

**THE IMPACT OF A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT LEARNING
COMMUNITY ON THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF
FRESHMEN IN TRANSITION AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY: A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF YEAR ONE AND YEAR TWO**

A Thesis

by

FELIX WALLACE ARNOLD III

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

May 2007

Major Subject: Agricultural Education

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Nicole Stedman
Committee Members,	Manda Rosser
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ABSTRACT

The Impact of a Leadership Development Learning Community on the Leadership Development of Freshmen in Transition at Texas A&M University: A Comparative Analysis of Year One and Year Two. (May 2007)

Felix Wallace Arnold III, B.S., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Nicole Stedman

The purpose of this research is to see if the peer mentors make a difference in the leadership development of students, their feelings about peer mentors, the Leadership Living Learning Community, and their acclimation to Texas A&M University.

Leadership is defined as an interaction between members of a group in which individuals, in the name of the group, act as agents of change, persons whose acts affect other people more than other peoples' actions affect them. The five leadership skills studied were working in groups, positional leadership, communication, decision-making, and understanding self.

A post-then methodology was utilized with self-reporting as the process by which data was collected following completion of an academic leadership learning community. The findings from years one and two participants were computed individually and then compared to see if the addition of peer mentors during the second year yielded any significant findings.

The major findings for this study were as follows: Year one participants in the learning community indicated improved leadership skills after participation in the learning community for the first semester, as measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory. In addition, year two participants in the learning community indicated a similar increase of leadership skills after the first semester. Year one participants indicated a more statistically significant increase when compared to year two on their leadership skills on the individual questions, while year two participants were found to have more statistically significant findings relating to the five leadership skills or Leadership Skills Inventory scales. Responses by year two participants indicated that the peer mentors who helped them were supportive, gave positive feedback, were good role models, were knowledgeable about Texas A&M University, were easy to communicate with, and did not use peer pressure to persuade them to do anything negative.

To Chrissy

Without your constant love and support I
could not have finished.

Thank you for everything.

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I would first like to thank my mother who instilled the qualities and drive in me to succeed. Without her I would not be where I am today. She has been a constant source of strength and support my whole life. Thank you for making me the person I am.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Expectations for undergraduates need to be established early in the academic career. This is a growing need for higher education institutions. Parents and employers believe there is something lacking in this experience and students are either unprepared for college or for life after college. Everyone involved emphasized this lack of experience (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). One way to address these issues is through the use of learning communities. A learning community is a tool for blending disciplines and increasing interactions between faculty and students.

Over the past twenty years, the concept of learning communities has grown, developed, and shown to be in interdisciplinary approach to undergraduate education (Smith et al., 2004). One of the most consistent driving forces in the development of academic learning communities in higher education has been the desire to bring together faculty, staff, administration, and students to create an enhanced learning environment intended to prepare students for not only a career, but more importantly life (Arnold, Stedman, & Rotter, 2006).

This thesis follows the style of the *Journal of Leadership Education*.

Background

At Texas A&M University, the Freshmen Leadership Living Learning Community (L3C) is a freshmen-year initiative designed to engage students academically, while producing reflective experiences, and creating intentional, self-aware learners. It is hoped through this process students will have a successful transition from high school to college and become fully integrated into the university community. The environment for such a program is one which is academically focused, while at the same time students can frequently interact outside of the classroom in a safe, community-type environment. This was developed through collaboration between the Department of Residence Life (Res Life) and the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications (ALEC), formerly Agricultural Education. These two departments combined possess all of the required materials and knowledge.

The Department of Residence Life oversees on-campus housing; referred to as residence halls, while ALEC is home to Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Development (ALED), formerly Agricultural Development. ALEC is one of only a few majors/departments at Texas A&M University addressing the leadership needs of students. An example of another program would be the Corps of Cadets, the university's ROTC program.

“Some countries, such as the USA, have chosen to locate leadership training in university departments and have built clear links with academic programmes” (Brundrett & Dering, 2006).

The L3C accentuates a common connection between the students involved and leadership. One of the main goals of L3C instructors is to make an impact on the students' personal leadership development. This is completed through a variety of methods. The methods used to accomplish this for year one included: a) specific curriculum designed to develop leadership, b) co-curricular activities, and c) a personal leadership development workbook. In year two, instructors implemented the use of peer mentors. The peer mentors alumni students from the inaugural year who elected to serve in this role.

