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Perceptions of Peer Leadership Among Honors Students

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PERCEPTIONS OF PEER LEADERSHIP AMONG HONORS STUDENTS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Psychology Degree Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

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2013

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ABSTRACT

My Capstone Experience/Thesis project seeks to explore and compare the perceptions of peer leadership among freshmen honors students who have received formal leadership training and freshmen honors students who have received no formal leadership training. Peer leadership plays an important role in all aspects of life. If students who have had formal leadership training have a more positive perception of their peer leaders, educators may want to put more peer leadership curriculum into their programs. This study tests the hypothesis that freshmen honors students who have received formal leadership training will have a more positive perception of their peer leaders. This study uses a known reliable and valid survey to collect data regarding the perceptions of peer leadership among honors students. Two subgroups were analyzed in the SPSS program by using the t-test method. The hypothesis was not supported by the findings in this study. Possible reasons for these findings are explored, including implications for further study and limitations of the current study.

Keywords: Peer Leadership, Leadership Perceptions, Honors Education, Freshmen Leadership Curriculum

Dedicated to my mother, who has given me her never-ending support and challenges me to pursue my wildest dreams.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Leadership development is a very important part of the college experience. According to Posner (2009), “the general mission of higher education historically has been to educate students to be future leaders.” Leadership development can come from a variety of ways, one of which is through course curriculum. Peer leadership is a very challenging aspect of leadership. It requires a young person to lead a group of people who are relatively equal in status and ability. In order to actually lead peers, one must earn trust and respect without having formal authority. One must become a respected individual that people equal to them will look up to. In today’s society, peer leadership is extremely important in the growth of a student’s leadership development. According to Alexander Astin, “Young people are more connected these days with their peers than anyone else,” (Richmond, 1986) which suggests that today peer leadership is more important to success than ever before.

The field of peer leadership is challenging at many different levels but is also very rewarding. The benefits for leading peers can outweigh the challenges. Peer leadership requires students to think analytically, develop managerial skills, improve communication skills, and expand problem solving skills. Often, students don’t realize their leadership potentials until they are faced with the situation of leading their

peers. Merely leading peers through a certain situation can help them realize the leadership potential.

The honors college challenges students to do just this – lead their peers. Honors courses provide students with the right setting to have more advanced class discussions, coordinate study groups outside the classroom, and have more hands-on interactions with one another. This type of education is rarely found in courses outside of the honors curriculum. The honors college also allows students to have more interaction with faculty, due to smaller class sizes. It challenges students to think outside the box due to more challenging course topics.

The following study incorporates both honors education and leadership development. It examines the different perceptions of peer leadership among freshmen honors students who have an interest in leadership as opposed to freshmen honors students who do not appear to have an interest in leadership. By addressing previous research and by analyzing data from a known reliable and valid survey, this research explores how freshmen honors students differ in their perceptions of peer leadership. From this focus, my hypothesis is:

H: freshmen honors students who have an interest in leadership development have a more positive perception of their peer leaders than freshmen honors students who do not have an interest in leadership development.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much explanation for the importance of peer leadership is exemplified in Albert Bandura's social learning theory. This theory helps explain how people learn. It includes seven major principles: learning by vicarious reinforcement, symbolic activities, forethought activity, self-regulatory capabilities, self-reflecting capability, self-efficacy, and self-reinforcement (Malone, 2002). While all of these relate to leadership in some way, learning by vicarious reinforcement closely relates to peer leadership. This principle includes imitation, modeling, and identification.

Bandura tested this ideology by observing children's violent behavior after watching a model get punished for striking a Bobo doll. Bandura found that children were less likely to imitate the violent behavior after witnessing the model receive some form of punishment for hitting the doll (Malone, 2002). Bandura explained that there are four processes required for imitation: paying attention to the model, remembering the behavior, competence that the action can be reproduced, and motivation to imitate the behavior. Bandura's social learning theory explains that not all behavior has to be imitated, but behaviors resulting in more positive feedback and reinforcement usually are imitated. It seems that the same idea should ring true regarding peer leadership. Positive peer leadership should result in more imitation and followers. More specifically, how the

perception of peer leaders differs if the students have an interest in leadership compared to students who have no interest in leadership. It would seem that students with an interest in leadership would have more positive perceptions of peer leaders than students who do not have an interest in leadership.

Haber (2011) discussed peer leadership with regard to the emergent perspective of leadership. She explained that, “the concept of leadership has developed, progressed, and emerged over the past thirty years to be more relational, process-oriented, service-directed, and systems-focused” (p.66). Haber points out that emergent leadership was a process, a group effort between team members, putting the team’s interest before oneself, regarding morals and ethics, and continuous self-development. She discussed emergent leadership as “a shared process with others as opposed to a hierarchical, leader-centric focus” (p.68).

