential has never been so critically important.

The emerging academic discipline of leadership studies strives to meet the needs of this new high performance workplace. A few colleges and universities have even developed full

undergraduate degree offerings in leadership. Brungardt et al. (2006) searched for those programs in the U.S. offering a bachelors degree in leadership. Of the 15 identified schools offering a major in “pure” leadership degrees, several curricular commonalities were discovered. Courses in skill development were considered essential in 14 of the 15 programs. As many of these soft skills are required to successfully interact within a collaborative team environment, the possibility of measuring teamwork skills has been explored as a way to measure for soft skill proficiency.

## **Methodology**

This study was conducted using the survey research method. The purpose of survey research is to gather data from groups of people by utilizing questionnaires (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002). Gall et al., (2003) stated that “the purpose of a survey is to use questionnaires or interviews to collect data from a sample that has been selected to represent a population to which the findings of the data analysis can be generalized” (p. 223).

Research question:

*Is there a statistically significant difference in self-reported ratings of soft skills between students with no leadership education in comparison to students with a certificate in leadership and in comparison with students who earned a bachelor’s degree in Organizational Leadership?*

Related hypotheses:

H<sub>01</sub>: Students with no leadership education will report significantly different scores than leadership certificate holders.

H<sub>02</sub>: Students with leadership certificates will report significantly different scores than leadership degree holders.

H<sub>03</sub>: Leadership degree holders will report significantly different scores than those without leadership coursework.

This study compared skills and abilities between three groups of Fort Hays State University graduates with varying levels of leadership education. Examined were three groups of graduates that received no leadership education, a leadership certificate, or a degree in Organizational Leadership, respectively.

### ***Population and sample***

The population for this study completed their degrees between the spring of 2003 and the spring of 2008. For the three groups to be more consistently represented, the decision was made to use a stratified random sampling strategy for selection.

Assuming a medium effect size with a probability level of  $<.05$ , at least 52 responses were needed from each group (Cohen, 1992). This was the minimum number needed to run analysis of variance with meaningful conclusions. In an effort to yield at least 52 responses, deliberate oversampling occurred in the first two groups. As there had been only 155 graduates of the Organizational Leadership degree through the spring of 2008, this entire group was selected.



Surveys were mailed to 225 randomly selected graduates from across all FHSU departments who had never taken a leadership class. These students completed their major requirements as well as all general education requirements, but had taken no leadership coursework. Likewise, 225 graduates who had received the leadership certificate from the FHSU Department of Leadership Studies, in conjunction with their chosen major and general education requirements, were mailed surveys from a total population of 464. All 155 graduates who had received the 12 course, 36-credit hour degree in Organizational Leadership, coupled with cognate requirements and all general education requirements, were included in the survey mailing.

Data was collected between November 2008 and January of 2009 using Dillman's Tailored Design Method (2007). A total of 558 surveys were sent. After the fifth contact was made (as recommended by Dillman) ultimately 301 graduates responded. This represented a total response rate of 53.9%.

### ***Instrumentation***

The selected instrument for this study, the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire (O'Neil et al., 1997), is intended to measure teamwork skills and focuses on the skills a person should have to be effective in a team (Cronbach alpha coefficients listed in Table 2):

- (a) *coordination* – organizing team activities to complete a task on time, (b) *decision making* – using available information to make decisions, (c) *leadership* – providing direction for the team, (d) *interpersonal* – interacting cooperatively with other team members, (e) *adaptability* – recognizing problems and responding appropriately, and (f) *communication* – clear, accurate exchange of information (O'Neil et al., 1997, p. 413).

**Table 2: Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the teamwork skills scales**

Subscale	$\alpha$
Coordination	.702
Decision	.724
Leadership	.839
Interpersonal	.769
Adaptability	.685
Communication	.707
Composite	.924
(n=301)	

Cronbach alpha numbers for the current study ranged from .685 to .839 on the six dimensions. Since all of the Cronbach values were above .600, the researcher had confidence in moving forward with the appropriate statistical analyses to test the hypotheses.

In a desire to test the quality of the measurement, Cronbach alpha was run to test reliability. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated on each of the six subscales of the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire, as well as the questionnaire's composite score. These procedures were utilized to determine if there is a statistical difference between the comparison groups of varying degrees of leadership education – no leadership coursework, leadership certificate, and degree in Organizational Leadership. Tukey's post-hoc test was run in an effort

to determine which groups differed from each other and where the differences occurred. Tukey is often chosen as the post-hoc method when testing large numbers of means (Field, 2005).

## Findings

This section reports results from the data collection process. Demographic information was detailed, as were the findings for each of the three hypotheses in relationship to the study's basic research question. The correlation between the six subscales and the composite score of the instrument was examined, as were the confidence intervals between the three groups. Regression analyses were performed on the subscales and the composite score of the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire.

### *Demographics*

Several demographic variables were collected in conjunction with this research. For gender comparison, males represented 35% (n=106) of respondents, while 65% (n=195) were female. When comparing the age of respondents, the ages ranged from 20 years of age to 62 years of age. By far the largest age range was those between 20 – 29 years of age at 72% (n=216). When asked for information as to ethnicity, 93% (n=279) of respondents reported being white or Caucasian, 4% (n=12) were black or African American, 2% (n=5) were Hispanic or Latino, .7% (n=2) were multiracial or biracial American, and .3% (n=1) was reported for Asian Americans, native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander and International. No American Indian or Alaska natives participated in this study.

### *Testing of hypotheses*

The first hypothesis stated that students with no leadership education would report significantly different scores than leadership certificate holders. The second hypothesis stated that students with leadership certificates would report significantly different scores than leadership degree holders. Finally, hypothesis three stated that leadership degree holders would report significantly different scores than those without leadership coursework.

Table 3 reports the means and standard deviations for each of the six subscale scores and the composite score for each subject group. The *coordination* subscale yielded a mean of 3.061 and a standard deviation of .515 in the no leadership coursework group, a mean of 3.213 and a standard deviation of .497 in the leadership certificate group, and a mean of 3.241 and a standard deviation of .430 in the leadership degree group. The *decision-making* subscale yielded a mean of 3.342 and a standard deviation of .413 in the no leadership coursework group, a mean of 3.383 and a standard deviation of .401 in the leadership certificate group, and a mean of 3.518 and a standard deviation of .372 in the leadership degree group. The subscale of *leadership* yielded a mean of 3.134 and a standard deviation of .537 in the no leadership coursework group, a mean of 3.276 and a standard deviation of .495 in the leadership certificate group, and, a mean of 3.410 and a standard deviation of .400 in the leadership degree group.

The mean of the *interpersonal* subscale in the no leadership coursework group was 3.626 with a standard deviation of .351. In this same subscale the leadership certificate group yielded a mean of 3.578 and a standard deviation of .455, while the mean of the leadership degree group was 3.757 and the standard deviation was .279. The mean of the *adaptability* subscale in the no

leadership coursework group was 3.219 with a standard deviation of .431. For this same subscale the leadership certificate group yielded a mean of 3.340 and a standard deviation of .406, while the mean of the leadership degree group was 3.431 and a standard deviation .394. The mean of the *communication* subscale in the no leadership coursework group was 3.325 with a standard deviation of .404. In this same subscale the leadership certificate group yielded a mean of 3.390 and a standard deviation of .366, while the mean of the leadership degree group was 3.491 with a standard deviation of .359. The composite scores for the total Teamwork Skills Questionnaire resulted in a mean of 3.290 in the no leadership coursework group and a standard deviation of .357, a mean of 3.362 in the leadership certificate group and a standard deviation of .334, and a mean of 3.471 and a standard deviation of .287 in the leadership degree group.

**Table 3: Means and standard deviations reported by the six subscales and the total scale by three subject groups for each subscale and the total scale**

Subscale/group	n	mean	s.d.	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<b>Coordination</b>					
No coursework	109	3.061	0.515	2.962	3.158
Certificate	90	3.213	0.497	3.109	3.317
Degree	102	3.241	0.430	3.157	3.326
<b>Decision-making</b>					
No coursework	109	3.342	0.413	3.264	3.421
Certificate	90	3.383	0.401	3.299	3.467
Degree	102	3.518	0.372	3.445	3.591
<b>Leadership</b>					
No coursework	109	3.134	0.537	3.032	3.236
Certificate	90	3.276	0.495	3.177	3.380
Degree	102	3.410	0.400	3.331	3.489
<b>Interpersonal</b>					
No coursework	108	3.626	0.351	3.559	3.694
Certificate	90	3.578	0.455	3.482	3.673
Degree	102	3.757	0.279	3.702	3.811
<b>Adaptability</b>					
No coursework	108	3.219	0.431	3.137	3.301
Certificate	90	3.340	0.406	3.255	3.425
Degree	102	3.431	0.394	3.354	3.509
<b>Communication</b>					
No coursework	108	3.325	0.404	3.248	3.403
Certificate	90	3.390	0.366	3.313	3.467
Degree	102	3.491	0.359	3.421	3.562
<b>Composite Score</b>					
No coursework	109	3.290	0.357	3.218	3.354
Certificate	90	3.362	0.334	3.294	3.433
Degree	102	3.471	0.287	3.419	3.531

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for differences in the mean responses between participants from the three groups. ANOVAs were performed for each of the six dimensions of the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire as well as the composite score. The amount of leadership education was treated as the independent variable while each of the six dimensions and the composite score of the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire were treated as the dependent variables.

Table 4 illustrates the findings of this ANOVA testing. These results are reported for each of the six dimensions as well as for the composite score. There was a significant difference found between groups for each of the six dimensions as well as the composite score of the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire. Criterion for significance was set at the .05 level. Results for each of the six dimensions were as follows: *coordination* ( $F(2, 298) = 4.271, p = .015$ ), *decision-making* ( $F(2, 298) = 5.572, p = .004$ ), *leadership* ( $F(2, 298) = 8.686, p = .001$ ), *interpersonal* ( $F(2, 297) = 6.248, p = .002$ ), *adaptability* ( $F(2, 297) = 7.053, p = .001$ ) and *communication* ( $F(2, 297) = 5.143, p = .006$ ). The composite score of the questionnaire yielded a significant difference ( $F(2, 297) = 8.757, p = .001$ ).

**Table 4: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire on the three sample groups**

Subscale/group		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Coordination</b>	Between Groups	1.990	2	.995	4.271	.015*
	Within Groups	69.411	298	.233		
	Total	71.401	300			
<b>Decision</b>	Between Groups	1.746	2	.873	5.572	.004*
	Within Groups	46.704	298	.157		
	Total	48.450	300			
<b>Leadership</b>	Between Groups	4.029	2	2.014	8.686	.001*
	Within Groups	69.102	298	.232		
	Total		300			
<b>Interpersonal</b>	Between Groups	1.675	2	.838	6.248	.002*
	Within Groups	39.819	297	.134		
	Total	41.494	299			
<b>Adaptability</b>	Between Groups	2.386	2	1.193	7.053	.001*
	Within Groups	50.244	297	.169		
	Total	52.631	299			
<b>Communication</b>	Between Groups	1.469	2	.734	5.143	.006*
	Within Groups	42.401	297	.143		
	Total		299			
<b>Composite</b>	Between Groups	1.879	2	.939	8.757	.001*
	Within Groups	31.865	297	.107		
	Total	33.744	299			

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

The significant one-way ANOVAs for each dimension and the composite score indicated that at least one group mean differed from the others; however, this result cannot tell us which groups' means differ significantly. Therefore, follow up post-hoc analysis was conducted.

Hypothesis one stated that students with no leadership education would report significantly different scores than leadership certificate holders. The Tukey (Cronk, 2004) post-hoc analysis was used to assess hypothesis one, with full results reported in Table 5. However,

no statistically significant differences were found between any of the dimensions, nor the composite score when comparing the two groups.

**Table 5: Tukey post-hoc test**

Subscale	Significance (Hyp 1: No Leadership Coursework and Certificate)	Significance (Hyp 2: Certificate and LDRS Degree)	Significance (Hyp 3: No Leadership Coursework and LDRS Degree)
<b>Coordination</b>	.069	.916	.019*
<b>Decision-making</b>	.753	.050*	.004*
<b>Leadership</b>	.096	.134	.001*
<b>Interpersonal</b>	.620	.002*	.029*
<b>Adaptability</b>	.100	.276	.001*
<b>Communication</b>	.450	.154	.004*
<b>Composite Score</b>	.226	.051	.001*

\* Significant at the 0.05 level

Hypothesis two stated that students with leadership certificates would report significantly different scores than leadership degree holders. The Tukey post-hoc analysis was again used to assess hypothesis two, with results summarized in Table 5. The significance values ranged from .002 to .916 with criterion for significance set at the .05 level. Although students with leadership degrees reported higher means across all dimensions and the composite score, these differences were only found to be significant for two of the dimensions. First, the dimension of *interpersonal* resulted in a statistically significant difference at .002 with criterion for significance set at the .05 level. Second, the dimension of *decision-making* was statistically significant at .050. Differences between the two groups on the other four dimensions failed to achieve significance at the .05 level: *coordination* at .916, *leadership* at .134, *adaptability* at .276, and *communication* at .154. Finally, the mean difference in the composite scores between the leadership certificate and the leadership degree groups achieved only marginal significance (.051).

Hypothesis three stated that leadership degree holders will report significantly different scores than those without leadership coursework. The Tukey post-hoc analysis was used to assess hypothesis three. As reported in Table 5, leadership degree holders reported higher levels of soft skills across all six dimensions than did those with no leadership coursework, and these differences were found to be significant at the .05 level for all six dimensions as well as for the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire composite score. Thus, hypothesis three was accepted based on the Tukey results and this supports the value of a leadership degree in comparison to no coursework in leadership education.

### **Correlations**

A follow-up Pearson's correlation was performed between the six individual dimension scores and the composite score of the Teamwork Skills Questionnaire in order to explore the degree of separateness among the dimensions. Table 6 summarizes these correlations. All correlations were statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ). The correlations ( $r$ ) ranged from .242 to .679. Coefficients of determination ( $r^2$ ) ranged from 5.9% to 46.1%. Eight of the correlations fell in the range of .61 to .68. Three correlations fell in the range of .54 to .59, with four correlations in

the range of .24 to .45. Two dimensions produced five inter-correlations in the upper range and these were communication and decision-making. At the lower end, one dimension, interpersonal, produced three inter-correlations in the range of .24 to .37. Three dimensions, adaptability, coordination and leadership produced four correlations in the upper range. Thus, communication and decision-making had the smallest degrees of separation and interpersonal had the largest degree of separation. In total, the researcher concluded that there were reasonable degrees of separation among the six dimension scores.

**Table 6: Correlation matrix of Teamwork Skills Questionnaire subscales and composite score**

<b>Subscale</b>	<b>Coord</b>	<b>Decis</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Inter</b>	<b>Adapt</b>	<b>Comm</b>	<b>Comp</b>
<b>Coordination</b>	----						
<b>Decision-making</b>	.643*						
<b>Leadership</b>	.628*	.628*					
<b>Interpersonal</b>	.272*	.448*	.242*				
<b>Adaptability</b>	.562*	.679*	.611*	.369*			
<b>Communication</b>	.585*	.637*	.549*	.625*	.646*		
<b>Composite Score</b>	.803*	.855*	.798*	.595*	.820*	.842*	----

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

### **Recommendations and Implications**

The results of this study suggest that the Fort Hays State University Department of Leadership Studies should consider a thorough review of the curriculum with possible program changes. As no significant difference was found in soft skill proficiency between students with no leadership coursework and students with a 9-credit hour leadership certificate, the strength of the leadership certificate must be examined.

Currently, the leadership certificate consists of the three courses (1) LDRS: 300 Introduction to Leadership Concepts, (2) LDRS 302: Introduction to Leadership Behaviors, and (3) LDRS 310: Fieldwork in Leadership Studies (Fort Hays State University, 2008). Perhaps the leadership certificate should be increased to a 12-credit hour requirement, adding another required course from the Organizational Leadership major. LDRS 480: Leadership and Team Dynamics appears to be an obvious choice to enhance the impact of soft skill development. LDRS 670: Leadership and Personal Development also has the potential to do so (Fort Hays State University, 2008). Additional investigation of the leadership coursework must take place to further identify what course or experience in the program caused specific differences to occur.

Another suggestion for the Department of Leadership Studies would be to encourage students from across all majors to consider adding an Organizational Leadership degree as a

second major. Today's employers expect incoming hires to be prepared to immediately interact effectively in diverse teams. Attaching a leadership degree to any other major should help fill this current organizational deficit. From the student recruitment process through their graduation, this point should be made clear to all current and incoming students. This would allow students to decide early in their collegiate experience as to whether the additional cost and time for dual degrees is worth their pursuit.

Finally, the Department of Leadership Studies must actively promote enrollment in their classes from all ethnicities represented on campus. The department should do more to encourage students from all cultures to understand the intended learning outcomes from leadership classes and how these classes may benefit their future employability skills.

### ***Limitations of the study***

- Because this study was based on survey research, and was not a true experimental design study, we are not able to manipulate independent variables to make a stronger case for causation.
- The sample for this study was not ethnically diverse. This fact should cause one to be cautious in generalizing findings of this study to another population.
- The number of Organizational Leadership degree graduates is relatively small. As leadership is a new academic discipline the Organizational Leadership degree at FHSU has only an eight year history.
- By studying only one university, generalizability to a broader population is difficult. Though there are numerous collegiate leadership development programs throughout higher education, there are few that offer a similar bachelor's degree in Organizational Leadership (Brungardt et al., 2006).
- The survey research method used in this study was based on self-report of respondents. People who self-report their own behaviors may report what reflects positively on their personal knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (Cook & Campbell, 1979).
- Using only one survey instrument to measure soft skills is limiting. There are elements of soft skill development not measured with this instrument, and there are other instruments which could be used for measurement.

### ***Implications for future research***

There are several implications which can be drawn from this study to enhance future research in the field. These suggestions should prove beneficial to future researchers, which should in turn produce more positive future outcomes for college students and organizations throughout the country.

- Validity is a concern in any research study. Did the instrument and the method measure what you want to know? What other skills might the leadership coursework produce that may not have been measured with this instrument? Given the complexity of the multi-dimensional phenomena known as leadership, future research in leadership education must specifically define the elements of effective leadership growth in order to measure outcomes more accurately.
- This study should be replicated using the same measure, but also collect data from a 360-degree feedback perspective. This data collection would include the graduates'

supervisors, peers and direct reports who would all respond to the graduate's performance on the six dimensions.

- Researchers must continue to stress the importance of both the '*knowing*' and the '*doing*' in effective leadership development. This will require measurement of learning through experiential pedagogies as well as traditional classroom teaching methods.
- This study should be replicated with the inclusion of one or more forms of qualitative methodology. Though time intensive and complex, qualitative research often illuminates "in radically new ways phenomena as complex as leadership" (Conger, 1998, p. 107). Though leadership development is difficult to measure, and qualitative research remains relatively rare, the two must be intertwined more readily to allow Leadership Studies to continue to emerge as a recognized academic discipline (Riggio et al., 2003).
- The field of leadership education needs to develop standardized leadership curriculum. Without these standards, measuring leadership growth of graduates in a consistent manner will continue to be difficult (Riggio et al., 2003).
- Longitudinal studies need to be designed and implemented. Therefore, there needs to be a long-term perspective to much of the future research in the leadership field.
- A strong goal of most leadership education programs is to instill a sense of civic responsibility within their students. The effectiveness of this component should be measured, particularly in future longitudinal studies.
- Future research in Leadership Studies must include integration of assessment data from multiple universities where similar degrees are offered.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, this study was an extension of the rapidly growing body of research in the field of leadership education. As this field is still in its infancy, more research is needed at many levels. Standardized methods of intended learning outcomes, curriculum development and program assessment will be critical in moving this field forward as an accepted academic discipline (Brungardt et al., 2006; Sorenson, 2000).

This study confirms findings from several previous studies (AACU, 2007; Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Hart Research Associates, 2006). There is a skills gap in incoming hires in the area of soft skill development, and this gap often proves detrimental to overall success of the organization (Eldredge, 2006). One potential answer to address this gap in needed skills is found in the new emerging academic discipline of Leadership Studies (Bisoux, 2002; Burns, 1978; Funk, 2006).

This study did produce positive results, which further advances the body of knowledge in the field of leadership education. If we believe that the role of higher education is to develop effective organizational members, and that leadership does indeed play an important role in the progress of our organizations, communities and society, then it is imperative that we as leadership scholars continue our efforts to educate for effective leadership.



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2. Participation and Leadership in Beef Industry Organizations
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6. If accepted, please print in conference proceedings.
7. Please consider for a poster presentation if not accepted.
8. No
9. No

## **Introduction**

Agricultural organizations have been an active part of American agriculture since 1867 (National Grange History, 2002). Throughout the years, names change, mergers and splits occur, the issues evolve, but one thing has remained constant: agricultural organizations are working to sustain America's oldest livelihood, heritage, and a way of life that continues for millions of farmers and ranchers today (American Farm Bureau Federation, 2007). These organizations were formed and continue to be funded by and for agriculturalists and their specific interests (Association History, 2008).

From product promotion to legislative lobbying, and from producer education to consumer communication, the activities of agricultural organizations are directed by members beginning at the grassroots level and carried out by staff and volunteers at local, state, and national levels (Association History, 2008). The volunteer leadership that producer members provide plays a vital role in supporting and sustaining the mission and goals for these organizations.