The L3C is in its second year of operation and has had to make changes from observations and data from year one. Some of those changes are: a) choosing a new textbook, b) using the peer mentors, c) working more closely with the Residence Life staff, especially the Resident Hall Assistant (RA), and d) use more experiential learning. The textbook was found to be too "juvenile" by students in the first year, so a new one was chosen to help with the concern by the first year participants. The RA's were not fully utilized in year one, with a few backing out of participating, so considerations and arrangements were made for year two. The students found the experiential learning activities (trip to state capitol, trip to NASA, ropes course, and three programs by graduate students) to be more beneficial than anything else. Instructors used this information in designing year two, in the hopes of increasing the leadership development of the second year participants.

Learning Communities

In 2001, the National Survey of Student Engagement reported positive correlations between learning communities and five benchmarks: diversity experiences, gains in personal and social development, practical competence, general education, and overall satisfaction with the undergraduate experience.

Texas A&M University has sought to establish learning communities designed to address the freshmen year experience. According to Texas A& M University, the underlying reasons for freshmen learning communities is to simulate the feeling of a smaller college and by doing so increase the experience for freshmen. Not only do the students attend class together, but live together to help with the overall experience of their freshmen year (Texas A&M, 2005).

In 1998, the American Association of Higher Education, the American College Personnel Association, and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators designed a joint task force to identify the importance of powerful relationships and a shared responsibility for learning. The first group identified, “learning is fundamentally about making and maintaining connections: biologically through neural networks; mentally among concepts, ideas, and meaning; and experientially through interaction between the mind and the environment, self and other, generality and context, deliberation, and action.” From these conceptions the task force recognized the role living/learning opportunities play in supporting freshmen college students (Arnold, Stedman, & Rotter, 2006).

Tinto (1998) said there exists four different styles of learning communities in higher education. The four different styles were: linked courses, freshmen interest groups, cluster or federated courses, and coordinated studies. From this, a learning community can be residential or non-residential, academically-oriented, or simply by interest. Shapiro and Levine (1999) describe a residential learning community to be a living space that incorporates intentional academic programs.

The impact on institutions of higher education using learning communities is more important than the structure of the learning communities themselves. This allows the opportunity for faculty, staff, and student development, as well as, spurring the development of better teaching methods (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). Yet the learning communities provide students with the opportunity for greater academic success and satisfaction (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Tinto, 1998; Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Recent research suggests the greatest impact is on student persistence, or decisions to stay in school through graduation (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990; Pike, Schroeder, & Berry, 1997; Tinto, 1998). When considering students' success, it is important to consider, the degree of success they want when they make the transition from high school to their undergraduate career. From observations, many students have a somewhat difficult transition from high school to college for many reasons such as: lack of supervision, new found freedom, being away from home for the first extended amount of time, distractions (internet, friends, activities, sports, video games, sleep, television, etc...), road trips, etc... Learning communities allow students

the ability to be around other freshmen who might be struggling with the same issues, while at the same time wanting to learn how to overcome these obstacles. This is especially true for the L3C, since students spend most of their time around each other, whether is it in class(es) or the residence hall.

Leadership Development

Leadership, like love is hard to define, but once you have seen it, you know what it is. There are multiple ways to finish the sentence “Leadership is...” (Northouse, 2004, p. 2). Northouse continues that although each of us intuitively knows what he or she means by such words (democracy, love, and peace); the words can have different meanings for different people. As soon as we try to define leadership, we immediately discover that leadership has many different meanings (p. 2).

Leadership education is driven by the desire to educate learners in the theoretical foundations of leadership, organizational development, and organizational change. These foundations are supported by psychology, sociology, and philosophy. The intent of leadership education is to provide learners with tools to be successful in a variety of contexts. The mission of all agricultural leadership education programs is “to discover, teach, and disseminate leadership theory, principles, and practices in Agricultural and Life Sciences contexts to develop leadership for organizations, businesses, governmental agencies and communities” (National Summit for Agricultural Leadership Education, 2004; Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications, Texas A&M University, 2005).

The instructors for the L3C designed the course to support a broad range of the students' needs, while at the same time focusing on one specific topic, leadership. With that, the intent of the L3C was to foster an environment to enhance their freshmen year experience and more specifically their leadership development. Leadership development is important for their development since it deals with concepts related to motivation, mentoring, needs, power, negotiating, self-esteem, etc.