Student Involvement

Astin researched the importance of student involvement. Astin (1999) defined student involvement as, “the amount of energy a student exerts physically and mentally in a certain academic experience” (p.518). He explained that student involvement is a verb rather than a noun. It is a behavior rather than a feeling, and it occurs along a continuum. He explained that learning and personal development from participation in a program depends on the quality and quantity of a student’s involvement in that program. Moreover, he explained that in order for any educational practice to succeed, it should encourage an increase in student involvement.

Astin (1999) outlined the traditional pedagogical theories: subject matter theory, resource theory, and individualized (eclectic) theory. These theories are the basis of most

educational institutions across the country and define a typical educational program. Astin explained that the theory of student involvement provides a substitute to these restricted traditional pedagogical theories. These theories focus more on the outcome of student development, whereas the theory of student involvement focuses on the how of student development.

The subject matter theory is also referred to as the content theory. In this theory, the student is in a passive role learning the right subject matter, while the teacher actively lectures and gives assignments. This theory favors highly motivated students, eager readers and listeners. In this theory, underprepared students suffer.

The second theory is the resource theory. Institutions think that having the right resources (libraries, laboratories, financial aid, counselors, faculty, students, etc.) available will provide the right learning environment thus increasing student involvement. The problem with this theory is that, not only are resources fixed (great faculty and students), but also the theory doesn't account for the use of the resources. For example, it doesn't matter if there are five libraries on campus if nobody is using them.

The third theory is the best one, according to Astin. The individualized theory accounts for different approaches to learning. Astin noted that not all students learn the same way, so it is ineffective to use a universal tactic. In this theory, students are required to take certain courses, but the theory focuses on electives. Students are given more of a choice for what courses they want to take, helping them focus on their interests and career plans. The theory allows for self-paced instruction, counseling, advising, and independent studies. In this theory, students are given common learning objectives, but

each individual is able to determine the timeline for completion. One drawback to this theory is that it is expensive and hard to implement.

Astin (1999) described the function of time as a resource. The theory of student involvement requires that students contribute their time, psychologically and physically. He explained that every policy that the university creates has an impact on the students' time and energy, thus affecting student involvement.

Furthermore, Astin explained that students who are in fraternities, sororities, clubs, honors programs, and athletics are much less likely to drop out of college. This may indicate that students who spend a lot of time on campus create more relationships with students and faculty. Astin listed many applications for use of the student involvement theory. Most importantly, he explained the importance of instructors focusing less on content and more on involvement, motivation, and time commitment in their experiences. Overall, instructors should focus more on the needs of the students rather than their own teaching styles.

Astin explained that the student involvement theory is more advantageous for students and faculty because it focuses more on the students' motivation, time, and energy for each experience. Leadership courses at WKU encourage the student involvement theory. Thus, students who are enrolled in leadership courses are more likely to have increased involvement. This is the primary reason for this study comparing perceptions of peer leadership of students who are enrolled in a leadership course to those who are not enrolled in a leadership course.

John Thelin (2002) reviewed Astin (1993) and concluded that the most important part pertained to Astin's findings that "those undergraduates who are enrolled full time,

live on campus, and have strong peer associations and close interaction with faculty tend to show the greatest likelihood of significant gains in cognitive skills in values and attitudes” (p.141).

Astin’s research has a tremendous effect on many aspects of this research project. This research focuses on freshmen students because Astin’s findings suggest that students who spend more time on campus, are enrolled full time, and have stronger peer associations are more involved, thus leading to more success in college. Because WKU requires most freshmen students to live on campus, which links to more success, this study restricts its analysis to freshmen students.

Honors

James Clauss (2011) discussed the significance of Honors programs at universities. He explained that honors students not only utilize their talents in their honors courses, but also in courses inside and outside their specific areas of specializations. They raise discussions in class, ask thoughtful questions, and provoke other students to think deeper about the current topic. Honors students meet more frequently with advisors and teachers and may seek out special discussion groups. Honors students top the chart at universities. Clauss explained that honors programs significantly impact a university because the students are exceptional and challenge other students to think. Clauss’s study helped narrow the broad spectrum of students to honors students used in this study because research suggests that honors students are more impacted by their peers than non-honors students.