These volunteer leaders of agricultural organizations take on many roles, including elected officers, committee and board chairpersons and members, event planners, and fundraising organizers. Some roles are assigned leaders with a title and designated length of service, while others are emergent leaders who take the responsibility without a title or official office (Northouse, 2007). One might consider both the president of the organization and the member who spearheads membership recruitment efforts to be leaders, but leadership is expressed and identified differently in each situation.

The beef industry comprises one piece of the vast American agricultural industry, but the economic, environmental, and political impacts of this industry segment are far-reaching. The U.S. beef industry is comprised of more than one million farms, ranches, and businesses from all 50 states (National Cattlemen's Beef Association [NCBA], 2007). On January 1, 2009, there were an estimated 94.5 million head of cattle and 800,000 ranchers and cattlemen in the United States (Cattle Fax, 2009). U.S. cash receipts from cattle and calves totaled \$49.6 billion in 2005 (NCBA, 2007). Beef is an important component in diets of Americans, as nearly nine out of ten U.S. households will eat beef at home in the next two weeks (NCBA, 2006).

The U.S. beef industry is not only vast; it is also very efficient. The United States has less than 10 percent of the world's cattle inventory, but produces approximately 25 percent of the world's beef supply (NCBA, 2006). With the amount of beef produced within the United States, export markets play a vital role in the movement and consumption of U.S. beef and the profits returned to producers and processors.

In order to stay in business, one has to make a profit or avoid losing too much. This requires a knowledge and understanding of consumer needs and demands, and the ability to efficiently and effectively meet those needs and demands. This also requires cooperation or minimal interference from local, state and national governments (Catchings & Wingenbach, 2006).

With the volatility of the political arena, there is never a guarantee that the interests of America's beef producers will be protected or considered with each new piece of legislation or jurisdiction

from the courts. This has created the need for unity amongst beef producers through industry organizations. Such organizations have historically played an integral role in the ratification and implementation of farm legislation. They also serve as channels of communication between producers and policy makers (Catchings & Wingenbach, 2006). There is strength in numbers, and these organizations provide a synergistic voice and greater influence than any individual member on their own.

One organization within the beef industry that was created for this purpose is the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). In 1898, a national cattle producers organization was formed to combat issues such as land rights, cattle rustling, and the packer monopoly (Association History, 2008). For more than 100 years, this organization has sought to bring cattle producers together to fight for rights and issues with a unified front. "Through three mergers, numerous organizational splits, economic busts, natural disasters, world wars, changing political views and evolving consumer wants, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association has persevered as the voice of the American beef industry" (Association History, 2008, p. 1).

Today, NCBA is a grassroots agricultural organization consisting of more than 25,000 members nationwide (Association History, 2008). Together with 64 state affiliates and breed and industry organization members, NCBA represents more than 230,000 cattle breeders, feeders, and producers. As a producer operated organization, members fulfill leadership roles at the county, state, and national levels, perhaps in conjunction with paid staff, to carry out the operations and goals of the organization.

It is crucial to the survival of NCBA and its subsidiary associations to have leaders that are competent and effective in fulfilling their service to the industry and association. These leadership roles carry with them a degree of credibility that must be protected. Leaders in the beef industry have a responsibility to have the knowledge and understanding necessary to communicate the reality of what is happening in the industry and global marketplace (Purcell, 2002).

Former NCBA President and cattle producer Mike John has said it is a struggle to recruit leaders to leave successful businesses for volunteer service (personal communication, April 29, 2008). Potential leaders have responsibilities and commitments to their agricultural operations and professions that make it a challenge for them to devote time and resources to serve in leadership roles. Some leadership roles, such as serving as a national officer in the NCBA, require spending approximately 300 days on the road in a given year (M. John, personal communication, April 29, 2008). Only in identifying the factors that influence the decisions that producers make to take on the responsibilities of leadership can we answer the question of how to recruit emerging leaders and address their concerns about leadership. Agricultural organizations such as NCBA have the potential to make a greater impact in serving the beef industry and beef producers by more effectively recruiting, training and retaining volunteer leadership.

The purpose of this research was to assess beef producers' perceptions of, interest in, and commitment to serving in leadership roles within the beef industry. The objectives of this research were to:

1. Identify the factors that influence producer members' decisions to participate and lead in beef industry organizations
2. Determine perceptions of cattlemen about volunteer leadership responsibilities and commitments

This study is significant because of its implications for agricultural organizations. Understanding participation in and perceptions of leadership in volunteer organizations is important because it can be used to enhance participation and leadership in voluntary groups (Chinman & Wandersman, 1999).

With an aging generation of agriculturalists in this country, organizations will have to find a way to attract new members and leaders from an upcoming younger generation (Allen & Harris, 2005). This research could initiate or provide direction for programs and training to prepare more producers for leadership roles in the future.

Carter and Rudd (2005) analyzed participation and leadership of active members within Florida Farm Bureau. Other researchers have conducted analyses and evaluations of other agricultural organizations and their members. With this study being focused on a beef industry organization, it will be of interest to compare the findings with similar research that has previously been done in other agricultural organizations.

Agricultural organizations, particularly those in the beef industry, can utilize this research to better understand producer members' concerns, apprehensions, and conflicts with volunteering for leadership roles. With this knowledge, organizations can improve their leadership recruitment and retention efforts presently, and then more effectively address these issues with potential leaders in the future.

Agricultural organizations were formed out of a necessity to promote and protect America's oldest industry and the livelihood of millions of Americans through a unified voice. The lifeblood of agricultural organizations is the members who participate. The pinnacle of that participation is the time and resources that are dedicated to serving the organization. In order for beef industry organizations to continue to protect their producers, members must be willing to serve the organization through leadership. By understanding why members choose to participate in organizational leadership roles, and how they determine where to allocate their time, current beef industry leaders and employees can work to recruit and retain members to lead this industry into the next century.

## **Literature Review**

Chinman and Wandersman (1999) conducted an extensive literature review of the costs and benefits associated with participation in voluntary organizations. They found that costs and benefits can be measured, they are related to participation, and they can be managed by voluntary organization leaders. In 2001, Catano, Pond and Kelloway explored leadership and organizational commitment in volunteer organizations. Volunteer leaders were found to be more psychologically involved and committed to their organization and rated higher in transformational leadership when compared to members of a trade union.



Social exchange theory has been used to determine patterns of volunteer participation in natural resource and environmental organizations (Passewitz, 1991). Passewitz developed three models based on incentives of volunteerism to predict four patterns of volunteer participant behavior. This model is based on social exchange theory's emphasis on rewards, costs, and reciprocation. The models define three reasons why people become involved in volunteer activities within an organization: (1) their values match those of the volunteer organization; (2) people volunteer based on their self-interest, ranging from a desire for recognition to gaining job related experience; (3) and people volunteer based on their social relationship network, including family, friends, and professional relationships. Each of these models is used to predict four patterns of volunteer participation which include: (a) levels of involvement, from little activity to holding positions of leadership; (b) amount of time contributed per month; (c) percent of volunteer activities participated in; (d) and consistency of participation over time. Results showed the most important value based benefit as doing something useful, the dominant self-interest based benefit was a sense of achievement, and the highest rated networking benefit was meeting new people. Only two costs of volunteering were rated as important, the self-interest based costs of lack of free time and night meetings.

Carter and Rudd (2005) explained individual motivations, attitudes towards volunteering, and opinions of serving on county Farm Bureau boards by determining the reasons why local Farm Bureau members choose to participate or not participate in leadership roles in local county farm bureau boards. The five variables of volunteering evaluative factor, volunteering activity factor, number of farm bureau events attended, membership in youth development organizations, and participation in leadership development program explained 36% of the variance in serving on county boards. The most significant variable with the largest explanatory power was the volunteering evaluative factor. Close to half of respondents had belonged to 4-H or FFA. How individuals evaluate volunteering was the strongest determinant of serving on county boards. Farm Bureau should appeal to individuals on a personal level, highlighting the value to their lives, personal achievement, and use of skills and talents that accompanies serving on county boards.

Participation and volunteer leadership in organizations requires motivated individuals who are willing to make a commitment. Barbuto, Trout and Brown (2004) used the Motivation Sources Inventory (MSI) to measure five sources of motivation among rural farm workers. The prevailing source of motivation for the rural farm workers was self-concept internal motivation. This implies that agricultural workers are internally self-directed and their behavior is based off their beliefs of what is required to be their ideal self. They are naturally motivated to live up to a standard set by themselves, and need more than fun, money, public recognition/reputation, or a purpose/worthy cause to motivate them. Kalkowski and Fritz (2004) examined the history of perceived gender differences related to motivation in organizational settings, the implications this has for women in leadership, and what role women and their motivation will play if the industry continues to head to a more participative type of leadership.

Recognition can be key to maintaining volunteer motivation. In 2003, Fritz, Karmazin, Barbuto and Burrow compared rural and urban 4-H volunteers in motivation, recognition, and program quality perceptions. Both urban and rural volunteers were predominately motivated by

affiliation needs, followed by achievement and power needs. Organizations are constantly try to expand their volunteer pool by competing for volunteers' time, and developing and implementing strategies to retain, recognize, and develop volunteers. Penrod (1991) developed the LOOP model for developing volunteer leadership, which includes Locating, Orienting, Operating and Perpetuating. The LOOP model is designed to increase project effectiveness and efficiency while helping volunteers stayed motivated and focused. Every organization competes for volunteers' time with every other activity to which volunteers could alternatively devote that time. Time-use studies research the duration and frequency of human activities. Research has shown that humans spend as much as three to four hours per day multi-tasking (Stinson, 1999).

Most cattle producers are self-employed entrepreneurs, and organizations must keep this in mind as they recruit, train and retain volunteer leaders. Reimers-Hild, et al. (2005) suggest that entrepreneurs and those who are successful at distance learning may share similar characteristics because they seek out opportunities and maximize their resources. Entrepreneurial personality is measured by the combined score of locus of control, need for achievement, and risk taking propensity. This paper suggests that a relationship exists between entrepreneurial personality and success and persistence in academic environments.

Research suggests a need for more effective beef industry leadership. Purcell (2002) addressed problems within the beef industry that must be addressed to keep the industry healthy, meaning profitable, sustainable, and resources are protected. Inadequate beef industry leadership was one issue addressed. Prescriptions for a healthy industry include continued support for the Beef Check Off program and elected leadership of beef industry organizations hiring competent, professional staff and listening to them in order to address the media and general public with more knowledge and understanding of pending industry issues.

## **Methodology**

Qualitative inquiry was deemed to be the best fit for this research. People are complex and difficult to study, especially when attempting to assess perceptions and factors that influence behavior. Observation and replication can be challenging, particularly for quantitative researchers who may not recognize the bias of their own values and attitudes and may have problems with the interactions between subjects and observers (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). Unlike qualitative researchers, they tend to collect observations from a distance and try not to interact with subjects (participants) or the environment.

This qualitative research is done as a basic descriptive study utilizing basic interpretive methods. The data is collected through interviews and observations with cattle producers to identify themes and patterns of participation and leadership in beef industry organizations. This type of research design allows for an in-depth analysis of the participation and leadership patterns of cattle producers. However, only a limited number of producers can be interviewed, so the purposive sample must be diverse and include producers from a variety of perspectives and backgrounds.

Interviews were scheduled with the cattle producers chosen for the purposive sample. Sixteen interviews were conducted face-to-face, with cattlemen and cattlemen identified from each of

the following groups: past beef industry leaders, current industry leaders, emerging industry leaders, members that participate but are not in leadership roles, members that pay dues but do not actively participate, and cattlemen that are not dues paying members of any beef industry organizations. All dues-paying cattle producers were NCBA members. Additionally some were local and state cattlemen's affiliate members and breed association members. Participants interviewed for this research represented several different regions of the country and were involved in various segments of the cattle industry, including seedstock, cow/calf, backgrounding, feedlots, livestock auctions, and allied industry.

Data collection for this research occurred during the spring of 2009 with interviews conducted at each participant's home or ranch. A list of nineteen interview questions was generated and piloted with an expert panel. These questions served as the foundation for the semi-structured interviews and further probing questions were asked when needed for clarification or additional explanation. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed into written documents. Field notes were taken during the interview and ranch visit and transcribed as well. The process of transcription serves as a measure of validity and a method of analysis. These documents were organized and formatted in preparation for coding and data analysis.

The qualitative research conducted through the interviews was organized into a logical format for analysis and interpretation. Weft QDA software was used for coding and categorizing themes. The data was coded and re-coded using constant comparative analysis to look for patterns that emerged and indicate variables that may influence volunteer leadership. Categories were re-combined into themes using constant-comparative and discrepant analysis. Variables discovered through this procedure were summarized and interpreted.

While limited research has been conducted to study volunteer leadership in grassroots agricultural organizations, the literature reveals some studies that contribute to the knowledge base and methodology for conducting such research. The methodology of this research is designed to achieve the objectives of this study by obtaining answers and results that are valid and reliable.

## **Results**

Each the sixteen cattle producers interviewed in this study had been involved in the cattle industry at least since they finished their last year of formal education. "I've been involved my entire life," or "just about forever" were common statements. Of the participants that were dues-paying members of beef industry organizations, all happened to be members of NCBA in addition to other cattle organizations and several were Farm Bureau members as well. Those who were members ranged from 4 to 45 years of membership, while the average length of membership was just more than 20 years.

Themes emerged in six categories relating to participation and leadership in beef industry organizations: organizational involvement; membership and leadership recruitment; costs and benefits of leadership; leadership development; volunteerism and humility. Several themes came out of each these categories.

*Organizational Involvement* – Every participant interviewed in this research discussed organizational involvement, with nearly 50 comments related to why they did or did not get involved. More than half of the participants talked about the importance and challenges of getting more young people involved. Those producers who had been involved in the past indicated they were highly likely to stay involved in the future.

For those that did get involved, many did so because they found common ground with the people, philosophy and culture associated with the organization. People want to spend their time involved in something they perceive to be worthwhile, where they feel they are making a difference. “If you can’t make a difference, you won’t do it.” Many participants enjoy their involvement and several stated it was “just the right thing to do.” A strong passion for and real commitment to the industry was discussed many times as reasons to be involved. One producer summarized involvement: “Come, get educated, get informed, and then use that in their organization back home or in their community, in their area, in their state, around the world.”

Data revealed that just because people did not like an organization did not mean that they would not join, but they were much less likely to become involved. Some chose not to be involved because they did not see the value in it. One young producer said, “If I don’t know the benefit of it, I ain’t going to do it.” Another producer referred to an organization’s annual meetings as “a big social, drinks and hors d’oeuvres deal...tea parties never have turned me on. I want to go get something done.”

Several producers said they did not know or understand what the organization did until they became involved, while several did not become involved because they did not know what the organization did or where dues money spent. This can be a vicious cycle and difficult for organizations to break. Some were unsure of how to get involved, one stating that he “found it very hard to figure out where I was supposed to be [within the organization].”

*Membership and Leadership Recruitment* – Every participant except one mentioned they or others became members of beef industry organizations or involved in volunteer leadership roles because they were asked. The idea of asking people to join or participate came up 25 times throughout all the interviews. One producer spoke of the number of people he had recruited to join organizations saying, “You just have to keep asking. I have a passion for it and some of mine will rub off on them and I will get them for \$100.” Another cattle producer talked about the lack of people asking fellow producers to join because of the culture of the cattle industry. “We don’t go around trying to sell people stuff. And that’s a tradition that just kills us in membership.”

When it comes to leadership involvement, the majority of the participants became involved because someone asked them to. Most saw this as an advantage to getting the right people. One commented that the “best leaders I’ve seen are the ones that do it because someone talks them into it, rather than deciding up front they want to do it...because it’s a service mindset.” Several were not involved in certain industry organizations because they had been selected instead of asked to serve, and because they felt they had not been for anything of substance.

*Costs and Benefits of Leadership* – The costs and benefits of serving in volunteer leadership roles was frequently a theme of conversation among participants. The rewards of leadership that emerged include education and knowledge gained, both from formal seminars and cattlemen's colleges and through conversations with other producers. "The thing about the cattle business is people don't mind sharing, particularly something that's worked well for them." Other rewards include time spent with like-minded people, building relationships with long-term friends and business partners, and making the "beef business better" which in turn improves their livelihoods.

The biggest cost of leadership, which emerged from nearly 30 comments, is the time it requires. Personal time, family time, travel time and ranch time were each discussed in regards to the time commitment of serving as a volunteer leader. Many producers said they would be more involved if they felt they had the time, while one young producer talked about "activity overload." Other costs include monetary costs of taking off work and paying to go to meetings and conventions, and giving up personal opinions to represent the voice of the organization. Some producers felt these costs were not a great sacrifice, one producer noting that "this industry has given me quite a bit...I damned sure ought to be able to give something back." While others felt the costs were too great, especially for the family. "We're not willing to sacrifice the family to work for the betterment of the industry."

*Leadership Development* – As participants discussed their experiences and perceptions in regards to leadership roles and development, many of them began asking themselves questions. "How do I keep the leadership of agriculture in the hands of people that know it, love it, live it?" "How do we keep people from leading in an uninformed manner?" "How do we keep the leadership in people that want and understand a long-term and sustainable business?" Many discussed the implications of leadership development, and how the trade associations can be more competitive with a progression of strong, well-trained leaders.

Several acknowledged that the need for leadership development was stronger today than it ever has been before. Regarding priorities, one participant said, "Our organization has continued to have leadership and leadership development as important but not as critical." Some noted the problem is that leadership development isn't an issue staring you in the face waiting for a response; it doesn't demand legislative action or a media response right now. "Leadership development...it's just, it's really not real sexy."

Half of the participants discussed a need for leadership training. "If we're going to have people that can run these organizations, they kind of need to be trained how to do it...they're cattlemen. Which is not a negative, but this a very different role, in understanding group dynamics and decision making processes and persuasive speaking." A couple noted that the leadership of an organization is not a coincidence; it must be cultivated.

More than half of the participants had been chosen by their state to attend the Young Cattlemen's Conference (YCC) with NCBA. All but one of the cattle producers that had been involved at the national level were YCC alumni. Everyone that had been on YCC commented on the impact of the program in regards to their industry organizational participation and leadership. Three

cattlemen said it was one of the best things they had ever done in their life, while only said, “I got more out of that trip than I did out of the 4 years of college education.”

Three comments were made in regards to the producers’ decisions not to be involved in leadership because it was hereditary, not merit-based. They perceived leadership roles to be passed down through certain families in particular beef industry organizations. One producer expressed frustration with leadership because the “decisions that were being made, they weren’t speaking my language. It was politically based and not based on sound science and what’s best for livestock production and for the environment.”

*Volunteerism* – More than half of those interviewed talked about the importance of volunteerism, that it does make a difference and help guide the organization. “I particularly think that clubs and organizations fulfill a great, great service in this country...most countries around the globe do not have the service organizations that we have in this country. Or the volunteerism within us that we have in America.” Several people discussed the need for volunteers with pure motives. While some “want to be on there to do the greater good, you get some that are just totally self-serving.” When folks volunteer their time, they have to buy into the organization and know that what they are doing makes a difference.

There was a need expressed for organizational members to be forgiving of volunteers who aren’t perfect people. One beef producer discussed the concerns of volunteer leaders who struggle with knowing what to say and how to say it when they represent the organization. “You’re talking about people that aren’t paid, these are volunteer leaders and I think people gotta realize that you get a pass on some of that because it isn’t your profession. It’s your passion but it’s not your profession.”

*Humility* – A majority of the participants discussed humility, both in terms of leadership and membership. One past organizational leader said, “it will humble you to know the quality of people that you’re working for, and the impact we can have on the young people that have a burning desire to try to get into livestock and this business.” Several discussed how serving in leadership roles had been a humbling experience, even if ego played a role in their decision to lead. Others discussed the humble nature of most cattle producers. “It’s not considered a positive trait in a producer that you’re arrogant, and brag and talk about how many cows you have and what you do.” The implications related to this humility of producers include a lack of recruitment because many producers won’t ask their neighbors for something (membership), and a lack of leadership because people don’t pursue leadership roles unless they are asked.

## **Conclusions**

Organizations that are looking to recruit members and leaders need to place more emphasis on purposefully identifying those potential members and/or leaders and asking them to join, be involved or serve the organization in specific capacities. In doing so, the value of such participation must be very clear for people to be willing to give up the time that they could devote to other things. Asking clearly emerged as the dominant way this industry recruits and engages people.

There is a need for leadership training and development programs to continue and expand in order to meet the need for organizational leadership within the agricultural industry. We can learn from the effective programs that are already in place, in addition to listening to the leadership education needs that producer members identify in the skills and knowledge they feel are necessary to fulfill their leadership commitments and responsibilities. If a grassroots organization is to truly make leadership development a critical priority, leadership training must be delivered all the way down to the grassroots level of the organization.

The Young Cattlemen's Conference, conducted by NCBA, has been very effective in identifying and developing industry leaders. Many questions could be explored related to YCC. Should it remain a small, elite event or be expanded to include more people and develop more leaders? YCC is for cattle producers age 25 to 50, but the average age is 35 to 40. Could the industry develop a similar or alternative program that is just as effective but reaching an even younger audience? Does YCC need to include more leadership development instead of focusing only on industry awareness and expansion of understanding?

Successful organizations must sustain themselves by addressing the costs associated with serving in volunteer roles within organizations, particularly the issue of the time commitment. Two participants suggested developing more leaders to share and spread the responsibilities of leadership, so that industry leadership does not remain such a large burden on a few people. This requires organizations to break traditions and habits and get away from the way things have always been, and this type of change does not come easily in a longstanding organization.