Leadership development was chosen because it incorporates many topics that Texas A&M University finds to be important in not only the college experience, but more importantly the freshmen experience (Vision 2020, Texas A&M University). The freshmen experience, in most cases, determines the remainder of a student's college career from the sense of motivation, determination, study habits, etc. After this experience students learn what they can and cannot do to succeed in college and in a sense move past the mentality of being on their own. This is important because this is usually the time in their college career when they choose to get involved in student organizations.

If they can learn the proper skills necessary to be successful leaders early, it can help them in the future as they gain the experience needed to be a successful leader. Leadership education has one goal, "to provide opportunities for people to learn the skills, attitudes, and concepts necessary to become effective leaders" (Huber, 2002, p. 27). However, most agree leadership is often learned by experience (Hirst, Mann, Bain, Pirola-Merlo, & Richver, 2004).

Experiential Learning

Dewey (1938) said true learning is best achieved when it is a combination between academic learning and experientially-based learning. This is the basic construct of the learning community, providing academic learning and then the opportunity to learn through experience. Learning communities provide a unique way for students to experience academic learning, while providing them with support (Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Hirst, et al. (2004) concluded leaders learn best when presented with challenging work, solving complex problems, leading a team, but additionally, that they foster communication and enhance team performance. Solving problems, leading teams, and communicating are important attributions of a leader and have been found in research assessing student leadership development (Brick, 1998; Rotter, 2004; Townsend & Carter, 1983). These concepts allowed for the application of the Tuckman and Jensen Group Development Model (1977).

The model shows the natural stages small groups go through which include: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, and Adjourning. The Forming phase takes place at the conception of the group where individuals want to be not only accepted, but also want to avoid conflict. During the Storming phase, group members feel-out their roles and confront other members of the group. With the arguments out of the way the group progresses into the Norming phase, in which the group's roles, having been establish, start working as the responsibilities and tasks become clear and agreed. The Performing phase is one that is not always reached, but when reached groups accomplish their tasks and work well together. Ten years after coming up with the first four stages,

Tuckman saw that there needed to be a fifth, Adjourning, in which the group completes its task and is disengaged.

The Tuckman and Jensen Group Development Model was an important factor in designing the material for the L3C. Using specific activities and topics, the L3C participants are guided through the phases of the model, however, they progress on their own. Each semester offers opportunity to complete some of the stages, with the hope being that all students will go through all five stages of the model.

Peer Mentoring

Hunt and Michael (1983) define mentoring as any age difference of half a generation apart. From this we can surmise that peer mentoring would be of less than a half a generation in age between the mentor and the protégé.

According to history, mentoring has its origins in ancient Greece (McLean, 2004). The original mentor was described as “the wise and trusted counselor whom Odysseus left in charge of his household in his absence. Athena, in the guise of Mentor, became the teacher and guardian of Odysseus’ son, Telemachus” (McLean, 2004).

The naysayer’s of peer mentoring say it does not work because the mentor and protégé are too close in age and life experience and the mentor needs more experience to share with the protégé. Hunt and Michael (1983) also say that mentors need to be successful in their fields. So why is it not possible, according to them, to have a mentoring relationship of people closer in age, when one could have far more experience than the other? It is argued that mentors need to be in a certain age bracket compared to

their protégé, so that they are not viewed as father figures or friends (Hunt & Michael, 1983).

On college campuses it is often hard to find a professor, staff or faculty member who has time to meet with you on a regular basis or serve as a mentor. However, there is an abundance of other college students, who have plenty of free time and experience with subjects or life one might need help with. Why then should we exclude this whole group of people from being able to be mentors or even coaching their peers, who might not have the experience they do?

Santovec (2004) said the results from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse study showed peer mentors gained leadership opportunities, allowing them to hone their skills, while the new students were able to meet people in a social setting that did not revolve around drinking. McLean (2004) found that students who were mentored were more apt to learn and identified the mentors as role models, while the mentors underwent personal development.