Johnson (2009) analyzed the role of peer leaders in a course for first year students at the University of Florida. Peer leaders in this study were experienced undergraduate

students who serve as a co-instructor with the faculty professor. A peer leader who has taken the course before and was chosen by the professor leads the course. The peer leader's responsibilities include online discussion forums, coordinating three discussion panels for the class, and meeting with each individual student to discuss ways to improve, getting to know the students, and answering questions. Johnson discussed Alexander Astin's finding that his peer group affects every facet of an undergraduate's college experience. She explained that having a peer leader in class contributes to a plethora of positive gains for students, including satisfaction with faculty, support, and the all-around college experience.

Johnson detailed the honors program at the University of Florida. She explained that it is made primarily for freshman and sophomores and has many positive features including honors courses, housing, advising privileges, and more opportunities for success, such as study abroad and internships. The honors freshman experience course serves as a course similar to the honors leadership focused course analyzed in this study. The course seeks ways for the student involvement on campus. Students are able to participate in service opportunities, as well as learn more about leadership and student involvement opportunities. The course also serves to help students become more familiar with campus, academic life, and student life.

The students rated the peer leaders via survey. The assessment contained five Likert-scale questions assessing facilitation of learning, availability of the peer, enthusiasm, knowledge of campus, and ability to serve as a role model. The four open-ended questions evaluated how the peer leader's personal characteristics and teaching

skills helped the class, hindered the class, the impact the peer leader had on the class, and additional comments.

Overall, the first year students thought the peer leaders contributed to the course. Specific comments pertained to the leader's involvement, encouragement, friendliness, time management skills, and familiarization with campus. Johnson's study indicated that the program works well and further explained the impact of peer leadership in the college experience of freshmen honors students.

Vassiliou (2008) also discussed honors students and peer leadership. In a twelve-week seminar that met once a week, a pair of students led discussions about controversial essays that would challenge students to confront one another. The pair of students had full control of the class that day. They decided how to handle interruptions, introduced their topics, called on students, facilitated participation, identified the start and end times for the day, and ended class that day. Students kept a journal for each seminar that would be submitted to Vassiliou. Pairs were chosen based on interest in the topic choices.

The results of the study suggested that peer leadership in honors students may increase student involvement. Since other honors faculty noticed that students asked for assignments involving more interaction and taking greater initiative on the students' part, the study suggests that peer leadership affects honors students positively.

In summary, peer leadership affects honors students in numerous ways. Students who are involved in honors programs gain a tremendous amount of self-esteem, are more involved, and more likely to persevere through college and continue their education (Astin, 1999). Since most freshmen students at WKU are required to live on campus, it

would appear that freshmen honors students would support Astin's student involvement theory, thus making them prime participants in this study.

Leadership Development Programs

Haber (2011) examined how peer leadership is utilized in curricular leadership programs. She defined a leadership program as, "a collection of activities or experiences 'intentionally designed with the purpose of developing or enhancing the leadership skills, knowledge, or abilities of college students'" (p.70).

Furthermore, Haber explained the benefits of integrating peer leadership education into leadership programs. Peer leadership provides beneficial first-hand experiential learning and development for peer leaders. Such leaders can provide insight and support for younger, less-experienced students and can help them with the overall enjoyment of campus life and personal development. Peer leaders are a priceless human resource for leadership programs. Finally, peer leaders can assist in providing insight to educators regarding the current student population and their interests and needs.

Posner (2009) investigated the benefits of a leadership development program from students' first year in the program compared to their fourth year in the program. Through assessment via a 30-item instrument called the "Student Leadership Practices Inventory," using a five-point Likert scale, he examined specific leadership behaviors and actions.

Results of this study suggest that leadership behaviors increased from their freshman year to their senior year. Posner's finding supports the thought that leadership programs do indeed impact the students' leadership behaviors. These findings are very encouraging for leadership development programs and suggest that such programs

positively affect leadership behaviors and differences in perceptions of peer leadership should exist.

Baker (2011) defined four leadership competencies that are important in effectively analyzing peer leadership. The first, and the most important, competency is *participate*. The results from his study suggest that individuals prefer leaders who communicate, listen, encourage effectively, as well as include them in the decision making process. The second competency is *assist*, which suggests that peers prefer peer leaders who have a positive attitude, provide assistance when necessary or asked, and sincerely care to reach an agreement with the peer. The third competency is *presence*. This is the mere physical presence of the peer. The least important competency is *reflection*. This refers to the peer leader helping the peer understand the importance of the situation, meditating on the experience, and learning from the experience. These four competencies were used analyze peer leadership perceptions in this research study.