Arrogance is a turn-off in this industry, and should be considered when selecting leaders and hiring staff for beef industry organizations. Keeping in mind that there are differences between confidence, pride and arrogance, humble people typically do not respond well to others with inflated egos.

Further research should be conducted to further explore and understand patterns of participation and leadership in agricultural organizations, especially the perceptions and motivations of volunteers. Quantitative data could be gathered through survey research to further analyze producers' perceptions of and commitment to serving in industry organizations. These questions of participation and leadership in agricultural organizations should be asked to producer members in other fields and compared to these cattle producers to see where issues, challenges and needs align, and to determine how the agricultural industry can take a holistic, unified approach to leadership development.

Beef industry organizations, like nearly all agricultural organizations, are comprised of and led by agriculturalists who give up their time and resources to better their industry through involvement in these organizations. They are unique in that the organization serves the interests of those producer members who serve the organization by paying dues, participating, volunteering and leading. This research provides more insight into the people surrounding agricultural organizations, both inside and outside, and their voices, opinions and perceptions can be used to strengthen the organization by better recruiting and retaining members and volunteer leaders, which in turn strengthens the agricultural industry through producer unity and effective legislative and issues management work.

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#### Title

The Cube: an integrated framework for leadership studies curriculum at BA, MA, and Ph.D. levels.

Presentation track: Research paper

#### Abstract

Leadership Studies, as an emerging academic discipline, must make curriculum and pedagogy decisions with an eye toward discipline unity. Acknowledging this, the faculty of Leadership Studies who are responsible for three different levels of education crafted a mutually beneficial curriculum framework which has three dimensions that form the bare bones of our program philosophy, curriculum structure, evaluation rubrics, and commitment to praxis.

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Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings, if accepted.

No, please do not consider this proposal for a poster if not accepted.

The first author is not able to serve as a reviewer. However, the second author, Josh Armstrong, will serve as a reviewer.

Yes, I am willing to serve as a session facilitator at the conference.

# THE CUBE: AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP STUDIES CURRICULUM AT BA, MA, AND PH.D. LEVELS

## Introduction

Within academia, there is a growing movement toward exploring leadership studies as a discipline of study through developing leadership curriculum, expanding course offerings, and creating majors, minors and degrees around the study of leadership (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Gonzaga University, a Jesuit institution, offers programs in leadership studies at the B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. level. The rapid growth of the study of leadership in academic circles during the past forty years has spawned an array of approaches to the teaching of leadership. This has given rise to many definitions of “leadership” and many different types of “leadership programs”. We are at a critical point in clarifying the scope and foundation of the ongoing scholarly dialogue that is necessary to understand and integrate leadership studies.

Offering such a variety of leadership programs at different levels is sometimes challenging. Below is a scenario that illustrates this challenge: Walking down the main classroom hallway in the Tilford Center at Gonzaga University, one notices that there are three classrooms being used. In one classroom about twenty-five young, traditional age undergraduates sit on pillows placed around the space as the teacher reflects on a slide projected behind him. The slide contains this quote: *The best test of servant-leadership is: do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?* The subject of the undergraduate course is servant-leadership, and the quote is by Robert Greenleaf (1978), the individual who originally coined the term.

In the next classroom over, a group of fifteen graduate students sit in traditional desks arranged in a circle. The majority of graduate students are working professionals in a variety of organizations, and they take courses in the evening after work. In each of their hands is a piece of paper that contains the same quote by Greenleaf (1978) that was projected on the screen in the undergraduate classroom: *The best test of servant-leadership is: do those served grow as persons?* This is also a course whose subject matter is, in part, about servant-leadership.

Across the hallway there is a classroom which has eight people sitting around a seminar table. Coming from a variety of backgrounds, both academically and professionally, these are doctoral students participating in a seminar. On the white board at the head of the table is written, *The best test of servant-leadership is: do those served grow as persons?* The topic for this doctoral seminar is servant-leadership, the same subject that is being engaged by the group of M.A. students and the group of B.A. students on the other side of the hallway.

Questions of level and depth and pedagogy confront these faculty who share hallways, meetings and resources. How does one topic such as servant-leadership serve as the focus of learning at three different academic levels? Would students who earned their B.A. degrees from Gonzaga, who went on to earn their M.A. degree, and then continued on to complete their doctoral degree, be presented with new learning each time they registered for a course on servant-leadership? The situation calls for careful decision-making at curriculum and program

levels. What are the differences in student learning goals at each level, and how do these goals inform how teachers structure their courses? What ‘content’ sits behind the overarching theme of (in this example) Servant Leadership? What is the most effective way to teach and learn about this topic? These are the questions that this paper will examine as they point to a larger problem; the exploration of leadership studies as an emerging academic discipline.

## **Background**

Leadership studies as a discipline continues to struggle with disparate interpretations and formulations of leadership, leadership studies, leadership development, and leadership research. While some (e.g., Northouse, 2004; Sternberg, Antonakis, & Cianciolo, 2004) have made laudable efforts at pulling the field together, others have observed (e.g., Chemers, 1997; Harter, 2006; Yammarino, et al., 2005) that the lack of a definition of leadership and its domain of study, has made it difficult to achieve a methodological coherence.

Other interdisciplinary fields experience similar issues. Reflection on these struggles helps identify crucial elements to consider when strategizing and theorizing a way out of the field’s definitional and theoretical thicket. One example is found in Turner’s (2006) recent analysis of sociology as a discipline:

...a strong discipline reveals a number of properties: consensus over epistemology, common view of the nature of the reality to be studied, agreed upon research problems, agreed upon methodologies, common discursive forms, accepted theories as the best explanation of phenomena, accepted and cumulative bodies of knowledge, control over professionals’ access to research funds and journal outlets for scholarly work, control over prestige-giving, credentials, and career tracks. (p. 24)

Leadership studies as an emerging discipline still must develop these basic properties as articulated above and in our view must certainly begin with a discussion of epistemology. As will be argued below, current trends in leadership education demand that we understand basic assumptions about leadership prior to engaging in its study.

The Gonzaga University leadership studies programs are making an effort to unify the curriculum such that our assumptions about epistemology, reality, and the meaning and value of our work are both shared and continually critiqued. In order to facilitate this unification we have developed a hybrid framework that draws from each of our departments’ fundamental theory and curriculum constructs. The effort here serves to work toward a theoretical and practical set of ideas that have potential to both bind programs together within our individual curriculum structures as well as integrate a wide variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. This process of program’s finding their own identities and engaging in curriculum review is ongoing in our School and by no means a smooth and conflict free process. Engaging in this work has surfaced for all of us valuable points of sameness and difference that are making our individual programs stronger and our collective identity as a School more clear.

## Description of the Practice

The following is an overview of how the hybrid framework, with the three dimensions that form the bare bones of our program philosophy, curriculum structure, evaluation rubrics, and commitment to leadership praxis, works.

### *Content*

This frame or dimension is meant to capture that broad movement in western thought that has historically both integrated and fragmented what Wilbur (1998) calls the Value Spheres. These ‘spheres’ cohere in western thought as investigations into being (ontology or what a thing ‘is’), knowing (epistemology), and valuing (axiology). Our content domain is an effort to make sure that we adequately incorporate the sense of these modernist categories through a rigorous vetting of our curriculum content through the filters of understanding what a particular element of knowledge ‘is’, how it is ‘known’ and what is its ‘value’. It should be noted, however, that we are aware that this perspective is but one perspective (albeit a powerful one) and our School in general is committed to staying on the leading edge of literature and theoretical advances in postmodern, post-structural, and posthumanist thought (Barad, 2007; Cooper, 2005). Our content frame emerged from the authors’ dialogue as *seeing clearly, responding ethically and serving willingly*.

- If, as an overall goal, we can guide students toward an ability to see problems and possibilities, theory and practice, individuals and social structures from a variety of perspectives, they will be able to see more clearly.
- If, as an overall goal, we can guide students from a position of clear seeing to the next place, a place that requires an examination of response, we can offer ways of thinking to arrive at an ethical response.
- Finally, our assumption is that when an ethical response is seen clearly, one is compelled toward a willingness to serve others. These content categories make up one dimension of the hybrid curriculum framework.

### *Context*

This dimension is meant to capture relevant topics and issues in leadership studies that support a meaningful and workable strategy toward defining and working competently with a ‘unit of analysis’. On the way to this simplification we have divided our subject matter and focus into three broad areas. These areas or domains correspond to the individual, group, and collective level of human experience and are useful in planning courses and developing curriculum. At the individual level we can study our own felt experience of being present to one another (Altman & Rogoff, 1987; Benhabib, 1992; Brothers, 1995; Griffin, 1989; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Mingers, 1995). We can investigate our own stories (Bruner, 1990), histories, and personal narratives (Sparrowe, 2005), and the ‘objective’ views of rational and naturalist thinking on the nature of the individual person – including the brain, mind, and body as a whole.

At the group level we begin to study literature in organizational science, group process, and the myriad ways that human beings collaborate and work together to meet their individual and collective needs (Argyris, 1993, 1999; Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Mead, 1934; Hayek, 1945; Schein, 1997, 2004; Weber, 1958). We are particularly attentive to how the conversation around leadership changes when we move from the personal to the organizational or group dimension.

The widest view in the Context dimension is large groups and collectives -- the global perspective. Scholarship here is filtered through the lenses of policy studies, history, political science, economics, and the full sweep of academic disciplines devoted to understanding the 'whole' (Eitzen & Baca Zinn, 2006; Hawken, Lovins, & Lovins, 1999; Stone, 2002).

It is the integration of these perspectives into a coherent framework that grounds a fruitful and generative discussion about the discipline of leadership studies. These distinctions also each suggest an affinity with areas within the Content dimension discussed above (see the graphic of our 'cube' below for examples of how these domains can possibly intersect). Our curriculum is designed with an eye to making sense of the Context domain through study of relevant Content materials that reflect the wholeness of human beliefs, knowledge, and values.

### *Process*

Our developing views on the process dimension encompass the increasing interest of human inquiry into the dynamic, complex, and emergent nature of the world and our experience. Literatures in, for example, sociology, complexity science, organization science, and philosophy reflect the processual and contingent nature of 'reality' (Emirbayer, 1997; Stacey, 2001; Rescher, 1996).

For us, the Process dimension guides both theory development and pedagogy at the BA, MA, and PhD levels and our efforts to understand the phenomenology inherent in our ongoing participation with each other, with students, and with our larger community. Like the other components of the hybrid curriculum framework, the Process dimension has three domains: empowerment, collaboration and dialogue.

Empowerment is a key goal of undergraduate leadership education. Power and the use of power (Barton & Tusting, 2005; Freire, 2000, 1992; Giddens, 1979; Illich, 1973, 1971) are central questions in leadership studies and are a core element of our curriculum. From a teaching and learning perspective we are focused, particularly in our undergraduate leadership program, on the goal of learners, students, and candidates all experiencing their own power as individuals, thinkers, and community members. This requires a recognition by faculty and administration that institutional constraints and opportunities affect the individual learner in a myriad of ways that require ongoing reflection and discernment regarding the gap between institutional intentions and outcomes (Kerr, 1995). It further asks of us that our methods and curriculum reflect a widespread shift in instructor based, place based, and 'mastery' of content approaches to education.

From the undergraduate perspective, the goal is that students understand and apply a useful conceptual framework of leadership studies, and feel capable of operationalizing leadership in specific situations, as well as understanding, critiquing, and responding to the leadership of others. The undergraduate at graduation, therefore, has found her “voice”—i.e., the individual feels that she has something to offer society. She is able to articulate and defend her meaning in the context of other students articulating and defending different meanings.

Collaboration is a key goal of graduate leadership education. It goes without saying that human beings are social and that living, working, and being with others is a vital part of human experience. In civil society the expectations are that people will get along and collaborate with skill, sensitivity, and good purpose. Our general approach to a collaborative and participatory social matrix is both theory and practiced based. From Aristotle’s notions of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) to the ethic of care articulated by Nell Noddings (1984, 2006), the challenge, opportunity, and necessity of people working together in harmony are fundamental to an education in leadership studies. The ubiquitous and rapid evolution of social networks in contemporary global cultures is astonishing (Shirky, 2008) and the increasing ability of scholars to understand those networks (Fuhse, 2009) makes understanding the nature of collaboration imperative.

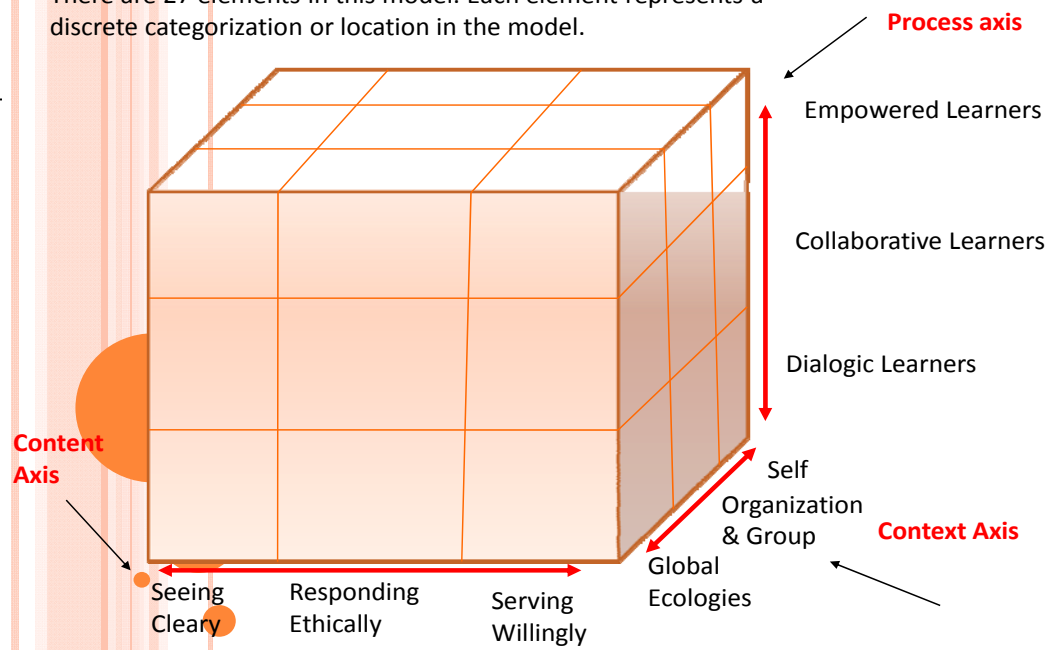
In the specific context of graduate leadership education, collaboration describes the desired identification and relationship with a community of scholars. The graduate student in leadership studies enters her program of study with a clear sense of the efficacy of her own voice, and leaves with commitment to the value of understanding and engaging with different voices in the conversation. The student can expand her processing of the different arguments to develop a synthesis that includes relevant literature written by scholars in the appropriate field of study.

Dialogue is a key goal of doctoral leadership education. Building on the choices, skills, and habits of empowerment and collaboration, it is our belief that human beings are capable of deep and sustained conscious interaction with each other that extends beyond habitual behaviors and assumptions, divergent or convergent world views, or a self or other centered emphasis on relationality. This type of intentional and serious engagement with the ‘other’ can be understood as dialogue (Bohm, 1996; Grudin, 1996) and requires a number of related capacities and skills. Qualities of mindfulness, equanimity, resilience, and courage are needed for a pedagogy of dialogic relationality. A chief prerequisite for dialogue is a resolve to stay in conversation and contact with the ‘strange’ other. Dialogue is most concentrated as a practice at the doctoral level.

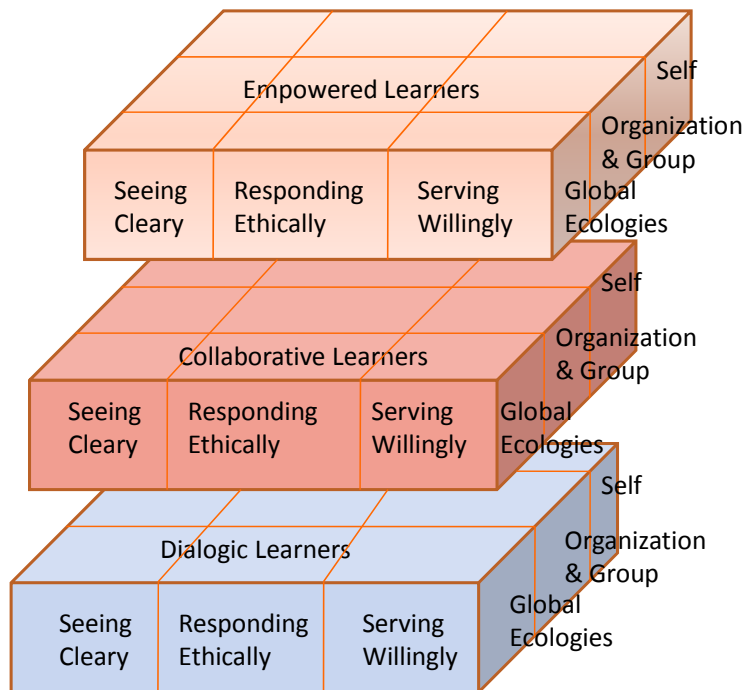
For doctoral level education we encourage and facilitate the development of skills associated with a dialogic view of the world. Core to these skills is the recognition of and participation with the emergence of shared meaning in interactions. Through the cultivation of respect, profound listening, and a deep awareness of one’s own biases we seek the ideal of continuous reflection in the Jesuit tradition embraced by Gonzaga University.



There are 27 elements in this model. Each element represents a discrete categorization or location in the model.



Gonzaga University



Gonzaga University

Figure 1: The Cube: Each axis orients us to the components of the model

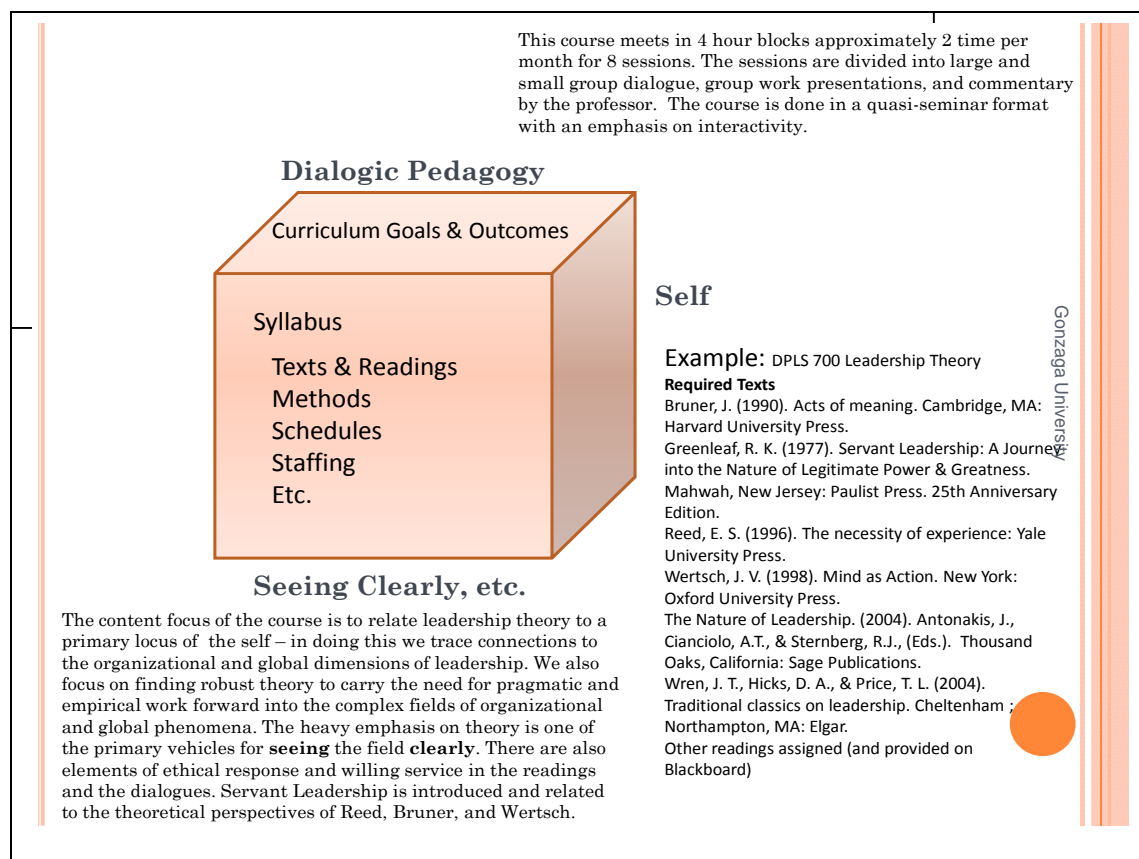
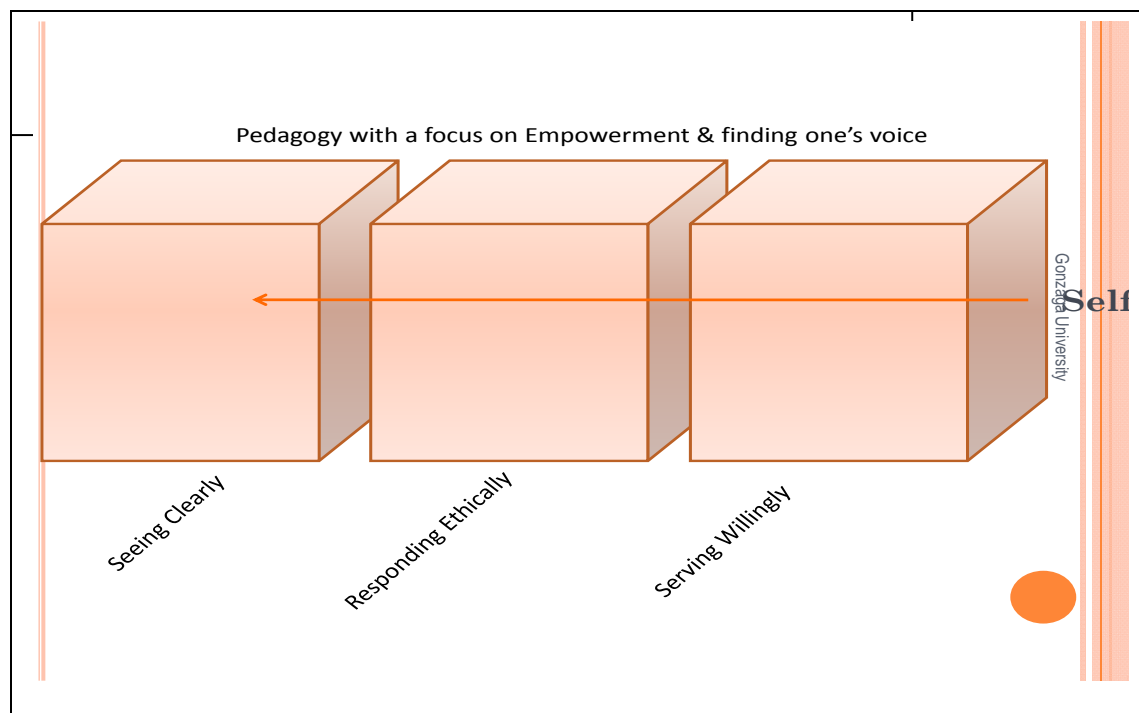


Figure 2: We can drill down to increasing specificity in terms of course content

Beyond understanding her own meaning of the experience, and beyond a reasonable synthesis of the different meanings emerging from a group, the doctoral level scholar can identify what is missing in the articulated meanings, as well as in the synthesis. The scholar can find other voices to bring into the dialogue. The scholar can create a new theory that transcends the synthesis of diverse meanings and seeks to probe beyond the constraints of ordinary consciousness. The starting point may be empowerment, and a key marker on the journey may be collaboration, but the destination of leadership studies, we believe, is dialogue.