While there has been much research performed on student involvement, honors education, and leadership development programs, however limited research exists on how honors students perceive leadership. Specifically, there has been no known research done on the perceptions of peer leadership among freshmen honors students who have an interest in leadership development as compared to freshmen honors students who have no indication of an interest in leadership development. The following study examines this question.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study focused on the different perceptions of peer leadership among two subject groups. A literature review and a known reliable and valid survey already used by Baker (2011) provided insight on the different peer leadership competencies that are important to peers. The purpose of this and the succeeding chapters is to define the methodology, conduct analysis of data, and provide conclusions and discussion regarding the different perceptions of peer leadership among freshmen honors students.

Procedure

This study utilized a forty-item survey to assess the differences in the perceptions of peer leadership between two groups of honors students. The survey breaks the questions down into four subgroups consisting of 18 questions total, which include the four competencies of peer leadership, previously examined by Baker (2011). These four competencies, as addressed in the literature review above, are participate, assist, presence, and reflect. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

Since the study required involvement from human subjects, it was necessary to gain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before administering any surveys. The IRB application and approval are found in Appendix B.

Participants

Research participants included freshmen honors students who were interested in leadership development and enrolled in a freshman honor leadership-based course at a comprehensive public university located in the southeastern region of the United States. There were a total of 62 students who responded to the survey.

Freshmen honors students who received no formal leadership training were selected using the fall 2012 undergraduate student class schedule. An email was sent to multiple professors who taught freshmen honors students to obtain an adequate sample.

The data collection was taken from 3 honors 100-level classes taken by 60 students, but only 35 of them had received no formal leadership training. These students were included in this study.

Data Collection

The data collection for the freshman honors leadership focused course was administered at the end of the fall semesters in 2010 and 2011. Data collection for the honors 100-level courses was administered toward the end of the fall semester in 2012. Both were administered via pen and pencil test. This method ensures more accurate data collection due to the mere presence of administrators.

The data collector read an informed consent document to each class describing the hypothesis and benefits of the study. The collector assured the students that the study was completely voluntary. The study provided no incentives for students, and there was no knowledge of harm by taking the survey. The average student took approximately five minutes to complete the survey.

The author ensured that all surveys were completed fully to be included in the study. An Excel spreadsheet that was formatted for SPSS was used to transfer the data to SPSS for analysis. Some of the items required transfer from nominal to ordinal scales.

Data Analysis

The survey was administered to honors freshmen students enrolled in introductory level honors courses. Several of the honors students had received some formal leadership training, so their survey results were not included in this study. Table 3.1 exhibits the distribution of participants who took the survey. Students enrolled in the introductory level honors courses who have received any self-reported formal leadership training were not included in this study.

Table 3.1 Distribution of Participants Enrolled in Introductory Level Honors Course

<u>Course</u>	<u>Students Enrolled in Course</u>	<u>Students Without Formal Leadership Training</u>
Psychology 100	19	15
Communication 161	21	12
American Sign Language 101	20	7

The data were analyzed in SPSS using the t-test method. The valid questions from the study performed by Baker (2011) were combined into the four competencies discussed in the study. Each competency between the two subject groups were then compared to determine whether there was a difference in perceptions of peer leadership for each of the competencies.

The data from the 62 honors leadership focused course participants was analyzed in SPSS and compared to the data from the 35 honors students who had received no formal leadership training. Chapter III provides a discussion of the methodology of the study, and Chapter IV states the results of the data collection.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Chapters I, II, and III identified the capacity of the study, provided a literature review, and discussed the methodology of this study. Chapter IV provides an analysis of the results found by using the methods previously discussed. These results can be used to provide honors educators with more information regarding peer leadership and leadership curriculum.

Influence Survey Analysis

Baker (2011) used a literature review and analysis of the ROTC database to construct the survey, which examined five peer leadership competencies: communication, mental/hard work, support, reflection, and physical presence. The survey consisted of eight questions for each of the five subgroups. These five competencies were then further broken down into four competencies in order of importance for both males and females, as addressed in the literature review: participate, assist, presence, and reflect. A demographics section was included for comparisons during the study.

The survey results indicated four factors derived from 18 questions with no cross loading at the .3 level. Each of the four factors had strong reliability above .70. The final competencies are a combination of the five subgroups

(communication, mental/hard work, support, reflection, and physical presence) that were analyzed.

Perceptions of Peer Leadership

The results of this study indicate there is no difference in the perceptions of peer leadership among honors students who have received formal leadership training and honors students who have not received formal leadership training.

Levene's Test for Equality and Variance (see Table 4.2) was used to assess the equality of variances in different samples. T-tests assume that the variances of the population of different samples are equal. The results from Levene's test were not significant, which suggests that the population variances between the two subgroups are not different.