### **Applying the Model**

As mentioned above, leadership studies is a young and interdisciplinary discipline in a state of flux. The field can be found at various places and at different levels across colleges and universities. It is not uncommon to find an undergraduate leadership program in a business school and at the same institution, an MA in leadership in a school of education. The curriculum framework of content, context, and process made up of seeing clearly, responding ethically, serving willingly at personal, organizational, and global foci and toward empowerment, collaboration and dialogue, has a unifying guiding potential.

We are hopeful that this model will be useful for curriculum committees and leadership teams. Within this framework discussions of course content or program goals can commence with a set of guiding questions. If a faculty person would like to offer a new course, colleagues have a way of talking with that faculty about how the proposed course fits the program goals or what differentiates the level of the course from those in other programs. Conversations of this nature build a culture of consistency, accountability, coherence, depth and satisfaction. The conversations, while fluid and adaptable, may sound like this: Is your course more focused on the personal, global, or organizational? Or, how does the use of the same leadership textbook differ within the context of undergraduate and graduate level goals?

We also intend to use this framework to map or keep track of course development and application. Courses in a given program can be mapped to the framework to find overlapping course competencies or missing course competencies. One leadership course may focus on the personal while the next course in a sequence may focus on the global. In this situation, the framework helps a person consider that he or she may need to offer a leadership course with an organizational emphasis. For example, a capstone course could be added with a focus on personal, organizational, and global perspectives of an issue in leadership studies with assurance that these concepts would be familiar to students. Conversely, the framework is adaptable to fit existing courses to program goals. For example, after mapping a program's curriculum to the framework, the whole program may emerge in a new light and can perhaps be more clearly articulated. For example, a young leadership program might be able to see after mapping courses to this framework, that the program is more about the organizational perspective and more about serving willingly than it had originally thought.

Locating courses within the framework also allows faculty a way to consider other perspectives for decision-making and/or understanding student concerns. Why do students avoid certain classes? Without the framework, a person may run through the usual list: course topic, the ratio of number of courses offered and students enrolled, and teacher preference. With the framework, we have another perspective with which to examine problems and opportunities.

Our experience with these ideas at Gonzaga are in their infancy. We have developed this thinking through a series of conversations and meetings with a small group of department Chairs and have made two significant presentations to the entire faculty. After much feedback and review we have begun work to more intentionally work with the model as a guide to course and program development. As indicated above this process is not without its difficulties. Engaging a heterogeneous (we are an interdisciplinary group of communications scholars, educators, psychologists, sociologists, etc.) faculty in a conversation about these larger institutional and theoretical issues is challenging. We will report back on our progress!

### **Conclusions**

The foregoing suggests an integrated framework and model that clarifies content, context, and process dimensions of leadership studies. This framework is the start of a unifying 'boundary object' (Star & Griesemer, 1989) capable of accommodating in leadership studies the variety of disciplines, orientations, perspectives, and world views that make up this still fragmented field. As the field grows, we will need theoretical frameworks and models to help us unify the wide variety of knowledge and information that is Leadership Studies. We hope that this model furthers the conversation on the development of these kinds of tools.

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2. Connecting the Dots of Leadership Through Interview Assignments
3. Presentation Track - Practice Paper
4. Abstract:

This paper describes an assignment, *interview with a leader*, the presenters have incorporated into several leadership courses. Because the assignment is grounded in constructivist and social learning theories, students learn to examine the complexities of leadership while they apply leadership theory to practice.

5. Biographical sketches:

Smith holds a BA. in Psychology (Furman University), M.Ed. in Student Personnel in Higher Education (University of Georgia), and Ph.D. in Higher Education (Georgia State University).

Roebuck holds a BS in Business Education and MA in Business Education (Truman State University), and Ph.D. in Business Education (Georgia State University).

6. Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings, if accepted.
7. Yes, please consider the proposal for a poster if not accepted.
8. Yes, we are willing to serve as reviewers for this conference.
9. Yes, we are willing to serve as session facilitators at the conference.



## Connecting the Dots of Leadership Through Interview Assignments

### Introduction

The academic study of leadership is a pendulum that has swung from debates regarding whether leadership can even be taught (Doh, 2003; Dalzo-Parks, 2005) to how best to teach leadership (Danzig, 1999; Getz, 2009). Curricular and co-curricular examples of college student leadership development are abundant in the literature (Day, 2001; Eich, 2008; Riggio, Cuiliia, & Sorenson, 2003; Rost & Barker, 2000). The descriptions of these examples are comprehensive and usually focus on program outcomes and assessment (Black & Earnest, 2009; Eich, 2008). While such a focus is helpful for big picture thinking about effectively teaching leadership, what is scant in the literature are descriptions of the smaller components (e.g. descriptions of assignments and activities) that comprise the day-to-day teaching of leadership. This paper describes one technique, *interviews with leaders*, which the authors have found to be an effective tool for addressing several course learning outcomes.

At the conclusion of the assignments students can...:

- 1) explain how factors such as gender and culture affect all aspects of leadership.
- 2) discuss the issues specifically pertaining to men and women in leadership positions.
- 3) describe how leaders impact group process.
- 4) describe how followers can influence leaders.
- 5) discuss leading through change.
- 6) converse about ethical responsibilities of leaders.
- 7) suggest strategies for leader and group renewal.
- 8) articulate connections between leadership theory and practice.
- 9) outline current issues important to developing and future theories of leadership.
- 10) share how interacting with successful leaders gave them insight into the challenges and opportunities of leadership.

### Background

The *interview with a leader* assignments have been used several times at a large, public, masters level, Southeastern university in the following leadership courses: 1) an undergraduate foundations course centered around theories and models of leadership, 2) an undergraduate course focusing on global and cultural contexts of leadership, and 3) a graduate course emphasizing women's leadership. In each of the three courses, the interview assignment was grounded in constructivist (Bush, 2006) and social learning (Bandura, 1977) theories. As such, the assignments guided students to reflect upon how they constructed, defined and made meaning (constructivism) of the practice of leadership by learning from the experiences of others (social learning).

### Description of Assignments

Students selected the leaders they wanted to interview. Selections ranged from former teachers, coaches, bosses, work colleagues, community leaders, and pastors. The students used an interview guide to facilitate their dialogue with their chosen leader in interviews that lasted

from one to four hours. Following the interview, students were also encouraged or required to thank their interviewees in writing.

After completing the thank you letters, students wrote reflective papers addressing the various aspects of leadership which were relevant to their course. In all three courses, students considered how the leadership theories and models they were learning connected to the actual practice of leadership. Papers were evaluated utilizing the criteria outlined below.

*Interview assignment from Foundations of Leadership undergraduate course*

Students select a leader to interview. The only restriction is they may not choose an immediate family member or college student. The leader signs a form that provides the professor with contact information. The following questions serve as both an interview guide and the framework for the reflective paper:

1. What is the name of the person you interviewed, with what organization or entity is he or she associated, and what sort of leadership role does he or she have?
2. Why did you select the person you chose to interview?
3. Find out the following from the leader you interview and address each aspect in your paper:
  - self-description of his or her leadership style
  - how he or she obtained this position of leadership
  - personal philosophy or view of leadership
  - how the leader developed this philosophy (e.g. other people, situations, etc.)
  - opinion as to whether or not the leader's own gender, culture, and/or ethnicity impacted his or her development of this personal philosophy/view of leadership, or how or she leads others
  - how, as a leader, he or she interacts with and is impacted by followers
  - thoughts on group process and leadership
  - what are the practical day-to-day issues of leadership with which he or she deals
  - thoughts on leading through change
  - thoughts on personal or group renewal strategies
  - ethical responsibilities of a leader
  - advice for you as a student studying leadership
  - anything else that might interest you
4. What did you learn from this interview that made the most impact on you and why?
5. How does what you learned in the interview either validate, refute, or reinforce what you have learned about leadership in this class? Make specific reference to theories, models, etc.

Evaluation of assignment is based on: 1) the depth to which all of the above questions were answered (the most weight is given to numbers four and five), and 2) the degree to which the assignment instructions were followed (e.g. paper length, font, spacing and margin specifications). Points are deducted for spelling and excessive grammatical or mechanical errors. The paper is worth 18 percent of the overall grade.

*Interview assignment from Leadership in a Global Society undergraduate course*

Students engage in an intercultural experience by participating in an event or events sponsored by a culture with which they do not normally identify. The goal is for students to actively participate and interact with the people of the selected culture for a minimum of four hours. The professor discusses examples of experiences that do and do not qualify for this assignment.

Students also interview a person who is a leader for the event or organization. The leader signs a form that provides the professor with contact information. In the interview, students learn the following from the leader:

- the history of the event they attended
- how the leader came to be involved with this event
- how the leader obtained this position of leadership
- how the leader interacts with followers, and to what extent the cultural norms of the group he or she leads affect this process. Students ask specifically about conflict resolution and decision-making processes.
- what the leader would like the majority culture to know about the culture/group he or she represents
- anything else that might be interesting to the student

Students are encouraged to formally thank the person they interviewed (in writing) for his or her time, and for the opportunity to participate in the cultural experience. The students share what they most valued about the experience.

Upon completion of the experience and interview, students write an essay addressing the following:

- descriptive details of the event (date, time, and location)
- the name of the person interviewed and the leadership position of that person
- why they chose the particular experience
- what reservations, if any, they had about completing the assignment
- what they observed, how they felt, and if applicable, what they did during the experience
- how this experience challenged or confirmed any previously held notions they might have had about this culture/group (honesty is encouraged)
- highlights of what they learned in the interview, spending the most time discussing what the leader had to say about leading his or her cultural group
- whether or not what they observed or learned correlated with their textual and classroom learning
- what they personally learned or gained from the experience

Students also give a 15-minute class presentation describing what they did and learned from their experience. Students are encouraged to use a visual aid.

Evaluation of this assignment contains several components (experience, interview, paper and presentation). For the experience and interview, students receive either full credit or no credit. They must, however, submit their plans and receive prior approval for the experience; failure to do results in a ten point deduction. Essay evaluation is based on; 1) the depth to which

the student answered all of the above questions, and 2) the degree to which the assignment instructions were followed (e.g. paper length, font, spacing and margin specifications). Students lose points for spelling and excessive grammatical or mechanical errors. The professor evaluates the student's presentation on the level to which the student followed the requirements (e.g. time length and focus on what he or she learned). The entire assignment counts for 26 percent of the overall grade.

*Interview assignment from Women's Leadership Lab graduate course*

Students conduct an hour interview with a practicing female leader. The leader signs a form that provides the professor with contact information. After the interviews are scheduled, students ask the interviewees to answer the questions below in preparation for the interview.

On a scale of one (very rarely) to five (constantly), can you rate the extent to which you use the following skills or behaviors during your workday?

Managing personal stress	Orchestrating change
Managing time	Delegating
Facilitating group or team decision making	Setting goals
Making private decisions	Listening
Recognizing and defining problems	Managing performance
Using oral communication skills	Coaching and mentoring
Interviewing	Managing conflict
Motivating others	Empathizing
Building teams	Achieving self-awareness
Conducting meetings	Solving problems
Gaining and using power	Negotiating
Thinking creatively	Inspiring a shared vision
Fostering collaboration	Challenging the process
Modeling the way	Encouraging others
Using written communication skills	Doing e-mail
Doing daily reflection and renewal	

Students ask the following interview questions.

1. What comprises a typical day at work?
2. What are the most critical problems you face as a female leader?
3. What are the major reasons female leaders fail in positions like yours?
4. What impact do you perceive women have made in your particular area or discipline?
5. What are the outstanding skills or abilities of effective female leaders you have known?
6. If you had to train someone to replace you in your current job, what key abilities would you focus on?

7. What is your personal philosophy/definition of leadership?
8. Have you observed differences in the way men and women lead? If yes, what differences have you noted? If no, why do you think this is so?
9. How did you first get involved in leadership?
10. Who is your role-model/mentor when it comes to leadership?
11. What has been your biggest challenge in leadership?
12. What has been your biggest celebration in leadership?
13. What are some resources that every leader should know about?
14. What are some words of advice that you would give to a new leader or an aspiring female leader?

Within one week, students send thank-you letters following the principles of effective business writing. After the thank you letters are sent, students capture their learning in a three to four page report. The reflective report provides interviewee background information, discusses the interviewee's responses to the questions, highlights five key lessons learned from this leader, compares and contrasts his or her philosophy of leadership with the interviewee's philosophy, shares what has been learned from being an interviewer, and concludes with insights drawn from the experience.

The professor evaluates the assignment based upon content and mechanics. Students lose points for grammatical and mechanical errors as well as lacking depth and reflection in their responses. The assignment is 16 percent of the overall grade.

## **Results**

Through a comparison of student papers, the professors' reflective course narratives, and end-of-course evaluations in which students often talked about the interview assignment, the authors detected several repeating themes or outcomes. The first notable outcome was that students began to develop a deeper understanding of leadership. In alignment with constructivist theory (Bush, 2006), their old views of leadership were challenged. They began to think of leadership as something more than a title or position and started to realize it was something they could learn. Students wrote about the complexities of leadership and expressed an admiration of and deep appreciation for the leaders who had influenced their lives. One student commented, "Mr. Bell really helped validate leadership as a whole for me, and showed me that leadership is a process and is something that comes in many different forms." Another student wrote, "He has opened my eyes to the things that I know I can accomplish. I have now set my standards higher to reach the goals and aspirations that will make me a great leader."

The second outcome, in congruence with Danzig's (1997) research, indicated that the experiences and stories shared in interviews provided "a way for novices to move from the superficial to deeper issues embedded in their studies. Stories lead to new understanding of how expertise is gained in the real world by linking the study of leadership to professional practice" (pg. 123). Students clearly demonstrated an understanding of how specific leadership theories and models were either intentionally or unintentionally applied in their interviewees' daily leadership practices. A graduate student had this comment, "Nancy told a few stories during the interview that helped me recognize her ability as a leader is so great because she is in tune with herself." Similarly, an undergraduate remarked, "Becky's leadership style re-enforces what I have learned in this leadership class. It's almost exactly like the circular flow of information diagram." Another undergraduate stated:

After this interview, I realized that a lot of what Danielle was saying we had learned in class and in the book, for example Leader-Member Exchange theory....it was refreshing to see that a lot of what happens in the real world can actually be learned in school.

While another graduate student stated, "As I was conducting my interview, I felt like I was listening to a chapter from our assigned books."

The third outcome was in alignment with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which suggests that errors are reduced or eliminated when we observe others, reflect on their actions, and then use their experiences to make decisions about our own responses. Students often wrote that post- interview, they began thinking about their own leadership actions in light of the insights and experiences their interviewees had shared with them. For example, one undergraduate student wrote, "I also thought that using political power and coercion methods, in certain situations, would be the best way to accomplish the task, but after talking to Elise, I no longer believe that either of those two methods works effectively." While a graduate student had this comment:

This interview with my Fleet Operations Manager gave me a lot of insight into what she does on a daily basis. I discovered through this process that the underlying skills to complete our jobs are very much the same, even though our responsibilities are vastly different. It made me realize that I am currently honing the skills and behaviors I need to become an effective leader. I was also able to learn exactly what the definition of leadership is directly from a leader, not a book.

The fourth commonly mentioned outcome was that many students went beyond the assignment requirements and shadowed or visited with their interviewees more than once. This was most often true of students who were interested in the same field as their interviewee. In one instance, however, the student and his interviewed leader shared a passion for Chinese culture. As a result, the student signed up for a study abroad trip to China.

### **Recommendations**

The authors have utilized the interview assignments several times, but continue to revise the assignments each semester. Our most recent recommendation is that students obtain professor approval about who they will be interviewing early in the semester. Some students procrastinate and end up selecting someone to interview that may not have been the best choice

(e.g. a relative or co-worker). In fact, one of the authors moved her interview assignment to be the first assignment due. She found when the assignment was due at the end of semester, students rushed through conducting the interview and writing the paper. By moving the assignment to the beginning of the semester, students often refer to their interviews throughout the semester.

The authors also recommend that a database be maintained listing who students interviewed. Some of the interviewees expressed a great interest in the leadership courses in which the students are enrolled. They would make excellent future guest speakers or perhaps be willing to serve as official mentors to students.

On a related note, the authors also recommend that professors follow-up with students who went above and beyond the assignment requirements. It would be interesting to find out if they are still shadowing the person they interviewed or pursuing their passion for a new culture to which they were exposed. These students would also make great panel participants at a conference, or serve as guest speakers in future sections of the courses.

Finally, the authors recommend professors explore the possibility of taking the necessary steps to turn the interview assignments into an official research study. The rich interview data would provide a solid basis for a qualitative study. Cross-cultural, gender and disciplinary perspectives on leadership are among the many possible facets that could be examined.

### **Conclusion**

Conducting interviews with leaders meets several of the attributes that Eich (2008) noted comprise a high-quality leadership program – connection, reflection, discussion and encountering episodes of difference. Furthermore, some of the interviewees, who are colleagues of the authors, commented that they enjoyed talking to the students and sharing their experiences. These professors found the assignment validating and the resulting reflection professionally renewing.

In conclusion, the authors believe the words from their students sum up the value of using interviews to connect leadership theory and application. One student stated:

In my role in HR, I can use the learning I gained from this interview on a daily basis. From facilitating meetings to leading projects, my success will come from effective communication and preparation. Both of which are key skills that Joann has shared as important to leadership.

Another student wrote, “I enjoyed the interview process for this assignment. I believe the best way to gain insight from a leader is to have a conversation; and this assignment was the spark that made that conversation happen.”

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## **Developing Life-Long Learners Through Personal Growth Projects**

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“I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.” – Mark Twain

### **Abstract**

Leaders must become life-long learners if they are to remain effective in an environment that is both global and changing at an exponential pace. As Day (1992) noted, personal growth is essential in the leadership development process. In a personal leadership development course, students are required to complete a personal growth project in order to add to their personal leadership development. In this assignment, students choose a project that will stretch their personal comfort zone and allow their strengths to be utilized in a new way. Reflection is a key element of the process in which they tie their experiences with the personal growth project to their values, strengths, and leadership behaviors.

### **Introduction**

The need for leaders to remain current in their field has always been important, but technology has increased the rate of change to blinding speed. In addition, the half-life of knowledge gained in college has shrunk to two to five years for many disciplines (Fischer, 1999). Leaders must become life-long learners if they are to remain effective in an environment that is both global and changing at an exponential pace. Not only must leaders continue their personal development, but it is essential that they create an environment where their followers embrace personal growth as well. As Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, and Smith note, an organization develops with its people (1994).

Leadership development, as defined by Brungardt (1996) and Conger (1992), involves both cognitive and affective assimilation. Ying and Yin (2010) stress colleges and universities should pay as much attention to the non-cognitive (affective) lessons as they do content (cognitive). Accreditations in higher education have begun to look at the integration of affective and cognitive activities in the classroom. Kuh (2001) examined the National Study for Student Engagement and found courses which integrate both affective and cognitive activities. Such courses not only leave a lasting impact on students, the students assimilate course content into their lives at a higher cognitive level.

This paper discusses how Personal Growth Projects (PGP) can be used to teach leadership students of any age how to become more self-directed, gain new skills, and develop a habit of life-long learning. A search of the literature did not reveal any research to date on the use of personal growth projects for this purpose.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Kouzes and Posner state that “The instrument of leadership is the self, and mastery of the art of leadership comes from mastery of the self.” Self-discovery and, eventually, self-confidence are “really awareness of and faith in your own powers. These powers become clear and strong only as you work to identify and develop them” (2007, p. 344).

Fischer describes life-long learning as a mindset and habit that people must acquire. It includes self-directed learning, learning on demand, informal learning, and collaborative and organizational learning (1999). Such self-growth is what Peter Senge calls *Personal Mastery* –

“learning to expand our personal capacity to create the results we most desire, and creating an organizational environment which encourages all its members to develop themselves toward the goals and purposes they choose” (Senge, et al., 1994, p. 6).

Conger (1992) describes four key components and primary approaches to leadership development: (1) personal growth, (2) conceptual understanding, (3) feedback, and (4) skill development. The first approach, personal growth, makes a direct correlation to self-discovery and life-long learning. In personal growth, leaders must participate in activities that stretch their boundaries. Simple activities are not enough to complete the development; one must also reflect on behaviors, personal values, and desires. Allen and Hartman (2008) discuss the infusion of Conger’s components into various leadership development activities. They specifically address individual reflection within personal growth activities as a needed and integral part of the leadership development process.

### **Background**

*Personal Leadership Development* is a three credit-hour course focusing on self-discovery and personal growth. In addition to learning about themselves as leaders, students are encouraged to develop a habit of personal growth and development through the identification and completion of a personal growth project (PGP). Developing the habit of personal growth helps students keep abreast of new information in their chosen field and gain new skills or abilities that lead to promotions. Life-long learning can also impact the creativity and innovation potential of people. Continuous learning fosters a deeper understanding of self as students pursue authenticity in their lives. The personal growth project (PGP) was developed by Sumer Odom (2005). A similar activity was utilized in an outdoor learning and leadership course. Ms. Odom created the assignment and corresponding rubrics, which each instructor modifies to fit his or her personal and course objectives.

### **Description of Practice**

The primary objective of the personal growth project (PGP) is to foster an attitude of life-long learning among students. By building a mentality of personal growth in themselves, they are more likely to encourage that mentality in their followers. A secondary purpose of the PGP is to encourage students to become self-directed in their learning. Becoming a life-long learner means becoming adept at self-directed and informal learning – a process that is fundamentally different from traditional classroom learning.

Students are responsible for directing their own learning in their PGP. They must find sources of information on their chosen topic. These resources may be people that they know with skill in their project area, coaches, formal lessons or classes, books and how-to manuals, or selected Internet sites. Identification of these resources is a critical part of their project proposal.

On the first day of class, students are asked to brainstorm a list of five things that they would like to learn if they had time. They are given until the next class to reflect on their list. During the second class, the Personal Growth Project is explained to them in greater detail. They are asked to choose one of the things that they would like to learn and prepare a one-page proposal detailing the project they plan to complete and why they chose that project. Students must describe how this project will be new and challenging to them, identify the resources they will

use to learn to how to do their project, and how they will document their personal growth. Part of their documentation must be a learning log or diary where they reflect on the learning process. The focus of the PGP is not necessarily on completing the project, but on the learning process.

The instructor provides feedback to each student, pointing them to resources for learning about their project and describing additional ways that they can document their learning. Some projects are rejected because they lack a learning component (e.g. tandem skydiving, bungee jumping), are too difficult to document the student's growth, or cannot be completed in the time allotted. Once their proposals are approved, students are free to begin working on their project. Students must spend a minimum of six clock hours on their project; however, most spend far more than the minimum time.

Students are required to submit a mid-semester progress report that describes their work on the project thus far. They also identify any barriers that have impeded their work and how they plan to overcome those barriers.

The students' final project report consists of their learning log, documentation of completion of the project, and a one-page reflection paper that answers the following questions:

- What have I learned about myself through this experience?
- How can I integrate what I've learned into my life?
- What did this project teach me about values congruence?
- How does this experience help me become a more authentic leader?
- How has this experience help me be a better leader?

### **Results to Date**

The Personal Growth Project has been used for six semesters and is very popular with most students. They enjoyed the autonomy of choosing their project, but readily made the connection to how their lives were made better because of the learning process. Students learned that leaders must make time for self-improvement and this has to be a conscious decision on the leader's part.

Students also discovered that they must incorporate much of the course content into the completion of their growth project. Students see the importance of the concepts taught in the lesson on achieving a balanced life as they try to find the time to devote to the completion of their project. Some students learn how to prioritize their activities while others find a way to integrate their project into their current schedule. Many students practice using their strengths (as identified by the Strengths Quest assessment) to complete their project while others discover their creative abilities.

Following is a sampling of Personal Growth Projects completed to date:

- Learning to cook (average of 5 meals)
- Obtaining certification in an area of interest (First Aid, CPR, Certified Handgun License)
- Reading to increase spirituality, establish better relationships
- Training to complete a marathon, triathlon, 5K or 10K run (must have never done these events)

- Learning a craft: crochet, painting, writing poetry/songs
- Learning a new hobby: golf, cycling, play an instrument, horseback riding, rock climbing
- Learning new skills: woodworking, home remodeling, basic construction, basic plumbing

### Conclusions

While a formal assessment has not been conducted, anecdotal evidence suggests that engaging students in a personal growth project has a positive impact on them. Students' final reflection papers indicate that some level of personal growth did occur and they are able to articulate how that growth impacted them personally and as a leader. One student described the impact of her project this way, "The project challenged my personal assumptions about my limits. It pushed me to overcome the mental models of my strengths." Another student made this self-observation, "As I completed my personal growth project, I realized my leadership behaviors were more masculine than feminine, which I am. It (the project) made me think about how I lead." These anecdotal statements show the assimilation of class content into the project and their leadership development. As noted by Kuh (2001) this is a benefit of having an activity which is focused on affective as well as cognitive development.

Follow-up conversations with students indicate that many of them continue using their new knowledge or skill well after the semester is over. For some, their project has turned into a hobby that they continue practice with passion. Other students embraced the concept of personal growth and have chosen new projects, demonstrating life-long learning even though they are no longer in the *Personal Leadership Development* class. A formal assessment of the impact of the personal growth project is planned for the end of the Spring 2010 semester.

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2. Preparation for Full Time Employment: A Capstone Experience for Students in Leadership Programs
3. Practice Paper
4. This practice paper describes the development and implementation of senior capstone course for communications and leadership development undergraduate students. The resulting course is a unique combination of experiential skill development and career preparation. The success of this course provides students with an important and meaningful culmination of their undergraduate experiences.

5. Karen J. Cannon is a third year doctoral student in agricultural communication at the University of Florida. As a graduate student, she has worked as a teaching and research assistant in Agricultural Education and Communications, focusing in communication and leadership. She is currently a teaching assistant for the departmental capstone course.

Greg Gifford is an assistant professor of leadership education in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at the University of Florida. Dr. Gifford received a Ph.D. in Human Sciences from the University of Nebraska. Current research projects include pedagogy in leadership education and effects of motivation on leadership engagement.

Dr. Nicole Stedman is an assistant professor leadership in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at the University of Florida. Prior to appointment at UF, she spent four years as an assistant professor of leadership at Texas A&M University. Her current research interests are how educators can create experiences to increase capacity for critical thinking in the leadership classroom; including the use artwork and other creative mediums.

Ricky W. Telg, professor in the University of Florida's Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, teaches courses in agricultural communication, instructional technologies, and news writing. Telg has received campus, regional, and national awards for teaching and has more than 50 refereed journal articles on distance education- and agricultural communication-related topics.

6. Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings, if accepted.
7. Yes, please consider the proposal for a poster if not accepted.
8. Nicole Stedman will serve as a reviewer.
9. Nicole Stedman and Greg Gifford will serve as facilitators.



# PREPARATION FOR FULL TIME EMPLOYMENT: A CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

## Introduction

Students in their final semester of the Communications and Leadership Development (CLD) undergraduate degree program in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication at the University of Florida are required to complete the senior capstone course or an approved internship. Due to the unpredictability of internships and a number of student complaints regarding internship experiences, the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication faculty sought to develop a unique capstone undergraduate experience which would include elements of career preparation, event planning and other professional skills. The capstone experience is intended to bring CLD students together during their final academic year and allow students to integrate and synthesize skills learned during their years as an undergraduate student.

A capstone course has been defined as “a culminating experience in which students are expected to integrate, extend, critique and apply knowledge gained in the major” (Wagenaar, 1992, p. 209). Fairchild and Taylor (2000) argued that capstone courses allow students to make meaningful connection between their coursework and professional industry. In a national Delphi study leadership faculty, Morgan, Rudd, & Kaufman (2004) found that faculty considered a capstone experience to be an essential component of a leadership program. Capstone experiences have focused on accomplishing a wide-range of objectives but according to Rhodus and Hoskins (1995) most commonly focus on 4 objectives including:

1. Synthesis of knowledge from formal and informal learning
2. Career preparation through experiential activities
3. Increase understanding of societal impacts, social and ethical issues
4. Provide greater appreciation for the connection of theory to research and practice

The career path of many students of leadership can be wide ranging since the nature of leadership is transferrable to many if not all types of industry. Capstone experiences which meet the needs of this type of diverse and growing student body are difficult to develop. However, Hall, Fairchild, Baker, Taylor and Litzenberg (2003) noted that, despite the challenges, “a capstone course should serve as both a synthesis and as a bridge. Thus, ideally, a capstone course should be scheduled in the last term of a student’s program, easing the transition between academic experiences and entry into a career or further study” (p. 48). The importance of providing leadership students with a meaningful and valuable capstone experience should not be overlooked. Nevertheless, to date, leadership educators have not coalesced around a single best practice for the senior capstone course.

The purpose of this practice paper is to describe the development of the communication and leadership development capstone experience at the University of Florida and its evolution over three academic years. While some of the curriculum has remained in place over the course of the evolution, significant changes have been made following trial-and-error, student feedback and societal challenges. While a single best practice may not be practical, the capstone

experience described in this paper may provoke a deeper and broader conversation among leadership educators regarding the design and objectives of the senior capstone experience for undergraduate leadership students.

## **Objectives**

The capstone course was intended to allow students to integrate the content and skills that have been acquired in communication and leadership courses to date. Specific concepts/skills that students were expected to draw upon for the capstone experience include idea generation, creative and critical thinking, peer review and critique, media campaign strategy and development, media writing and graphic design, special event planning and management, leadership skills and competencies including teamwork, conflict resolution, project management.

Specifically, the objectives outlined for the capstone experience are:

- Develop the plan, creative elements, and communications materials for a special event
- Integrate concepts of teamwork, conflict resolution, leadership, and project management
- Critically analyze issues facing the agricultural industry
- Assess the state of career fields the student may be interested in pursuing and develop action plans to pursue career objectives
- Develop a professional portfolio of work including statements of philosophy grounded assessment inventories of who you are as a person/professional using creative and professional skills

## **Background**

Many faculty and administrators involved in higher education programs are exploring ways to culminate the educational experience of degree seeking students. Among these, the most common historical approach has been the internship. From a programmatic perspective internships were the preferred method because they allowed students to obtain first-hand experience within their discipline. However, as budget restrictions have increased and faculty time has decreased, several alternative methods have been identified. One of these is commonly referred to as the capstone experience. While capstone courses can be designed and implemented a variety of ways, this capstone was delivered using a traditional classroom environment. The Communications and Leadership Development Capstone Course (AEE 4930), currently in its third iteration, has gone through many development changes (trial and error) in designing just the “right” balance of academics and application. Faculty members have had full input and decision-making authority as to the direction the capstone course has taken. The various iterations have included:

- Year One:
  - 3 students enrolled

- Focus on communication-oriented skills, students were required to complete video production, design and creative elements, and reflections. Assignments were completed both individually and in a team.
- Reflections were designed to provide students an outlet to discuss concepts related to leadership, including their own personal development and team integration.
- Concepts were added related to project management and balancing team roles
- Year Two:
  - 9 students enrolled, 8 completed
  - Focus on a balanced communication and leadership approach. Students completed a campaign including creative elements with individual assignments and team assignments.
  - Concepts were added related to project management and leading change.
- Year Three:
  - 25 students are presently enrolled in the course.
  - Two-pronged approach focusing on career and employment development and a specialized skills development in special event planning.

While all three approaches were designed in response to student needs, each has yielded dramatically different results. During year one, students expressed a desire for more freedom in selecting a topics for assignments and more leadership-oriented material and experiences. Year two students wanted admission to the capstone to be more selective, including only top students, and to have even less of an emphasis on communication elements. In year three, faculty designed an experience indicative of some of these needs; however, the course is still in session at the time of this proposal. Final material will include information reflective of year three, and an overall look at the course and its iterations.

### **Description of the Practice**

The year three course was designed to incorporate lessons learned and student feedback from previous years. An instructional team was formed, including two leadership specialization faculty members, a communications specialization faculty member, and a graduate student assistant in the communications specialization. Together, the team compiled the course syllabus to ensure a focus on the elements identified during previous years where the course was offered (see Appendix A for course schedule). Enrolled students were required to have completed three departmental prerequisite courses: a digital media course, a leadership foundations course, and a course focused on understanding the communication process. The purpose of these prerequisites was to ensure a base level of experience among students, and assist the instructional team in designing course assignments that all students had the appropriate background to complete.

The course format featured lecture and discussion and was divided into two major units – special event planning and professional growth, development, and career planning. Due to the collaborative nature of the instructional team and the wealth of knowledge and experiences of other individuals in the department pertinent to course topics, both units were designed to include a number of guest speakers and panelists. In the special event-planning unit, students

heard from individuals with extensive experience in planning local, state, and national special events and conferences, speakers with budgeting and volunteer management experience, and learned about the intricate details required when planning any kind of event. During the professional growth portion of the course, students heard from a professional career advisor who specializes in agricultural careers, toured the university's career resource center, learned about creating professional resumes and received input from professionals looking to hire new graduates.

Course assignments were designed by the instructional team to pull together the lectures and information delivered to students in each unit, and to give students an opportunity to learn by doing. A description of course assignments is available in Appendix B. In the special events section of the course, students were assigned to teams and asked to create a special event management proposal plan for an actual event. While teams were not required to carry out the event, they were asked to provide information and all of the elements that go into a special event plan for professional planners.

In the career development unit, assignments included a professional portfolio of work completed, as well as a resume and participation in a mock job interview. An additional assignment focusing on current events and issues in agriculture and natural resources spanned the length of the course. This two-part assignment included a 10 minute presentation of an issue of students' choosing which was in the news and related to agriculture and natural resources. Students were then required to complete a written issue brief outlining the issue or event, discussing the stakeholders involved, and providing their own opinions regarding the issue based on what the student learned during the process.

### **Results to Date**

The capstone course has grown in popularity among students, indicated by the enrollment growth over 3 years. Content has evolved to meet specific needs of the students enrolled in the course. At the beginning of the present semester, students were asked about their plans following graduation from the University of Florida. Results varied widely and included students wishing to attend graduate school to becoming extension agents to one interested in becoming a radio host. Table 1 is a summary of student responses.

Results of the pre-course open-ended career trajectory questions indicate somewhat vague or abstract plans for many of the students. These results are somewhat surprising considering that each student enrolled will be graduating within 1 year of completing the course. While some students seemed to trend toward more concrete plans such as university extension, graduate/professional school or education, a number of students indicated interest in positions in event planning, public relations/communications; however some did not designate any specific plan.

Table 2 shows students responses to the open ended question, "What will you need to do to achieve your plans after graduation?" Responses indicated a wide variety of strategies ranging from GPA boosting to targeted and non-targeted job searches. While these responses are not necessarily surprising, the responses indicate a general lack of planning for post-graduation plans

and an apparent lack of knowledge of the variety of resources available to graduating students as well as simple requirements such as resumes, cover letters and portfolios.

Table 1. *Post Undergraduate Plans*

<i>What job do you want after you graduate?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An internet marketing position for a smaller company that does something that interests me as well (fashion, travel, etc.)</li> <li>• To work with the foreign ag service (FAS) as a communications person.</li> <li>• I plan on going to law school, so any type of job at a law firm would provide good experience for me</li> <li>• Master's degree, then a doctorate – be a professor</li> <li>• I hope to find a job that allows me to work in the event planning/public relations world</li> <li>• One that allows me to live and eat, perhaps a teacher to start</li> <li>• My plan at this point is to attend grad school for sustainable development</li> <li>• Law school or non-career type job, probably</li> <li>• I would like to be involved in a teaching/extension position in the specific area of leadership; hopefully in a rural setting</li> <li>• I want a job dealing with PR and communications.</li> <li>• Marketing/branding specialist for world racing group, in Concord, N.C.</li> <li>• 1010XL JAX sports radio host</li> <li>• Saltwater, inshore fishing guide</li> <li>• I plan to open my own restaurant, most likely in the Orlando area</li> <li>• Event planner, PR</li> <li>• Graduate school to pursue a master's in either organizational leadership or leadership development, then obtain a masters of divinity in theology</li> <li>• Event planning or public relations job</li> <li>• Teach middle school</li> <li>• I want to do something fulfilling. No real specifics yet, maybe PR for urban farms, or community farms, but I want to do a million other things too, this is just one direction, USDA, travel.</li> <li>• I want a job within the agriculture field. Specifically doing something with design or human resources. I would prefer it be in Central Florida.</li> </ul>

The two-pronged approach for this course—applying communication and leadership concepts in the planning, design and promotion of a special event plan, as well as career development—seems to have a unique balance for students completing the Communication and Leadership Development major at the University of Florida. The application of communications and leadership skills in an experiential activity seeks to bring together a seemingly fragmented classroom content experience while further developing and refining a unique set of skills. At the same time, students are considering career choices, writing resumes and beginning a process of thinking long-term about their career.

Table 2. *Plans for Achieving Post-Graduate Goals*

*What specific steps will you need to take to get that job?*

- Searching postings online, contacting chairman of Tampa Chamber of Commerce for networking opportunities (family friend)
- To get the job, I hope to get an internship with FAS and receive my masters' degree in FRE
- Finish up undergrad with over a 3.75 GPA, get above a 150 on the LSAT and get into law school
- Work hard and study hard, develop enough contacts
- My plan is to talk with people I have relationships with, and apply for every job possible
- Work hard, be personable, let it happen
- Start making moves now. Figure out requirements, work out travel, housing, scholarships, apply
- Apply, apply online for jobs with openings
- Teaching certification, making numerous early contacts to be in the loop, stay positive and be persistent
- I am going to do whatever it takes. If that means moving to another state, then I'll do it. I plan to contact as many people as I need to
- Build relationships, tailor my experiences and possibly doing an internship
- Started internship there in the fall (they said I did a great job and can't wait for me to come back and finish in summer
- Make payments on cheap apt with garage, boat, insurance
- I have already been working on furthering my knowledge for the job. I only need to save for the costs
- Apply to as many places offering what I am looking for
- Improve and update current resume, use my resources of networking, do as much "last minute" GPA boosting
- Apply for an internship with the company; submit resume, cover letter; do an interview; travel and visit the company
- Graduate, test for temp certification, apply for a job, have good references
- Would like to go to graduate school
- I will rigorously look for jobs using the internet, UF resources, career fairs, etc.

### **Recommendations/Implications**

Scholars have indicated the importance of the capstone course for students in undergraduate leadership programs (Andreasen & Trede, 2000). However, research has indicated mixed results in achieving the anticipated outcomes of a capstone experience (Hall, et al., 2003; Sargent, Pennington, Sitton, 2003). Leadership educators should consider the varying implications of capstone courses which focus on skill development versus capstone courses that focus on career development. While providing students with a capstone experience which allows the bringing together of skills learned throughout an undergraduate leadership program and the application of those skills, perhaps students of leadership may benefit more widely from a focus

on career preparation. However, a unique balance between skill integration and application and career development may have more powerful implications for students. The experience of the capstone course at the University of Florida indicates that a balanced approach which focuses on experiential application of the undergraduate program coupled with a distinct focus on career preparation (e.g.—writing resumes and cover letters, creating professional portfolios, interacting in professional settings, etc.) may provide a more successful and meaningful completion to the undergraduate leadership program.

Additionally, leadership educators should consider the specific needs of each class of students enrolled in the capstone course. Establishing a core curriculum and objectives is important, but tailoring the capstone course to the interests and needs of each set of students may allow educators to better integrate undergraduate experiences. The capstone course should serve as the bridge to professional employment opportunities for students. Regular adjustments and updates to curriculum which reflect changing societal needs is better suited for capstone courses than perhaps other courses in leadership programs.

### **Conclusions**

The reality of today's world is that good jobs are difficult to come by, difficult to keep and competition is increasingly aggressive. The ultimate goal of the leadership program in general and the capstone experience in particular is to assist students in fine tuning the leadership and communication skills that will set them apart from their peers and allow students to be more attractive to potential employers. Each assignment, activity, exam, discussion and all other course requirements should be designed to allow students to integrate knowledge from their undergraduate programs, but also allow students to develop a solid career path with goals and tools to achieve an immediate, if not an ultimate, career objective upon completion of the undergraduate program. A capstone experience balanced between experiential skill application and career development appears to offer a successful format for students completing an undergraduate leadership program.