Table 4.1 Results of the Influence Survey

<u>Leadership Training</u>	<u>Peer Leadership Competency</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Standard Error Mean</u>
Yes	Assist	62	24.2295	3.34362	.42811
No		35	23.2059	3.91407	.67126
Yes	Reflect	62	16.8065	2.14123	.27194
No		35	15.8529	2.97599	.51038
Yes	Participate	62	21.0323	2.80496	.35623
No		35	20.9706	2.93862	.50397
Yes	Presence	62	12.0492	2.64213	.33829
No		35	12.4412	2.35376	.40538

Table 4.2 Results Based on Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

<u>Equal Variances Assumed</u>	<u>Peer Leadership Competency</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Sig (2-tailed)</u>
Yes	Assist	.226	.636	1.345	93	.182
No				1.285	59.858	.203
Yes	Reflect	7.283	.008	1.811	94	.073
No				1.649	52.124	.105
Yes	Participate	.078	.780	.101	94	.920
No				.100	55.384	.921
Yes	Presence	.058	.795	.719	93	.474
No				.742	74.969	.460

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the differences in perceptions of peer leadership among honors students. An introduction found in Chapter I, literature review summarized in Chapter II and an analysis of the methodology in Chapter III prefaced the study's results, which are found in Chapter IV. The results suggest that there is not a difference in the perceptions of peer leadership among honors students who have had formal leadership training and honors students who have had no formal leadership training. Chapter V provides an in depth discussion of the results, limitations of the study, implications for the results, and recommendations for further study, as well as a summary and conclusions of the study.

There are a few possible explanations for the results of this study. First, the influence survey created by Baker (2011) was the first of its kind. There is no other known survey used to measure peer leadership competencies. If there was an accurate measure already determined, the study could have used that as a basis and then derived an updated influence survey from that measure.

Moreover, the influence survey was administered during first year students' first semester of college. One semester of college may not be enough for perceptions of peer leadership to change. The data for both of the subject groups was collected about two-

thirds of the way through their first semester, which is only about two months into the students' first year of college. This may not be enough time for any maturation to occur within the students.

Collecting the data in the fall semester could also have an impact on the study. If the results were collected at the end of the academic year in the spring semester, students may have had more experience with peer leaders to reflect on and use during the study. According to the social learning theory proposed by Bandura (1977), in order for learning to occur, one must recall certain behaviors and transform them into appropriate actions. If students have more recent experiences with their peer leaders, they will have a more accurate recollection of events, thus making it easier for them to report the affect that such behaviors had on them. Furthermore, according to Astin (1993), students who have more frequent interactions with peers are more prone to rate them as higher leaders. Performing data collection at the end of an academic year would be beneficial because students would have an entire academic year to interact with peers, rather than just a few months.

Furthermore, the results of the study performed by Baker (2011) suggest that there is no difference in perceptions of peer leadership among first year students and fourth year students. The results of Baker's research and this study suggest that perceptions of peer leadership may form before college. Peer leadership may form early in life and not change. Therefore, formal leadership education could have little to no effect on perceptions of peer leadership.

While peer leadership education may not be beneficial, it appears that leadership education is effective. According to Avolio (2004), leadership effects are suggested to be

higher in laboratory settings compared to field settings. Due to the lack of differences in leadership education from this study, it is suggested that leadership is universal around the world. Furthermore, raising people's confidence about working with more motivated and competent followers can be beneficial for performance. Evaluating the leadership education can be beneficial in improving leadership education. Finally, evidence suggests that leadership education does work when attempting to alter leadership styles and behaviors.

Limitations

A few assumptions were made while conducting this study. The researcher assumed that the participants provided honest, accurate answers to survey questions. Without this assumption, the validity of the survey remains questionable and might result in inaccurate data with deceptive conclusions. The researcher also assumed that the participants clearly understood the survey questions and situation.

There were a few limitations with the participants and data collection. Not every student was in the same course, so the students may have different interests. There was no item on the influence survey that discussed how long the formal leadership training lasted. Moreover, the surveys were administered to the different groups of honors students over a three-year period – the honors leadership focused student data was collected in 2010 and 2011 and the survey of the other group of subjects was collected in 2012.

The data were also collected by freshmen honors students at a medium sized, public university located in the upper south-central region of the United States. The majority of the students participating in the survey originated from the same geographic

region of the United States. The university where this study took place prides itself on its diverse recruitment of students, but approximately 82 percent of the students are in the same state as the university. Due to the limited scope of the participants, the survey is not generalizable at this time. The demographics section of the study precludes an analysis based on gender or race. Few minorities were represented in this study.

Implications for Future Research

This study identified that there is no significant difference in perceptions of peer leadership among freshmen honors students who have had formal leadership training and freshmen honors students who have had no formal leadership training. Future studies should include a more diverse population, including race, gender, and geographic regions.

This study did not include a large number of students from different races and ethnicities. It also included more females than males. The participants were not representative of the United States population. The data collection occurred at a medium sized, public university in the upper-central part of the South, future studies should focus on more diverse populations.

Future studies could also focus on administering a survey to second semester freshmen or at the beginning of the sophomore year. Because the leadership training occurred during the first semester of the freshmen year for honors students, there may not have been enough time for the formal leadership training to affect perceptions of peer leaders. Performing the data collection later in the academic year may help students internalize the information learned in class and use it while taking the survey.

Future studies should also include an item on the survey that better defines the length and type of formal leadership training for the students who have not taken the honors leadership focused course. This study did not have an item regarding this topic. If the survey had addressed this issue, more subjects may have been used in this data analysis. A survey with this item would also ensure that the populations are equally compared. A student who has only had one week of formal leadership training is not comparable to a student who has had a whole semester of formal leadership training.

Honors implications

Honors educators could use the result of this study to analyze the freshmen honors leadership course. The results from this study suggest that the course does not impact perceptions of peer leadership. Honors educators may want to analyze the honors leadership focused course to determine if it has a significant impact on different aspects of leadership.

Perceptions of peer leadership may form earlier in life, so a course involving peer leadership may not benefit the honors curriculum. However, even though there is no significant improvement in peer leadership, a leadership course focusing on other areas of leadership may provide benefits.

Conclusions

Peer leadership is important in all aspects of life. Astin (1999) explained that the students' benefits from student involvement depend on the quality and quantity of the organization. He explained the importance of instructors focusing less on content and more on involvement, motivation, and time commitment in their experiences. Studies

performed by Thelin (2002), Johnson (2009), Vassilou (2008), and Haber (2011) suggest that peer leaders do have an impact on freshmen and honors students.

This study examined the differences in the perceptions of peer leadership among honors students. The results suggest that there is no significant difference in peer leadership perceptions among honors students who have had formal leadership training and honors students who have not had formal leadership training. This can be helpful for honors educators because leadership training does not necessarily have to include peer leadership. However, leadership classes may prove successful without the peer leadership aspect. Further studies should focus on a more diverse population and ensure that the samples are equal in the length and quality of formal leadership training. Future studies could also examine the success of leadership courses.

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<i>Use this scale to answer the next set of questions</i>				
None	Little	Neutral	Some	Very Much
1	2	3	4	5

How important was:

The physical appeal of the individual helping or supporting you?	1	2	3	4	5
The mere presence of that individual in helping or supporting you?	1	2	3	4	5
The physical fitness of the person helping or supporting you?	1	2	3	4	5
A sense of insecurity created by the physical presence of the person helping you?	1	2	3	4	5
The presence of the person in creating a sense of confidence within you?	1	2	3	4	5
The level of personal appearance maintained by the person helping you?	1	2	3	4	5
Having the person helping you physically near you?	1	2	3	4	5
The physical attributes (height, weight, gender, etc.) of the person helping you?	1	2	3	4	5

Overall, how would you rate the VALUE of the support or assistance you received from this individual?

Poor Excellent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How recently did this individual support or assist you?

_____ Weeks/Months/Years

Influence Survey Demographic Information

Please provide the following information. You are not required to answer any question that you find inappropriate.

Date: _____

Class: _____

Age: _____

Gender: M F

Race: White Black Hispanic Asian Other

College Level: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Academic Major: _____

Grade Point Average: _____

ACT/SAT Score: _____

Are you the first in your immediate family to attend college? YES NO

What was the approximate size of your graduating class? _____

Have you ever received any formal leadership training (i.e. courses, conferences)? YES NO

APPENDIX B



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research Integrity
364 Tate Page Hall
270-745-2129; Fax 270-745-4221

**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF INVESTIGATIONS
INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS**

The human subjects application must stand alone. Your informed consent document(s), survey instrument, and site approval letter(s) should be attached to the application and referred to in your write up of the appropriate sections so that reviewers may read them as they read your application. Thesis proposals or other documents that are meant to substitute for completing the sections of the application will not be read and should not be attached.