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## Appendix A - CLD Capstone Experience Class Schedule

	Topic:	For Class Today:
<b>Week 1 – SPECIAL EVENT PLANNING</b>		
	Introduction to course	
	Types of special events, SE plans, SE managers, Stages of SE development	Read Organizing SE: Chapters 1 & 2
<b>Week 2</b>		
	Committees, volunteers, staff	Read Organizing SE: Chapter 3
	Communication, marketing, media relations	Read Organizing SE: Chapters 8 & 9
<b>Week 3</b>		
	Goals/objectives, project management, team member roles	Read Organizing SE: Chapter 4
	Entertainment, food, audio/visuals, licenses, risk	Read Organizing SE: Chapters 11-16
<b>Week 4</b>		
	Selecting the site, registration	Read Organizing SE: Chapters 6, 7, and 10
	Budgets, finances, sponsorships	Read Organizing SE: Chapter 5
<b>Week 5</b>		
	Conferences and meetings	
	Site Tour – Bill Hill Griffin Stadium	
<b>Week 6</b>		
	<b>*Work day - No Class</b>	
	Special Events Panel Discussion Panelists TBA	
<b>Week 7 – PROFESSIONAL GROWTH/DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PLANNING</b>		
	What I want in a career QLC Discussion	Read QLC: Intro & Chapter 1
	To Be Determined	
<b>Week 8</b>		
	Professional portfolios: personal statements	
	Professional portfolios: design, themes, use QLC Discussion	Read QLC: Chapters 2 & 3

Week 9		
	Human resources (job descriptions, getting hired)	
	Career Resource Center speaker and tour QLC Discussion	Read QLC: Chapter 4
Week 10		
	Writing Resumes QLC Discussion	Read QLC: Chapter 5
	Negotiation & Job Offers, Resume Workshop	
Week 11		
	Special Events Presentations	
	Special Events Presentations	
Week 12		
	Individual growth	Read QLC: Chapter 6
	Career/professionalism panel discussion	
Week 13		
	Conflict Management	
	QLC Discussion	Read QLC: Chapter 7
Week 14		
	Luncheons, social settings, professionalism in how to present oneself	Chapters from B. Pachter posted on E-learning
	Etiquette lunch	
Week 15		
	Professional Portfolio Workday	
	Portfolio Evaluation and Mock Interview Day	

## Appendix B - Course Assignment Descriptions

- **Special Event Plan**

Student teams develop the plan and materials for a “real” special event. Students will be assigned to one of the following “real” special events:

- **Educational/Industry Tour:** Students will develop a two-day educational/industry tour for at least 15 people and include an overnight stay. Students will plan all aspects of the itinerary (speakers, topics, order of visits, hotel, meals) and determine the budget/costs. The tour can be to any area within five hours of Gainesville, but must include at least five stops.
- **Professional Development Workshop for Professionals:** Students will organize a 1.5-day professional development workshop for professional leaders and/or communicators. Students will plan all content areas for the workshop, meals, budgets, and logistics. Plan is for 40 attendees. The workshop can be in any city in Florida.
- **National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow Professional Development Workshop:** Students will develop a plan for the 2012 National ACT Professional Development Workshop. Students will plan all workshop topics, meals, budgets, and logistics. Plan is for 100 attendees. The workshop can be in any city in Florida.

The special event plan must include the following components:

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| • Objectives  | • Location (including pricing) |
| • Timetable   | • Itinerary/agenda             |
| • Volunteer/committee structure                           | • Communication/media          |
| • Theme   | • Entertainment                |
| • Menu/catering (with a real caterer’s pricing structure) |                                |

Teams will submit a draft special events plan early in the semester. The plan should include each of the components listed above at least minimally addressed.

Teams will present their special event plan to the rest of the class. Your team’s presentation should last no more than 10 minutes. The presentation should address all of the components listed above. Teams may choose to incorporate some of the *individual communications/creative element* pieces (see next assignment below) into the required presentation. This is a formal presentation. Teams also will distribute to each classmate a one- to two-page executive summary of the proposed special event plan. The class will vote on the best presentation/plan.

- **Individual communications/creative element for the special event plan**

Students will develop/design a communications element (print ad, flyer, brochure, Web page, video [group of two], poster, T-shirt, news release, etc.) promoting the special event. Each student in a group should develop a separate communications element. (The special event plan is a team project. The communications/creative element is an individual project.

The only exception is that two students could choose to do a promotional video. All other creative elements are to be done individually.)

Drafts of the communications/creative element are due Feb. 9 in class. Students will have their team members peer critique their work. At the end of class, the drafts will be submitted to the instructor for evaluation and critique. The finished communications/creative element will be due the same day as the special event plan. The communications/creative element also should be included as part of your professional portfolio.

- **Panel Discussion News Release**

Students will write a news release based on the information from one of the two panel discussions during the semester. Half of the class will write a news release on the special events panel discussion, and half will write a news release on the career/professionalism panel discussion.

- **Current Events in Ag and Natural Resources Assignment**

Students will select a current event or issue in the agriculture or natural resources/environment sector for this assignment which will be completed in two parts. Part A: At the beginning of the semester, students will sign up for a 15 minute slot, 10 minutes will be devoted to a clear description of the issue/event and five minutes for discussion/questions from the class. Part B: Students will write an issue brief detailing the issue/event, summarizing the key points, identifying the audience(s) or sides, and providing a brief analysis of the issue/event.

- **Professional Portfolio**

Students will compile all of the work they have done that represents their skills set into a professional portfolio. Elements can include communications elements from this and other courses; plans, documents and other illustrated examples of leadership activities; class writing assignments; relevant work done on jobs or internships, “spec” work, etc. In addition, students should include a copy of their up-to-date resume and a statement of philosophy that incorporates a description of who they are as a professional communicator/leader, based on their experiences in the CLD program and especially the outcomes of the assessments they have taken while in class (MBTI, KAI, LPI, True Colors, etc.). Portfolios will include no less than 10-12 elements, and should be grouped into theme areas with a section page to separate and a table of contents in front. Students will need to place these elements into a professional looking portfolio for judging purposes.

## 2010 Association of Leadership Educators Conference Practice Paper

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### 2. Practice Paper Title:

“An Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching Senior Undergraduate Leadership for Business and Human Services Majors”

### 3. Abstract:

This practice paper describes the senior undergraduate Leadership course at the University of North Texas at Dallas (a new institution) taught in an interdisciplinary format for Business and Human Service majors. An integrative model structured to promote leadership development, and cross-sector understanding is presented. Short-term and long-term recommendations for course improvement are discussed.

### 4. Author Bios:

Barbara W. Altman is a pioneer faculty member at the new University of North Texas at Dallas. She has served as Coordinator of Management Programs on the campus, along with teaching courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels in Leadership, Business Ethics, Business and Society, and Organizational Change and Design. Her applied research interests are at the intersection of these topics, most notably Leadership Integrity, Corporate Community Relations, Cross-Sector Partnerships and Entrepreneurial Ethics.

Constance Lacy is a pioneer faculty at the new University of North Texas at Dallas. She has served as Coordinator of the Human Services Management Leadership program and Division Director for Education and Human Services. A Social Worker by training, Dr. Lacy's teaching interests are in Human Service practice, non-profit management and community development. She has an extensive background working in community behavioral healthcare settings, family courts, and serving as center manager for a school-based health program.

## AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO TEACHING SENIOR UNDERGRADUATE LEADERSHIP TO BUSINESS AND HUMAN SERVICES MAJORS

### Introduction

The University of North Texas at Dallas (UNTD or UNT Dallas) is an emerging institution committed to an interdisciplinary approach to training its students to be good citizens. A new institution that will officially be separate from the flagship campus, UNT at Denton, in Fall 2010, it is located in an economically challenged area of Dallas County previously underserved for higher education. As such its mission “is to enhance access to high quality education and to prepare students to become exemplary citizens who can assume leadership positions in a global environment” (UNT Dallas Campus, 2006). The Vision includes recognition for “distinctive interdisciplinary approaches to education,” “commitment to the well-being and full development of all students,” and “commitment to improve quality of life through civic engagement” (UNT Dallas Campus, 2006).

One example of UNTD’s interdisciplinary approach is the senior undergraduate Leadership course. Designated a Management (MGMT) course, it is housed and staffed out of the Division of Professional and Urban Studies, which includes undergraduate business programs in Entrepreneurship, Organizational Behavior/Human Resources Management and General Business. The course is also the designated leadership course for the Division of Education and Human Services “Human Services Management and Leadership (HSML)” degree program on the Dallas Campus.

The HSML program was developed to address the shortage of qualified human service personnel in the non-profit sector. The program targets students committed to careers in non-profit social and human service settings providing a foundation in the unique purposes and roles of non-profit organizations in a multi-sectored marketplace. A particular strength of the program is the fact that it was developed with extensive consultation with leaders in the non-profit human service community in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metropolis. According to the Center for Non-profit Management and Community Foundation of Texas (2009), 9,149 501 (c) 3 organizations are registered in Dallas County, which highlights the potentially significant size, economic impact and societal benefits provided by the non-profit sector in North Texas. As the only human service baccalaureate program in North Texas, the HSML degree represents the kind of unique programming available through the UNT Dallas campus in direct response to community needs and goals.

### Course Design and Learning Objectives

The MGMT 4470 Leadership course was redesigned in fall 2008 to acknowledge that both Business and HSML majors would be taking the course. The overarching goal for the course, as stated in the syllabus, is “to increase students’ understanding of major leadership behavior patterns and strategies that promote effectiveness in organizations” (Altman, 2009, p. 1). The specific learning objectives for MGMT 4470 stated in the syllabus include:

1. To acquire a basic understanding of key leadership theories and approaches;
2. To develop self-awareness of your personal leadership style and potential for leadership;

3. To identify the leadership traits and behaviors which you most respect, and an understanding of how this impacts working relationships with supervisors; and
4. To develop the ability to analyze situations which challenge business, and non-profit leaders, and to identify the strategies which make them either effective or ineffective in organizational settings. (Altman, 2009, p. 1)

These learning objectives fall into three categories: 1) those designated for the College of Business undergraduate programs in General Business, Entrepreneurship, and Organizational Behavior/Human Resources Management; 2) those designated for the HSML program, and satisfy requirements for students pursuing American Humanics (AH) certification; and 3) General learning goals for all UNT Dallas graduates, given its mission as stated above. Of this set, the most specific learning criteria are laid out by American Humanics ([www.humanics.org](http://www.humanics.org)); among the competencies this course must cover for purposes of their certification process are leadership principles, leadership methods, ethical principles, practice and decision making, self-assessment, public speaking skills, and writing skills.

The course has been designed with a multifaceted approach, grounded in Pratt's "model on how to integrate leadership theory and practice in a manner that provides a foundation but also invites students to explore their own leadership futures" (Pratt, 2007, p. 59). Centered in the integration of leadership theory and practice, Pratt's model is implemented through four strategies: 1) exploring leadership theory; 2) interacting with exemplary leaders; 3) engaging in personal assessment; and 4) pondering and reflection. Pratt suggests that her model is particularly relevant in linking the course learning objectives with program objectives, which is also the case with the UNTD course, given its linkage to the campus mission and overarching objectives for the Business, HSML and American Humanics programs.

### **Course Topics and Assignments**

The flow of topics in the course starts with Module 1, "Overview of Leadership Theories," including Leader Traits and Behavioral Theories and Contingency Theory. This is followed by Module 2, "Leadership Integrity, Motivation and Communication," and Module 3, "Creating Vision and Strategic Direction." The last set of topics, Module 4, is "Leading Change." The assignments described below fall heavily into Pratt's four categories noted above. In several places adjustments have been made to Pratt's model to fit the student population or setting at UNT Dallas.

A survey text, *The Leadership Experience*, by Daft (2008) is used as the basis for the course. Pratt (2007) proposes that too much leadership theory (and thereby survey texts) can be problematic at the undergraduate level if not integrated with practice. The Daft text integrates theory and practice, and was specifically chosen because of its self-assessment questionnaires and experiential

exercises. At the close of each chapter, Daft includes a “Leadership at Work” exercise that challenges students to make sense of their current work life in light of the theories and frameworks being studied. UNTD’s average student age is 33 and most are either working part- or full-time. They are therefore able to bring varied work experiences to these “Leadership at Work” exercises, which are also used as a basis for class discussion.

Another facet of Pratt’s model, “Engage in Personal Assessment,” is accomplished through a series of self-assessment tools, labeled “Leader’s Self-Insight” included throughout the Daft text. Examples include “Your leadership orientation,” “Substitutes for leadership,” “Instrumental and end values,” “Power of followership,” and “Listening self inventory” (Daft, 2008). Students are asked to complete these self-assessments and engage in written reflection (“Leadership Log”) about them. Excerpts from the Leadership Log assignment follow:

Engaging with the leadership frameworks through self-reflection is a critical piece of learning in this class. The self insight tools assigned with the text chapters are the basis for writing your log entries. Ten entries are required throughout the semester. Your completed self-insight and initial thoughts on the results should be brought to class on the day the assessment is assigned; they will be discussed in class.

Following each class, students should take the time to reflect again, and prepare their formal written log entry on that self-insight tool. Students should “dig deep” to seriously think about their leadership findings and what implications they have for past, current, and future work/life settings and career goals. Each log entry should be 3-4 single-spaced typed paragraphs with the following content: 1) Explanation of your scores on the self-insight tool; 2) Discussion of whether you were surprised by the results: Is it consistent with previous actions you have taken in a past or present leadership situation? If not, what was different? and 3) Discussion of how you will use the information you learned from the assessment in the future. Grading for the logs will be based on truly insightful self-analysis and reflection; understanding of the frameworks being applied by the tool; and ability to apply those frameworks and the tool’s findings to past, present and future work and extracurricular group/leadership settings you have experienced or anticipate. (Altman, 2009, p.3)

Self-reflection as a necessary part of leadership development is included in Pratt’s (2007) model, but also well supported by other management and education theorists (Daudelin, 1996; Schon, 1983). Training for human service and nonprofit leaders has also endorsed the use of self-reflection (McClam, Diambra, Burton, Fuss & Fudge, 2008; McMichael & McKee, 2008). These scholars emphasize the importance of student self-reflection and for the instructor as well. It communicates whether the learning process has been effective, and it can be used in devising new teaching strategies.

The written “Leadership Logs” are turned in twice during the semester. Students often struggle with the assignment as they have never been asked to engage in deep self-reflection. Turning in one draft Log early in the semester for feedback is encouraged; however many students do not and grades on Logs 1-5 are generally low. Logs 6-10 are usually much more in-depth and truly reflective after receiving feedback on the first set of Logs. End of the semester student evaluation comments credit these log assignments as one of the avenues that resulted in the most learning.



The capstone course assignment due late in the semester is the “Leader in the News” research project. This assignment deviates from Pratt’s (2007) model, which prescribes the use of guest speakers for students to “Interact with Exemplary Leaders.” The course designers choose this alternative assignment based on research of current high profile leaders so that students would engage in research, and be required to present that research in both written and oral form. Students still get to interact with local leaders, as guest lecturers are frequently on campus and in other business and human services classes, and limited extra credit is offered for students who attend such lectures and write a summary memo about them.

The “Leader in the News” project challenges students to apply the leadership traits, behaviors and styles to research and analyze the profile and actions of a current business or non-profit organization leader. Students must find a leader who has been profiled or written about in three to four mainstream press outlets. Student research culminates in an eight to ten-page paper and associated ten to fifteen minute oral class presentation that must include the following:

- a) Description of the leader’s current position and summary of career highlights;
- b) Identification of the traits of the leader, including specific data (brief examples) to back-up your conclusions;
- c) Assessment of the leadership behaviors and strategies most often used by the leader, including data (brief examples) to back up your conclusions;
- d) Evaluation/description of a situation where the leader was effective; and
- e) A situation where the leader was not effective. For the non-effective situations, offer recommendations for what he/she might have done differently. (Altman, 2009, p. 3)

Business students generally choose a chief executive officer (CEO) from the *Fortune* lists of “Most Admired Companies” (Colvin, 2009), or “50 Most Powerful Women” (Shambora & Kowitt, 2009). HSML majors choose from a listing like the “Non-Profit Times Power & Influence Top 50” (Non-Profit Times, 2009) or “Charity Leaders Who Topped the Chronicle’s List (Chronicle of Philanthropy, 2009). This paper is extremely challenging for students, given its research intensity, extent of data analysis, and required synthesis of critical factors in both written and oral form. Examples of leaders profiled in the Fall 2009 class are Steve Jobs, Andrea Jung, Wendy Kopp, Bill Gates, Warren Buffett and Lance Armstrong.

### **Setting the Stage for Cross-Sector Understanding**

The need for cross-sector partnerships between for-profit and non-profit organizations to solve complex social issues on the local and global levels is well documented (Googins & Rochlin, 2000; LeBar & Branzei, 2010). Accomplishing these partnerships is extremely challenging on many counts, one of which is leaders’ understanding of the frame of reference, approach and language used by their partner organization’s leaders (Gray, 1989; Waddock, 1988). Non-profit leaders understanding how business leaders think and relate, and vice versa, can be one avenue for improving the success of cross-sector partnership in the future. Battista (2009), in a recent study of firm managers and social workers engaged in a cross-sector partnership, explores the underlying psychodynamics experienced by these individuals. The findings show that for business managers “fear of losing control” and “over commitment” are two common themes:

The manager is afraid that if he publicly presents his engagement in the community, a public expectation and pressure for him to engage further, or even increase his engagement and...if the company doesn't meet the expectations of community-based initiatives through continued service, the company will 'suffer negative consequences'--poor image in the community and loss of reputation. (Battista, 2009, p. 102)

On the other hand, the social workers in Battista's study talk about the possibility of mutual learning and the opportunity to address social problems with creativity and more resources yet they tend to have a "wait and see" attitude. This might be interpreted as mild indifference or apathy. The reality is that social workers fear becoming dependent on short-term solutions to long-term social challenges. (Battista, 2009)

As other research (Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Gray, 1986; LeBar & Branzei, 2010; Waddock, 1988) and Battista's (2009) study demonstrates, the complexities of cross-sector partnerships cannot be understated. Underlying the learning objectives of this interdisciplinary leadership course, therefore, is a desire by the co-designers to improve the understanding of future business and non-profit leaders to the challenges and frames of reference each bring to their work.

Students come to the MGMT 4470 course with varied work experiences and are encouraged to share these in classroom discussions. The nature of work in both business and non-profit settings is therefore actively discussed. Common ground is set early in the semester, when students are asked to share not only their work experience, but also experience in volunteer or community settings. This activity levels the field for business students who commonly do not realize that non-profit work is relevant to them and vice versa. All of the exercises described earlier, such as the "Leader Self Insights" and "Leadership at Work," are integrated in to class discussion and students offer examples from both business and non-profit settings. This begins to sensitize students to their fellow students' challenges in other work settings, either within or across sectors.

The "Leader in the News" oral presentations are the capstone opportunity for students to engage in discussion about how high profile business and non-profit leaders handled organizational challenges both effectively and ineffectively. The question/answer period following each presentation is very lively with student observations. At this point in the semester, students are very comfortable and discussion can flow freely.

### **Preliminary Analysis and Recommended Course Changes**

The data from course exercises, assignments and exams for the two times this course has been taught in this format (Fall 2008 and Fall 2009) support successful accomplishment of the course learning objectives, as repeated below:

1. To acquire a basic understanding of key leadership theories and approaches;
2. To develop self-awareness of your personal leadership style and potential for leadership;
3. To identify the leadership traits and behaviors which you most respect, and an understanding of how this impacts working relationships with supervisors; and

4. To develop the ability to analyze situations which challenge business, and non-profit leaders, and to identify the strategies which make them either effective or ineffective in organizational settings. (Altman, 2009, p. 1)

As course designers, we feel positive about the interdisciplinary success of these two pilot course delivery trials. We intend to move forward with course improvements that move beyond sensitizing students to the challenges confronted by leaders of other sectors, to explicitly training them about the positive benefits and challenges of cross-sector partnerships. In the short-term, the Fall 2010 offering of the course will incorporate a fifth learning objective: *To develop an understanding of the need for cross-sector collaboration to confront social issues; and methods to confront the challenges leaders must face to be successful in such partnerships.* The specific course materials and assignments that will be used to achieve this learning objective will be designed during Summer 2010.

More radical changes to the course curriculum will need to wait until UNT Dallas is accredited as a separate institution. While UNT Dallas has been approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to operate as a separate institution in Fall 2010, for accreditation purposes, UNT Dallas will remain under the UNT Denton umbrella until we are able to apply for independent accreditation, which we hope to accomplish in 2012. Such a restraint hinders the ability to incorporate new instructional strategies at this time. Once we have separate accreditation, we will have the opportunity to make substantive changes in this and other courses to better match the specific mission of UNT Dallas, which states a commitment to both interdisciplinary learning and community engagement.

Two substantive changes come to our minds that could/should be implemented once we achieve independent accreditation. First is team teaching, and second is the requirement of a service learning project.

### *Team Teaching*

Pratt's (2007) model of integrative leadership education notes, "If modeling of leaders is important to helping students learn as they explore the leadership road, the teacher has the responsibility to model leadership as well" (p. 62). Therefore, if our goal is much deeper understanding of issues across sectors, what better way to model collaborative work than team teaching by Business and Human Services faculty members? Our academic disciplinary barriers often do not allow such work, but interdisciplinarity ultimately means academic policies that allow for and foster cross disciplinary collaboration (Franks, Dale, Hindmarsh, Fellows, Buckridge & Cybinski, 2007). Given UNTD's mission's interdisciplinary focus, we hope that team teaching will be supported at UNT Dallas in the future.