1. Principal Investigator's Name: Christy Culbreth
Email Address: christy.culbreth516@topper.wku.edu
Mailing Address: 491 Timberidge Dr, Edgewood, KY 41017
Department: Leadership Studies Phone: (859) 992-4707
Completion of the Citi Program Training? Yes No(double click on box)
Found at www.citiprogram.org Date 9/18/12

2. If you are a **student**, provide the following information:

Faculty Sponsor: John Baker Department: Leadership Studies Phone: 270-
Faculty Mailing Address: 1906 College Heights Blvd #11067, Bowling Green,
KY 42101
Completion of the Citi Program Training? Yes No
Found at www.citiprogram.org Date 5/16/12

Student Permanent Address (where you can be reached 12 months from now):
491 Timberidge Drive, Edgewood, KY 41017

Is this your thesis or dissertation research? Yes xxxx No _____

Policy of Research Responsibility. The Western Kentucky University Institutional Review Board defines the responsible party or parties of the research project as the Principal Investigator and Co- Principal Investigator. In those cases when a student holds the title of Principal Investigator, the Faculty Sponsor (Advisor, Supervisor, Administrator, or general managing Council) will conduct oversight of the research project and share in the accountability to assure the responsible conduct of research. Researchers outside of the Western Kentucky University campus system are required to provide proof of training to obtain approval for WKU Human Subjects protocols. This proof must be presented by the Compliance Official at the researcher's institution to the WKU Compliance official. When no training requirement exists at the researcher's host institution, training must be conducted through affiliation of Western Kentucky University CITI Program.org requirements. WKU faculty, staff, and students are required to complete the CITI Program Training modules outlined by the WKU IRB.

3. Project Period: Start upon IRB approval End December 2012
month, day, year

Note: Your project period may not start until after the IRB has given final approval.

4. Has this project previously been considered by the IRB? Yes No
If yes, give approximate date of review: October 5, 2009 HS10-047

5. Do you or any other person responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of this research have an economic interest in, or act as an officer or a director of, any outside entity whose financial interests would reasonably appear to be affected by the research?
 Yes No

If "yes," please include a statement below that may be considered by the Institutional Conflict of Interest Committee:

6. Is a proposal for external support being submitted? Yes No
If yes, you must submit (as a separate attachment) one complete copy of that proposal as soon as it is available and complete the following:
a. Is notification of Human Subject approval required? Yes No
b. Is this a renewal application? Yes No
c. Sponsor's Name:
d. Project Period: From: To:

7. You must include copies of all pertinent information such as, a copy of the questionnaire you will be using or other survey instruments, informed consent documents, letters of approval from cooperating institutions (e.g., schools, hospitals or other medical facilities and/or clinics, human services agencies, individuals such as physicians or other specialists in different fields, etc.), copy of external support proposals, etc.

8. Does this project SOLELY involve analysis of an existing database? *Yes*
 No

If yes, please provide the complete URLs for all databases that are relevant to this application, then complete Section A and the signature portion of the application and forward the application to the Office of Compliance.

If the database is not available in an electronic format readily available on the internet, please provide evidence that the data were collected using procedures that were reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board, then complete Section A and the signature portion of the application and forward the application to the Office of Compliance.

9. Is there a plan to publish or present the findings from the research outside the department or university? *Yes* *No*

In the space below, please provide complete answers to the following questions. Add additional space between items as needed.

I. PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT

- A. Provide a brief summary of the proposed research. Include major hypotheses and research design.

For my CE/T project, I will focus on the phenomenon of peer leadership. As a Psychology major with an interest in Industrial/organizational Psychology in the future, leadership is a field that most interests me. For this particular project, I will examine the perceptions of peer leadership of Honors students who have an interest in leadership versus those honors students who have a limited interest in leadership. I will determine if there is any difference in the perception of peer leadership and if there is, I will examine what those differences are and why they may occur.

I hypothesize that there is a difference in the perception of peer leadership between honors students with an interest in leadership and those without an interest. I believe one reason for this may be because those individuals with an interest in leadership are knowledgeable about the subject and can deduce whether their peers are good leaders or not. The honors students with an interest in leadership can admire their peers who have good leadership skills. The honors students who have no interest in leadership may not be able to tell a good leader from a bad one and base their decisions solely on whether they like that person, or not.

My approach to this project will be in the form of a survey. I will distribute the survey to all the Honors 175 classes and approximately 75 other honors students who have not had a formal class in leadership. The survey will have a question that addresses whether the subject is or isn't interested in leadership. The survey will ask the subject to "Think of a time in your life when an individual, within your peer group, helped you either (1) make an important or difficult decision or, (2) was instrumental in supporting you during a crucial time. If more than one person comes to mind, focus on the one that had the greatest influence on you." Questions that follow include the way the individual handled the situation, communicated to the subject, helped the subject, and how the appearance of the leader affected the subject. The survey will have a section designated to finding out the demographics of the subject.

The data will be processed with help from Dr. Reagan Brown in the Psychology Department. We will use SPSS and other statistical methods to determine the validity and reliability of our findings. We will then produce a graph to display our data.