### *Cross-Sector Service Learning Project*

A recent edition of the *Journal of Management Education* was devoted entirely to the subject of service learning, documenting that the field has matured from its early roots (Kenworthy & Fornaciari, 2010). In the review of a "Social Entrepreneurship and Community Leadership" capstone course for Master's leadership development students, a course with similar cross-sector learning goals, Lizky, Godhsalk and Walton-Bongers (2010) state:

Service learning is an excellent pedagogy, as it allows students to apply theoretical concepts and principles learned in the classroom to real-world situations and advances the partnerships between the community, university, and students, where all parties can learn from one another. (p. 142)

The unique core curriculum of UNTD has been designed with a freshman service learning component, which will be implemented in 2010-2011, when we enroll our first freshman class. The curriculum plan is to carry this service learning component forward to junior and senior level courses in each student's major. The HSML program already has several service learning opportunities built in to the core courses and a senior internship, so these students have multiple opportunities for experiential learning and practical application. The undergraduate business program, however, sorely lags behind with no current required community service or internship requirement. Integration of experiential learning for undergraduate business students will be foundational to students' integration of theory and practice. Future planned curriculum changes in the business programs will add several service learning or internship opportunities.

The service learning projects and internships housed within the HSML or Business programs, however, do not achieve a cross-sector focus, as they are still discipline based. Integrating a cross-sector service learning project within MGMT 4470, with its already established interdisciplinary framework, has the potential to train both future Human Services and Business leaders through a cross-sector field-based learning model.

### **Conclusion**

Teaching the senior leadership class to undergraduate Human Services and Business students together has already been found to produce learning outcomes that support the development of these students, their degree program competencies, and the mission of the emerging University of North Texas at Dallas. This paper has attempted to highlight the structure of this course, the assignments unique to it, and the class environment built to promote cross-sector understanding. Foundational concepts of organizational leadership are interwoven with self-assessment and reflection exercises, along with class discussion and research on challenges current leaders face, to ensure that students learn from each other as well as experientially.

Future enhancements have been identified to further build on this understanding by studying cross-sector partnerships in the short-term, and in the long-term modeling of cross-sector partnerships, both in the classroom and in the field. These enhancements, once implemented, will hopefully support additional learning outcomes for the students, their respective degree programs, the University and the broader community.

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**Association of Leadership Educators: 2010 Annual Conference  
& 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration  
A Presentation for Practice Paper**

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**Title of Presentation:**

INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP: A teaching perspective on intercultural competency

**Presentation Track:** Practice Paper

**Abstract: (50 words)**

Almost every interaction between people is intercultural. How we appreciate, understand and embrace diversity says much about our approach to leadership. Leadership development that supports individuals in improving cultural competence is essential. How these concepts are developed across undergraduate, masters, and doctoral levels of teaching is the focus of this praxis session.

Author one: Mary C. Klein, EdD

Dr. Mary Klein serves as co-director of the Center for Spirituality & Leadership at Marian University. She is a full professor of Organizational Communication, the director of the Communication and minor in Leadership Programs. Her research examines leading effective volunteer organizations. She is a past recipient of the Underkofler Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award.

Author two: Yung-Pin Lu, ABD, MBA

Yung-Pin Lu teaches Leadership Program and facilitating program design in the International Multi-cultural Center at Marian University. He has consulted and assisted with organizations in the United States, China, and Taiwan. Yung-Pin Lu practices and is interested in leadership development, education, and curriculum through crossing intercultural barriers.

**Additional Information:**

Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings.

Our proposal has been accepted as a practice paper.

Both of authors had done the review work for this conference and we enjoyed this work.

Yes, both of us are willing to serve as a session facilitator at the conference.



**INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP:  
A teaching perspective on intercultural competency**

**Practice Session Presentation:**  
Yung-Pin Lu, ABD, MBA & Mary C. Klein, EdD  
Marian University, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

**Introduction**

Almost every interaction between people is intercultural. How we appreciate, understand and embrace diversity says much about our approach to leadership. Leadership development that supports individuals in improving their cultural competence is essential. How these concepts are developed across undergraduate, masters, and doctoral levels of teaching is the focus of this praxis session. The session will provide a model for curriculum development and examine how foundational elements of intercultural competence are played out in each learning context.

**Context of the Session**

Globalization of industry, communication networks, and political sensibilities has made the world smaller. As a consequence, people often find themselves having to learn to work across cultural boundaries to make decisions and solve problems (Moodian, 2009, Trompenaars and Voerman, 2009). Effectively making connections across sub-cultures and sub-groups within individual cultures presents an equal number of challenges. Leaders in both situations, play an important role in this by emphasizing cultural competence and cooperation.

Equally challenging is the prospect of teaching intercultural competence across the varying levels of higher education; undergraduate, masters and doctoral preparation. What is fundamental and necessary at the undergraduate level may seem tedious and elementary at the masters and doctoral levels. Even so, there are a number of foundational theories and concepts that must be addressed at each level.

The work of Geert Hofstede and others is just such a concept. This work has given us language with which to describe individual cultures. This language helps us to identify points of similarity and difference. The work of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck provides us with a values orientation to understanding individual cultures. Both are seminal works in developing intercultural competence (Moodian, 2009, Trompenaars and Voerman, 2009).

Presenting these theories to traditional undergraduates requires something different of the instructor than the more rigorous examination of theory development and evaluation of research methodology required of graduate students.

This practice presentation provides a model of pedagogy that differentiates between undergraduates, masters level, and doctoral students. The presenters will argue that undergraduate students require more attention to awareness and understanding of the differences and similarities between cultures, while master level students need to take a more reflective, multiple perspective approach to understanding the concept of intercultural competence. Doctoral students may be expected to take on a more critical and holistic understanding of key concepts.

With the model as a conceptual framework, a variety of key intercultural competence concepts will be explored as they pertain to the varying degrees of readiness. Examples of methodology and specific course curricula will be presented as a way to demonstrate the application of the pedagogical model presented.

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2. A Look Through the Lens of Our Perspective: Bringing Into Focus a Deeper Understanding of Culture, Self, and Leadership
3. Practice Session
4. This interactive session designed to sharpen participants' awareness brings into focus a deeper understanding of how culture impacts the personal values and judgments which inform and potentially hamper leadership capacity. Participants construct a physical lens representing their current frame of reference to increase self-awareness and generate development of new goals.
5. Jen Brothers, Clinical Education Specialist with the Batten Leadership Institute, teaches, facilitates experiential learning through group processing, and works individually with students to identify and take apart personal obstacles to leadership development. Jen received her B.A. in Communications and Spanish from James Madison University and her M.A. Ed. in Counselor Education from Virginia Tech.

Jill Hufnagel, Assistant Director of the Batten Leadership Institute and licensed professional counselor, holds a Ph.D. in English and Women's Studies & an M.A., Ed.S. in Community Counseling. Jill is energized by the immediacy of group process and the opportunity to encourage participants to grapple with vulnerability. Her current research focuses on the ways we give and receive meaningful, critical feedback.

6. Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings, if accepted.
7. No, please do not consider this proposal for a poster session.
8. No, we are not able to serve as reviewers.
9. Yes, we will serve as facilitators for our session at the conference.

## **Introduction**

*“Reality is a variable we see through the eyes of our culture.”*  
--Alex Katz

Leading from our core, with congruent authenticity, requires introspection and adaptability. Effective leadership begins with courageous self-dialogue rooted in a willingness to focus our attention inward and explore our values and judgments. As family and culture shape our attitudes and beliefs, we develop a unique lens through which we view and interact with the world—a lens which predisposes us to judgment. Through a framing discussion followed by the construction of a personal, physical lens, participants bring into focus areas where vision is hampered, blurred, or even blinded. Attention to this lens creates a deeper self awareness and movement toward improved empathy with others, thereby strengthening our leadership capacity. Learner objectives include: understanding the attitudes and beliefs participants carry with them across all settings and relationships and examining their default expectations—of themselves, of others, and of the world in general.

## **Background**

According to Edgar Schein, “Culture is the deepest, often unconscious part of a group, and is, therefore, less tangible and less visible than other parts” (2004). In this interactive session designed to sharpen personal awareness of the lens defining our worldview, we unearth the underlying assumptions within our culture (Schein, 2004) and pair these with our personal VABES (values, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations) (Clawson, 2009) to increase our ability to see beyond our own personal experience and find connection with the experience of others. How are our VABES influenced by our past or present?

Undergirded by a belief that true leadership begins with self-awareness and pointing to such works as Manfred Kets de Vries and Konstantin Korotov’s *Coach and Couch: The Psychology of Making Better Leaders* and the Harvard Negotiation Project’s *Difficult Conversations*, the proposed practice paper begins with an understanding of the vital need for leaders to know themselves—a key to strong, resilient, adaptive leadership. To that end, this practice works from a core belief: without meaningful self-revealing intrapersonal and interpersonal work, potential leaders are sorely and fundamentally disadvantaged. At every level of leadership training centered on self-awareness, the work of participants grows from the inside out. As Drucker capitulates, the first commandment of leadership is: “Leader, Know Thyself” (2005). This commandment informs every facet of this intrapersonally-based approach to leadership training.

## **Description of the Practice**

According to Clawson and the thousands of professionals with whom he has worked, 95% of our VABES are unthinking, knee-jerk pieces of how we experience and respond to the world. This exercise brings to consciousness the values and judgments lying beneath the surface of our everyday awareness. We begin the practice with a discussion of VABES and then invite participants to examine their own personal VABES. Next, participants are asked to consider the VABES that influence them in their leadership capacity, both intrapersonally and interpersonally. In preparation for the experiential component of this exercise, participants are

also encouraged to consider feedback they have received concerning how others experience them as leaders and team members.

Facilitators then provide a variety of craft and recycled materials, including various paper, scissors, and glue, and ask participants to construct a physical representation of their personal lens. Using a spectrum of prompts--what does your lens look like? how does it feel? how much does it weigh? what color is it? what shape is it?-- participants are encouraged to think outside the box or not, according to their personal preference. The process is free flowing, limited only by time constraints, and results in a variety of final products. Facilitators listen in on the process, taking mental note of participants' responses, and trust participants to gain significant insight about how they interpret and interact with people and systems.

Facilitators reserve a significant portion of time to process with participants as they describe their lens to the group. Why did they choose the materials they chose? Why the shape? Where are their blind spots? What did they discover about themselves along the way? After processing the experience, participants are invited to develop a goal stemming from this new awareness.

### **Results to Date**

Increased awareness of the lens we bring to everything we do enables us to work purposefully and deliberately with our lens. The goal of this workshop is not to erase or lose our lens, but to know it for what it is—a magnifier with interpretative, subjective capacity and tendencies.

The impact of looking inward is often, in itself, incredibly powerful. Participants frequently remark on the novelty of such a fundamental exercise and the force of bringing to light what is deeply embedded and therefore difficult to access. During the construction process participants express a range of reactions to even getting started. Some jump in; others hold back and ask for more direction; still others seek feedback from their peers as they engage in construction. To date, interpretations have run the gamut from bifocals to monocles, from kaleidoscope to telescope and beyond.

The exercise has both internal and external value. By pausing to reflect inwardly, participants have the opportunity to unearth the deeply embedded framework through which they view and respond to the world. At the same time participants glimpse the vastly different perspectives of others. Self-reports during this workshop and in subsequent writings reflect increased self-awareness and a lasting impact on personal change goals.

One participant wrote: *“I learned how to understand and acknowledge my cultural lens in such a way that I am better able to display empathy toward those around me. By understanding how my unique experiences shaped my worldly outlook, I am in a position to understand why people view the world in a different way than I do.”*

Analyzing her new understanding of culture and its impact on her lens, another participant wrote: *“I used to think that culture meant different countries, foreign languages and ethnic food. Now I realize that culture is something that goes much deeper, and it affects me in my everyday life. Culture is something that affects how we see ourselves and others, as well as how we view the world. Reality varies according to our cultures, which is why culture plays such*

*a big role in our lives. By understanding our cultural lens, we are able to grasp a better understanding of who we are and what we value.”*

*Yet another participant found meaning in how she approached the exercise: “My favorite activity was creating our lens. This included crafting from scraps an object that represented how we see the world. I am an optimist; therefore, I subconsciously created my ideal lens, instead of my current lens...[this] taught me how to embrace the blind spots in my lens and to simply come to the realization that blind spots are nearly impossible to eliminate, but we can try to reduce them.”*

### **Recommendations/Implications**

While participants are crafting their lens, the process is largely intrapersonal. They seek to identify and represent key facets of how they view and respond to the world. How participants explain themselves internally and externally is a powerful piece of the process, and one that requires a willingness to make sense of individual culture within a larger system. Naming that system as intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, societal, even universal adds to the possible layers of using this workshop across arenas of inquiry and understanding. At the same time, participants are invited to be vulnerable with others and through that process to develop a deeper understanding of the lens of others, an understanding that has the distinct power to impact fundamentally their approach to leadership.

### **Conclusions**

A practice that tends to work with participants regardless of demographic factors, this approach is helpful both in terms of individual leadership development as well as with groups and teams working to better understand one another and to function well as a whole. It serves as a natural jumping off point for personal goal development and may be used to understand and develop participants’ capacities to give and receive meaningful, constructive critical feedback. This purposeful dip into making more explicit our experience of the world and our reactions to it has the power to permeate several levels of participants’ lives—and to deepen participants’ ability to lead through conflict in healthy, resilient, thoughtful ways. This approach may be used on its own or as one of several workshops in an adaptive leadership training series within an intrapersonal framework.

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2. Peer Education Training: The Success of a Train-the-Trainer Framework

3. Practice paper

4. Many programs utilize peers educators and facilitators as part of the framework for leadership development. The success of such programs involves purposeful selection, training, and providing continual support. This paper will discuss a train-the-trainer model sharing strategies and ideas for application in similar programs for training peer educators.

5. Jill Casten is a Graduate Assistant and Ph.D. student at Virginia Tech in the Agricultural and Extension Education Department. Previously, she has experience working for the National FFA Organization developing and managing leadership programs for collegiate students. Jill received her B.S. from Kansas State University and M.S. at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.

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6. Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings, if accepted.

7. Yes, please consider this for a poster or roundtable in the event it is not accepted.

8. The first author is able to serve as a reviewer; however, the second author is not available.

9. The first and second authors are able to serve as a session facilitators at the conference.



# PEER EDUCATION TRAINING: THE SUCCESS OF A TRAIN-THE-TRAIN FRAMEWORK

## Introduction

Students participate in the learning process of leadership education as they move from peripheral observers to active participants in the process (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Many leaders in student and academic affairs on college campuses have provided that student learning takes place in cocurricular and extracurricular settings through interaction with peers, therefore providing a positive leadership model through peer leaders (Hunter, 2004). Additionally, peer educators and leaders learn the subject matter on a deeper level, while gaining transferable skills in partnerships, cooperation, listening, and communication (Topping, 2005).

With college students utilized as peer leaders and educators, there is a need for these students to partake in training to further enhance their roles as peers and leaders. The process of peer leader training involves selecting, training, and providing continual support. The training process brings challenges and educational opportunities for the development of peer leaders. This paper will discuss a peer leader train-the-trainer model sharing strategies and ideas for application in similar programs for training peer leaders. The purpose of this practice paper is to examine how training for peer leaders can best utilize the train-the-trainer model in an applied approach for peer facilitation.

Objectives of this program are based in knowledge, skills, and personal integration (Ender & Newton, 2000):

1. Identify knowledge components for agricultural-based and facilitation topics.
2. Practice skills, methods, and techniques based in facilitation and teaching for all identified audiences.
3. Integrate knowledge and skills with practice sessions including feedback and coaching.
4. Create a community of trust and communication.

This paper will provide literature in peer education including the process and reflection model, describe the details and framework of the current program, provide results from the current training program, as well as implications and conclusions for further practice.

## Background

Peer programs bring a positive impact on feelings of self-worth and the development of interpersonal skills (Ender & Newton, 2000; Hunter, 2004). Even more, the peer leader's personal growth is seen through increased knowledge and personal attributes, the ability to resolve complex issues, an enhanced sense of emotional well-being, and being able to find a personal sense of contribution (Ender & Newton, 2000). Peer leader programs aim to build upon an individual's strengths while mobilizing them to become active participants in the learning process (Topping, 2005).

This active learning process begins with a training program for peer educators and leaders. One of the foundational aspects to training peer leaders is to first determine the level of their own competence in leading. From there, the connection can be made between the new knowledge and skills in order to provide the best possible training experience (Ender & Newton, 2000). Hunter (2004) sets forth in a guideline for successful training for peer leaders as a minimum of 10 and up to 25 hours or more spent in training.

As introduced previously in the objectives, a peer educator training includes three critical areas: knowledge, skills, and personal integration (Ender & Newton, 2000). These three pieces can be illustrated further through the Process and Reflection Model by Borton (1970) which stems from the questions of, “What?”, “So what?”, and “Now what?”. Borton (1970) asserts this process is intentional and can be used to generate feedback to help determine how effectively a process is functioning. Based in the functions of sensing, transforming, and acting, this theoretical model provides an organized way of increasing awareness, evaluating intention, and experimenting with new behavior (Borton, 1970). The corresponding question of, “What?”, helps sense the differences between response to the actual effect and the intended effect in the processing and reflection process. This piece is considered the descriptive and self-awareness aspect of the model. The second question, “So What?”, transforms the information into relevant patterns of meaning for analysis and evaluation of the experience. Finally, deciding how to act on the best alternative and reapply information into other situations represents the synthesis piece or the “Now What?” of the model. By applying the processing model, training is presented in a way for peer educators to experience their own reflection while gaining new knowledge and applying it to their relevant experiences. This straightforward approach can be relevant to those at a variety of knowledge and skill levels.

Training for peer educators and leaders should be an active and engaging process for learning. In addition, special attention must be paid in order to establish and provide a supportive community. Peer leaders should be made self-aware and prepared for coaching and feedback. Finally, both trainers and peer leaders should note the time, practice, and feedback that is necessary for all to constantly engage in this process (Ender & Newton, 2000). Continual support is crucial, as well. Whether it is through reoccurring training, communication or administrative support, peer leaders need adequate support to carry out their goals (Hunter, 2004).

### **Description of the practice**

The program used as the model for this practice paper is the National Collegiate Agricultural Ambassador program with the National FFA Organization. Created as an educational program for collegiate students in agriculture, the intent is for these students to serve as peer educators and leaders. Their role is to create awareness and advocacy for the agricultural industry through the facilitation of educational workshops and seminars. The terms ambassador, peer educator, and peer leader are used interchangeably as descriptors of the participants in the training process.

## **Selection and pre-training exercises**

The selection of new ambassadors for this peer education program includes a two-part application process where applicants submit packets to the program manager. The first phase of the selection process includes the submission of an applicant's resume, written essay responses, and a video demonstrating his or her presentation and facilitation abilities. The program staff and selection committee review the applications and videos where the first round of the selection is made. The selected applicants advancing to the second phase of the process participate in a phone interview. Questions for the interview are behavioral-based, asking about specific traits and experiences. From this second round of interviews, the final candidates are selected to become ambassadors.

Once the selection has been made, ambassadors are asked to begin reviewing and attending to issues and topic areas in agriculture prior to training. Ambassadors are also required to review previous educational presentations as part of the new knowledge and content they will need as peer educators. The expectation is that they each review and bring an understanding of one of the previous educational presentations with them to training. With a comprehensive understanding of at least one presentation, ambassadors can immediately begin applying various facilitation and presentation techniques at training.

## **Peer education training**

The design for the initial training is set in a week-long format. The program manager functions as the trainer for the peer education training. Additional training support is provided by industry professionals and returning ambassadors with peer education experience from the previous year. Time is devoted each day of the training to gain knowledge and bring content for a different audience and topic area. Industry professionals bring expertise and knowledge in agricultural topics, while the program manager and returning ambassadors provide the models for facilitation and peer education experience. Within the process of training, the reflective model is used as the trainers build upon the participants' foundational knowledge of the agricultural industry and facilitation techniques. Often the trainer disseminates information through expert sessions bringing knowledge and insight of industry through professionals working in the field and by modeling facilitation practices. By providing this new content ambassadors gain a comprehensive understanding of a variety of current agricultural issues and relevant subject areas as well as how to best communicate and share the message effectively. As the ambassadors progress through the training program, they move into their role as peer educators.

In addition to the contextual knowledge, the peer educators gain awareness and practice skills for the facilitation of different types and formats of audiences. There are nine identified audiences in which the peer educators are asked to present. These are: elementary students, middle school students, high school students in both agricultural and non-agricultural settings, college students in both agricultural and non-agricultural settings, agricultural organizations, civic and community organizations, and audiences within a fair or exhibition.

Recognizing the differences and needs within each type of audience is a crucial component of the training. Awareness and discussion is based upon different learning styles and approaches appropriate for each audience as well as basics for delivery of any presentation. The trainer models appropriate activities, processing questions and reflection, effective directions, and economy of language as basic skills needed for facilitation.

The train-the-trainer format is modeled the trainer, but also through experienced peer educators as returning ambassadors. These returning peer leaders are asked to facilitate and present a model lesson as a way to help the new ambassadors gain understanding of a typical presentation. A step-by-step approach is taken as the presentation is discussed from a teaching and training perspective dissecting it into the specific components.

The culminating experience in the final stages of training is through a “stand and deliver” process for each peer educator. Every ambassador delivers a presentation to their peers and fellow ambassadors, industry professionals, and outside students. This practice experience allows students to combine all elements of the training while receiving feedback and coaching on their presentation. This process assures the trainer and program manager that each ambassador has had the proper preparation in order to carry out his or her role as a peer educator.

### **Post-training support**

Beyond the completion of training, extensive work is required from ambassadors upon return to their respective universities and campuses. The most important aspect of the program post-training lies in the communication network of the program manager and the peer educators themselves. Communication is vital to the success of the ambassadors and the educational programs they deliver. Throughout the year, ambassadors are expected to share with their fellow peer educators any presentations they create, as well as any valuable resources, information, activities, or content they acquire. Continual communication with the program manager is also required of each ambassador as a way to make sure they are accomplishing their objectives and visits for the program while maintaining the process of feedback and coaching. The program manager contacts each ambassador on a monthly basis to monitor their personal and program goals for the year.

An additional level of support is provided as the program manager conducts onsite visits to individual ambassadors. These visits assist the ambassador in their role as a peer educator as they are able to take advantage of extensive one-on-one coaching sessions to further develop their presentation skills. Fellow peer educators and ambassadors provide a significant support as a part of the program, too. Through connections built during the training, these relationships continue to develop as peers serve as leaders and a great sense of support for one another.

### **Results to date**

The National Collegiate Agricultural Ambassador program began in 2005 with 10 ambassadors selected in the first year. Since then, over 81 ambassadors have served the program, representing 29 different states. These peer educators have given over 1,500 presentations to audiences over 72,000. Reaching 35 states and two countries, the impact of the

program has been extensive. Due to the relationships and sponsorship of industry partners, the ambassadors have benefited from mentorship, career opportunities and other resources.

As the program has evolved, the program management has sought to improve the process and experience for a sustainable program. In the beginning of the program, training was limited to one week of face-to-face training. Since then, an additional training has been implemented during their year of service. At the mid-point of the ambassador's experience, they are brought back together with the entire group to further their knowledge, skills, and practice. This second training picks up with supplementary content and knowledge on agricultural issues with an enhanced focus on practice and delivery. With months of experience to their benefit, peer educators are asked to create their own individual presentations on topics of their choosing. This process helps transform what they learned in the previous training and through their experiences and evaluate their progress and growth. The presentations are critiqued through coaching from the audience, their fellow ambassadors, and the program manager on both content and delivery.

### **Recommendations/Implications**

With five years of experience and lessons learned from this program, there are several implications and recommendations to be shared. The framework for this program for college students as peer educators can be applied to other groups with an educational purpose. Beginning with a purposeful selection of peer educators and clear objectives, the train-the-trainer model can be employed in many settings.

First, the importance of face-time with the individual ambassadors and the group is necessary to build trust and community within relationships and the entire group. The program manager helps foster this sense of community in order to sustain support throughout the year. When individuals feel connected to the group and comfortable with the manager, they are more willing and able to share their experiences and ideas. One recent development in the program was to develop a weekly communication page as a way to engage in constant and concise communication while maintaining a weekly connection to the program manager and the group.

Continual communication in a variety of formats is needed to share necessary information and resources while maintaining the expectations set forth in the beginning. Peer educators are required to share the valuable information and resources they find and use within their own presentations and work. Students are given a resource notebook at the beginning of the year with the intention for them to add to their own and share information with others creating an inclusive resource.

Coaching is an underlying foundation of the development of each peer educator in the program. Students must be open to receiving feedback and make a commitment to improving their skills in facilitation. As they are exposed to the coaching process, the program manager as the coach helps them to see and understand the value and importance of constructive feedback and the need for being open and willing to receive such information. In addition, students are also asked to provide feedback to others to help their fellow peer educators grow and develop.

An arsenal project was developed through an identified need for documentation of the process and how the program is organized. This project provides a tangible resource for ambassadors to utilize throughout their year of the program. This resource contains model presentations, facilitation tools, and consistent reinforcement of the training principles. As an additional support and communication piece, the arsenal meets different needs of ambassadors needing different levels of support. Other groups featuring peer education frameworks may find it worthwhile to create a sustainable resource, such as an arsenal, to bring continuity to their programs.

Capitalizing on the experience of returning ambassadors as peer educators is beneficial. Often they can speak to real experiences that reinforce components of the training or the need for support and communication. Returning ambassadors not only serve as a vital resource to the ambassador group during the initial training, but also serving as a resource and sounding board for the new ambassadors as they begin their year. After ambassadors serve one year in the capacity of a peer educator, they are given the opportunity to return to the program. They undergo a different selection process that focuses on their commitment to sustaining the program and serving as a leader for the new ambassadors.

The final implication for this program is to stress the importance of peer educators as leaders. Not only do these peer educators learn the subject matter on a deeper level, but they are also gaining transferable leadership skills in helping, cooperation, listening and communication (Topping, 2005). With these skills also comes personal and social development, which can contribute to a sense of cohesive community (Topping, 2005). It is the hope of the program that these peer educators take the knowledge and skills they have gained from the program and implement them into their university and local communities.

## **Conclusion**

The impact of this program on college students as peer educators has been substantial. These students have gained knowledge in their areas of study, while also having the distinct opportunity to practice their communication skills through facilitation and education. This program is distinctive in its management of students; selecting only the top collegiate students to represent the national organization and the agricultural industry. Such an experience forces students to be effective in their presentation skills, properly manage their time, stay up to date on a variety of topics, and remain in communication with fellow peer leaders. This program is unique with its design and representation of diverse students from across the nation.

Leadership through education and practice provides an active and experiential model for college students to gain experience working with others and communicating in a professional context. This applied practice is what continues to allow students to be successful within the program, their coursework, and their future careers. It is a foundational goal of the program to provide an educational experience and program that allows students to grow and develop necessary and transferable skills for success.

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2. Lessons of Leadership and Professionalism: A Workshop Series with Rotaract

3. Practice Paper

4. Abstract:

Graduate students developed a leadership training curriculum for a leadership theory course. The group developed a leadership training program with the university's Rotaract chapter. A series of workshops were implemented with the Rotaract chapter to provide leadership training. The workshops serve as a model for potential leadership development for other service-based organizations.

5. Biographical Profiles

Stephen Edwards is a Ph. D. Student in Agricultural and Extension Education at Virginia Tech University. Stephen's research interests include teacher effectiveness, teacher attrition and curriculum development.

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6. Yes, please print this report in the conference proceedings, if accepted.

7. If the manuscript is not accepted as a paper, the authors are willing to have the manuscript accepted as a poster.
8. Stephen Edwards and Eric Kaufman (the first and second authors) are willing to serve as reviewers for conference submissions.
9. Eric Kaufman (the second author) is willing to serve as a facilitator for the conference.

## **Lessons of Leadership and Professionalism: A Workshop Series with Rotaract**

### **Introduction**

Teaching leadership is one of the best ways to learn leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2008). Students also learn class concepts better when they have the opportunity to teach others (Lord, 2007). Thus began the odyssey of the graduate students as they sought to implement an action research leadership project with a local organization. The project needed to allow participants to gain insight into leadership practices that support theories. Coming from different educational backgrounds and bound together by two common bonds, one being a desire to develop a deeper understanding of leadership theory and a second being the requirement of enacting a project, the research team set out on a quest to create a meaningful leadership training experience for a group that needed leadership consultation. The project began as a classroom assignment and became a research practice that could be replicated with similar groups in the future. The following shares how this project positively affected a collegiate organization and how the leadership action project could serve as the foundation of successful leadership programs for similar organizations.

### **Literature Review**

According to Dale (1969), having learners teach concepts to others is the most effective form of learning (Dale, 1969). The model states that after a period of two weeks, people learn retain on 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they say, 50% of what they see and say, but over 90% of what they say and do (Dale, 1969). The model has also been proven effective when memory retention is measured over a six week period, with participants still remembering 80 - 90% of the material that was taught to others (Lord, 2007). Because of the high retention rates present when teaching others, Dale's (1969) theory was applied to the leadership project.

Many college students have experienced service learning programs prior to entering the collegiate learning environment. A 2008 National study of elementary, middle and high school principals reported that 68% of their schools had students who participated in school recognized community activities (Spring, Grimm, & Dietz, 2008). In the same study, 86% of schools devoted at least part of their instructional time to community service activities (Spring, et al., 2008).

Students participating in service-based leadership projects benefit upon college graduation; the participants in service-based leadership programs are more likely to receive employment offers as opposed to their peers who did not participate in the programs (Fox, 2002). Comprehensive reviews of research on service learning reveal that service-learning has a positive effect on students' personal and interpersonal development including leadership skills and the ability to work well with others (Astin et al., 2006; Eyler, Giles Jr., Stenson, & Gray, 2001). Service-learning is proven to have a positive impact on students' academic learning as well as their career development and ability to apply what they have learned in the "real world" (Eyler, et al., 2001; Rhee & Honeycutt Sigler, 2010). Students can also develop management skills that are needed in organizations after graduation (Fairfield, 2010). The community received multiple

benefits where the service projects were implemented including: greater access to technology, media resources and financial literacy (Hannon, 2006; Heiselt & Wolverton, 2009; Rosacker, Ragothaman, & Gillispie, 2009).

Successful programs involving older collegiate students have also had positive results at the university level. A program from a small Midwestern college showed a great gain in financial literacy of college freshman when they attended workshops conducted by upperclassman in accounting majors (Rosacker, et al., 2009). Service based programs implemented by a small college's informational technology leadership major have resulted in technology benefits in the college's surrounding area (Hannon, 2006). A service based program facilitated by a Southern university involved undergraduate students working directly with the patrons of the local library near campus to provide access of the libraries materials to the community-at-large (Heiselt & Wolverton, 2009). Leadership programs can also offer the participants various leadership roles and opportunities that they may not have previously experienced in their educational careers (Fairfield, 2010).

Despite the documented successes, service-learning projects can be considered unsuccessful due to outside reasons. A program at a small liberal arts college in the Northeast experienced problems with their service learning programs due to the lack of program participants to attend all sessions for the specific program, presenters having to change their scheduled presentations due to the lack of people continually showing up to the programs, and the competition of similar opportunities offered during the same time period (Hannon, 2006). Another potential problem identified in the literature was that the student leaders only had a finite amount of time to implement their service projects (Heiselt & Wolverton, 2009). Working in teams to develop the project also can lead to some members to become uninvolved in the process of service-based learning (Fairfield, 2010).

### **Description of the Practice**

The graduate students were assigned to implement an action research leadership project with a local community group as the culminating assignment in a Leadership Theory graduate level course. The instructor of the course provided guiding parameters for the project and assistance when needed, but the project was left open-ended to reflect the various intellectual interests of the graduate student researchers. One of the graduate students had a direct connection with the local chapter of the Rotary Organization. Rotary International is the world's first service organization, with more than 1.2 million members who volunteer locally, regionally, and internationally to combat hunger, improve health and sanitation, provide education and job training, promote peace, and eradicate polio under the motto Service Above Self ("Rotary International: About Us," 2010). The graduate students were able to contact their sister Rotaract organization for the possibility of implementing the leadership project with the collegiate organization. Rotaract is a collegiate organization that is affiliated with Rotary International designed for participants aged 18 – 30 (Rotary, 2009). After initiating contact with Rotaract, the graduate students met with Rotaract members to determine the needs of the organization. An assessment of the needs lead to the development of five workshops that coincided with the Rotaract Organization's weekly meeting schedule. The five workshops were based upon the Service Leadership Model developed by Sendjaya and Sarros (2002) and included five major

portions of their model including team building, awareness, empathy, persuasion, stewardship and commitment (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The service model was chosen for this project based upon the mission statement of the Rotaract organization: *Service Above Self* ("Rotaract handbook," 2009).

### *Workshop #1*

The first workshop focused on defining leadership. The three main questions to be answered during the first workshop were "What is a leader?" "Who are we as a group?" and "Why is it important to know who you are as a potential leader?" The think-pair-share method was used as a discussion tool during the first lesson. The think pair-share-model involves the instructor asking students to think about the question at hand, pair up with a nearby student to discuss the possible answer and then the instructor asks the groups to share their findings (Lyman, 1981). The effect of the think-pair-share lesson is the empowerment of the entire group to contribute to the outcome of the discussion. The workshop provided comfort for organizational members to develop the foundations of leadership training.

### *Workshop #2*

Rotaract members completed the Big Five Personality Assessment prior to the second workshop. The key points of the assessment were reviewed and members were asked to reflect on methods to incorporate the strengths of each member to formulate an effective team. The Big Five Personality Assessment identifies leadership qualities that an effective leader innately possesses which include: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1991). The Big Five Personality Assessment emerged from leadership research over the last 25 years with research establishing that the possession of these five personality traits was correlated with effective leadership (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Northouse, 2007).

During the workshop, the leadership team shared the meaning of the five major measurements in the Big Five Personality Assessment Model. The team members were asked to share two major leadership strengths that they could add to the Rotaract organization. The sharing technique allowed for the group to see what kind of human, conceptual, and technical skills the group collectively possessed (Northouse, 2007). The second workshop encouraged Rotaract members to become aware of each member's strengths. By understanding their strengths, Rotaract club members began a path to better leadership (Rath & Conchie, 2008).

### *Workshop #3*

Service leadership requires leaders to engage in effective communication (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002). The goal of the third workshop was to teach effective communication techniques. The lesson focused on three areas: running a business meeting, developing a professional image, and promoting ideas. Parliamentary procedure is the process that businesses, organizations and governments worldwide use to maintain order while conducting business transactions (Robert & Robert, 2000). The goal was to introduce parliamentary procedure as an effective way to run Rotaract meetings. As a quick reference, a chart titled *Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance*

was given to each member (Morrison, 1994). Through interactive instruction, the entire Rotaract membership practiced the basic yet important tasks of introducing new business, discussing the new business and voting on the business in a meeting. *Robert's Rules of Order* was shared with the membership as an important reference for future business meetings.

Online professionalism is critical for individuals who will be entering the job market in the near future (Jannsen, 2009). The second portion of the workshop involved sharing with the members the importance of showing a positive image. The section began with an activity that involved members identifying the difference between appropriate and inappropriate photographs to post on the Internet. While some photographs were obviously either appropriate or inappropriate, several were inserted that could be considered either. The importance was for the members to realize if a photograph is questionable in appropriateness, then it probably should not be posted. Online posts can also affect someone's image; an example was shared with a Twitter post that cost a company millions of dollars of business (Shankman, 2009). The final portion of this section was a handout that the members could use to protect themselves through their individual Facebook accounts (O'Neill, 2009).

Leaders have to pitch their ideas; they have to learn how to effectively communicate the ideas to other people. Promoting ideas is accomplished through public speaking, resume etiquette, e-mail, letter writing and telephone. Members received a brief overview of effective speaking, examples of effective resumes, an explanation of the reasons why letter writing is still effective in the days of e-mail and a role-play exercise on effective phone conversations. Resources from the third portion of the workshop came from the resource book *Leadership Skills: Developing Volunteers for Organizational Success* along with some viable online sources (Lee, 2009; Morrison, 1994; Taber, 2009).

#### *Workshop #4*

Leaders must possess excellent time management skills to be effective stewards of the projects that they lead. The fourth workshop involved an introduction to two types of management, the management of time and the management of projects. The main goal of this session was to introduce the concepts of time and project management to Rotaract members through the initial planning of a car wash fundraiser. Before accomplishing this goal, Rotaract members were asked to assess their individual time management skills using an instrument from a respected business training website (MindTools, 2009). Project planning for the car wash fundraiser began after time management skills were measured. Five priorities for achieving the goals of the session included: listing goals, tasks and activities, setting priorities, managing interpretations, minimizing procrastination and setting/adhering to a schedule. Rotaract members planned the car wash fundraiser using the following order; parse, prioritize, plan, propagate, follow up and praise. The workshop ended with a review of the planning process.

#### *Workshop #5*

Commitment was the focus of the final workshop implemented with the Rotaract organization. Members were asked to recall the goals of the international organization and

create a plan to implement the knowledge gained throughout the workshop series with future Rotaract meetings and service projects.

This session involved using a six-step process focusing on vision, goal(s), resources, critical success factors, potential obstacles and chronologically arranged tasks. This process was aided through materials available from the Corporation of National and Community Service (EnCorps, 2006). The session was heavily oriented to the leadership approach of path-goal theory through the premise that the members of the student organization have certain goals and programs they would like to achieve and we as leadership consultants worked to help them navigate obstacles in order to achieve success (Northouse, 2007). The final workshop ended with the encouragement to implement the concepts learned through the workshops.

### **Results to Date**

The five workshops were conducted during the 2009 fall semester during the weekly meetings of the collegiate Rotaract Chapter. Attendance was voluntary for the membership of the Rotaract Organization, but all members who were present during each of the meetings participated in the individual workshops.

A survey was created to assess the effectiveness of the workshops. The following results were reported.

Workshop participants were asked an open-ended question for the definition of a leader. Responses included:

*“A leader is someone who can step up to the plate but also knows when to be more of a team player. They can take on different roles when needed. I think an important aspect of a leader is communication. They must be able to communicate and work with a variety of types of people and groups.”*

*“Someone who takes personal responsibility in order to attain the goals of a group.”*

*“A leader is not only someone who can lead others, but someone who can adapt to the needs of others and help to use their skills in order to make a group a more effective at completing a task.”*

*“Someone who is able to organize a group and accomplish a common goal.”*

All respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of the mission of the Rotaract organization. In addition, they all agreed or strongly agreed that personality traits affect personal leadership styles. In response to the open-ended question, “How do your personality traits affect your leadership style?” participants said:

*“I am not a very assertive person or confrontational. I think that this is shown because I lead in a different way and try to work more with others instead of appointing and directing the task.”*

*“I can use my strengths such as organization and relatable to others to make my leadership skills stronger.”*

*“Maybe overcoming my shyness would help me become a more effective leader.”*

*“I feel that leaders must be outgoing and accepting and including of all people and I feel that that has a lot to do with a person’s personality.”*

Concerning the individual workshops, participants agreed that each of the individual workshops was either beneficial or strongly beneficial to them as a participant.

When asked to provide additional thoughts or comments from the research, the following comments were provided by the Rotaract members:

*“Each individual seminar was very well planned and I feel as though the way in which the material was presented to our group was just right. You were relatable to college students and the length of each session was the perfect amount of time.”*

*“I thought that the workshop was very helpful and I would like to thank everyone who put in the time and effort to help our group grow.”*

A final presentation was held at the local Rotary International organization explaining the workshop series with their sister Rotaract Organization. The workshop materials and lesson plans were presented in a notebook to the local chapter during this presentation so that they could be implemented with future members of the Rotaract Organization.

### **Recommendations / Implications**

The Workshop Series Project was designed to apply the leadership theories graduate students were learning in class to real-life organizational leadership dynamics. The assignment also allowed students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of leadership training with individualized workshops tailored toward the interests and needs of the organization.

Replications of this project could be done by soliciting other existing organizations whose members could benefit from additional leadership training. The workshops have been developed and tested with a collegiate age group organization. Also, the workshops would be beneficial to other organizations as long as the content is tailored to the needs of the audience. The project utilized a service learning project to apply leadership theory and training. Other examples for service learning projects can be found at <http://www.servicelearning.org/> and <http://servenet.org>. Future studies should include a more thorough evaluation method. The survey for the Rotaract project provided valuable information, however specific questions could have provided more extensive data to improve the workshop series before offering the program to another future group. Because not every participant was at every workshop and not all participants filled out the survey, a true measurement of the opinions of each workshop are possibly not known to the researchers without further questioning of the participants. It is recommended that a future study conclude with a complete and in-depth qualitative case study to gather information on the benefits of the workshops and receive suggestions for improvement



from the participants. Another suggestion would be to increase the number of the workshop presentations. Two to three workshops could easily have been added using the same materials to allow for more in depth discussions of the leadership concepts.

Specific recommendations for the Rotaract group are based upon the observations of the graduate students. The graduate students recommend that the Rotaract group continue to promote leadership development by employing teamwork activities. A notebook containing all resources from the workshops was given to the President of Rotaract as well as their advisor. The notebook included the lesson plans from the workshops so the club can use it as a reference in the future. The graduate students believe that teamwork activities will strengthen the officer team and the members' desire to participate consistently throughout the academic year. Another recommendation offered to the Rotaract club is to form committees for larger projects to promote shared leadership among members. These committees could work closer with the local Rotary or Interact Organizations on activities. The Interact Organization is the Rotary Organization for secondary school members. These options should be explored in order to promote the connection between organizations as stated in the Rotaract handbook.

### **Conclusions**

The workshop series followed similar outcomes outlined in previous literature. External factors of the participants, not the presenters had the effect of changing the order of the presentations (Hannon, 2006). The workshop series also emulated the positive effects of previous service projects including students enjoying the workshops while learning useful knowledge (Rosacker, et al., 2009). The participants in the program can also develop a strong empathy for the beneficiaries of the project (Fairfield, 2010). The graduate students developed an appreciation of the true impact of the Rotary International Organization.

The main benefit of the assignment was the direct leadership training for members of the local Rotaract organization. Rotaract members reflected the appreciation of this benefit through survey responses. Another benefit of the assignment is the hands-on leadership training experience provided to the graduate students. Applying leadership theory with another organization allowed for the greater retention of learning leadership theory by the students enrolled in the leadership theory class. This statement is supported by Dale's Cone of learning which states that learners retain the most knowledge if they teach the process to others (Lord, 2007). The learning by doing approach to leadership assisted the graduate students in developing a leadership training experience where they gained an appreciation for leadership by placing service above self.

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