I expect to produce significant findings within the realm of peer leadership. My project could help determine if there is a correlation between the perceptions of peer leadership for students who have an interest in leadership and those who don't. These findings will help contribute to the phenomenon of peer leadership because they could help leaders understand whether it is more or less beneficial to lead honors students who understand leadership. My findings could also help us determine if leadership classes further the understanding of and appreciation for peer leadership. Overall, my project will

help students understand the significance of leading their peers – whether they do or they don't have an interest in leadership.

B. Describe the source(s) of subjects and the selection criteria. Specifically, how will you obtain potential subjects, and how will you contact them?

Are the human subjects – under 18 years of age, pregnant women, prisoners, or fetus/neonates? Yes No

The sources of subjects will be chosen first by their class enrollment. They will come from the HON 175 class rosters, as well as other honors classes. First, I will ask the professor if it is permissible to administer the survey to his or her class. I will then attend the class and administer the survey.

C. Informed consent: Describe the consent process and attach all consent documents.

I will read a statement to the class on informed consent then administer the survey to those students who volunteer to participate in this study.

D. Procedures: Provide a step-by-step description of each procedure, including the frequency, duration, and location of each procedure.

1) I will contact the professors teaching honors classes and ask permission to administer the survey in their class.

2) The survey will be administered one time, upon IRB approval, to participating honors classes during their class time in the assigned classrooms.

3) The survey is a pen-and-paper survey.

4) The data from the survey is then transferred to an Excel spreadsheet. The Spreadsheet is then imported into SPSS for analysis. All data, both paper and electronic, is stored in secured rooms on WKU's campus.

5) After the conclusion of the study, the paper copies of the data will be destroyed on WKU's campus using secure means (shredded).

6) Electronic data is maintained and secured by faculty for possible future studies.

E. How will confidentiality of the data be maintained? (Note: Data must be securely kept for a minimum of three years on campus.)

Dr. Baker will secure all data in a secured container in the Center for Leadership Excellence, Western Kentucky University, for a period of three years. After the three year period, all data pertaining to this research project will be destroyed.

F. Describe all known and anticipated risks to the subject including side effects, risks of placebo, risks of normal treatment delay, etc.

There are no known and anticipated risks to the subject.

- G. Describe the anticipated benefits to subjects, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result.

Subjects will have the opportunity to participate in a research study that could affect their honors curriculum. Peer leadership affects all areas of life. This study will help bring awareness to honors educators. If students who have taken a leadership course have a better perception of peer leadership than those who have not taken a leadership course, educators may want to inculcate more leadership courses into the honors curriculum.

- H. List of references (if applicable):

Not applicable

Additions to or changes in procedures involving human subjects, as well as any problems connected with the use of human subjects once the project has begun, must be brought to the attention of the IRB as they occur.

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Differences in Perceptions of Peer Leadership Among Honors Students

Investigator: Christy Culbreth, Department of Leadership Studies, 859-992-4707

(include name, department and phone of contact person)

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask him/her any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. **Nature and Purpose of the Project:** This project focuses on the differences in perceptions of peer leadership of Honors students who have an interest in leadership versus those honors students who have no interest in leadership. Data will be analyzed through SPSS. This study will help bring awareness to honors educators. If students who have taken a leadership course have a better perception of peer leadership than those who have not taken a leadership course, educators may want to inculcate more leadership courses into the honors curriculum.
2. **Explanation of Procedures:** The survey will be administered to you during your regularly scheduled class time.
3. **Discomfort and Risks:** There are no known discomforts or risks associated with this study.
4. **Benefits:** You will have the opportunity to participate in a research study that could potentially affect your own honors curriculum.
5. **Confidentiality:** I will access the surveys and analyze the data. Dr. John Baker will secure all data in a secured container in the Center for Leadership Excellence, Western Kentucky University, for a period of three years. After the three year period, all data pertaining to this research project will be destroyed.

6. **Refusal/Withdrawal:**

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

Signature of Participant

Date

Witness

Date

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT
THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY
THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Paul Mooney, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-2129



A LEADING AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WITH INTERNATIONAL REACH
OFFICE OF COMPLIANCE

DATE: September 24, 2012

TO: Christy Culbreth
FROM: Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [380244-1] Differences in Perceptions of Peer Leadership Among Honors Students

REFERENCE #: IRB 13-057

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: September 24, 2012

REVIEW TYPE: Exempt from Full Board Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Exempt from Full Board Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by an *implied* consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Paul Mooney at (270) 745-2129 or paul.mooney@wku.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Western Kentucky University (WKU) IRB's records.