Problem Statement

As a new program within a higher education institution, showing programmatic impact is an important step in continuing support, not only administratively, but also economically. The L3C was developed to address the needs of freshmen in transition at Texas A&M University; therefore accountability of the program to make measurable differences in the programmatic objectives must be established. The objectives of the Leadership Living Learning Community are to; 1) provide freshmen in transition a introduction to personal leadership development, 2) provide freshmen in transition with

peer support, and 3) provide a foundation for academic success. For the purposes of this study the first two programmatic objectives were pinpointed as appropriate for research. The third objective was not included because program staff had not operationalized a detailed account of what academic success could be measured by. This programmatic objective will have a measurable impact once year one students have reached the point of graduation, in which matriculation rates may be compared with graduation rates. The intent of the study was to provide a baseline measurement of leadership development and peer mentor involvement in the Leadership Living Learning Community.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of a leadership living learning community on the leadership development of freshmen in transition at Texas A&M University. The purpose guided the development of specific research objectives which were written to identify, not only the leadership development of the freshmen, but also the perceptions of the freshmen of the peer mentors.

Objectives

The specific research objectives, guided by the purpose, of the study were to:

- 1) the leadership development, as measured on the LSI, of year one L3C participants,
- 2) the leadership development, as measured on the LSI, of year two L3C participants,
- 3) the leadership development, as measured on the LSI, between years one and two, and
- 4) the perceptions of year two L3C participants about the role of peer mentors.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

People have been studying leadership since the beginning of time, not because they do not understand it, but because it interests them and is always changing and complex. “From the very beginning, human beings have been trying to figure out and analyze their own behaviors, determine why what they do has any meaning, determine what they should do next, and decide how to improve upon what they have done in the past” (Rotter, 2004).

There is not just one universal definition of leadership, but many that have created throughout time to serve various interests. Rotter (2004) defines leadership as “an interaction between members of a group in which individuals, in the name of the group, act as agents of change, person whose acts affect other people more than other peoples’ action affect them.” While Townsend (AGED 340 Class notes, 2003) says that leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation and competencies of others, which usually results in a positive effect on the group.

Leadership then can best be learned through experience. Terenzini and Pascarella (1991) found that both in and out of class experiences, sustained over an extended period of the impact college students rather than just a single experience, particularly when academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular activities are both supporting and relevant to a particular educational outcome (p. 31 & 31).

When students make use of the available resources, whether it be people, material, positions, and facilities it greatly impacts their leadership development (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1991). Peer mentoring is a way to bring together people and allow them to learn from the more experienced persons' experiences. There are many terms associated with peer mentoring "peer educator, peer counselor, paraprofessional, student assistant, student educator, tutor, resident assistant, orientation leader, and many more (Ender & Newton, 2000, p. 2).

Ender (1983, p. 324) defines these synonymous terms in a working definition as "students who have been selected and trained to offer educational services to their peers. These services are intentionally designed to assist in the adjustment, satisfaction, and persistence of students toward attainment of their educational goals. Students performing in paraprofessional roles are usually compensated in some manner for their services and are supervised by qualified professionals."

Students have been helping each other in some fashion since the invention of schools; while people have been helping each other since the beginning of time. Students in classes help one another study, work on projects, take notes, etc., while students who live on campus have been helping each other with the same, whether that be students in "leadership" roles such as resident assistants or advisors (Ender & Newton, 2000).

Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) small-group development model can then be used, as Ender eluded, to help students through the peer mentoring process as well; as well as help with their leadership development. The model says groups pass through five

certain phases from Forming to Adjourning. Each phase is classified a different way, to distinguish them from one another. Most times groups do not pass through all phases and can get stuck in a loop between Storming and Performing.

The model uses a five step process to help groups through the different phases: including Forming (testing and dependence of the group), Storming (intragroup conflict), Norming (development of group cohesion), Performing (functional role readiness), and Adjourning (group termination) (Arnold, Stedman, & Rotter, 2006).

Conceptual Framework

Learning communities have been around, in at least some part, since the 1920s; however, in the last 20 years there has been an increase in their development, and they have shown to be an interdisciplinary approach to undergraduate education (Lichtenstein, 2005; Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004; Arnold, Stedman, & Rotter, 2006). Learning communities can thus be used to help students transition from high school to college which is an issue for some. “Student attrition in the first year of college is an issue of concern for all postsecondary institutions” (Lichtenstein, 2005).

Texas A&M University (2005) defines a learning community as consisting of a “group of students who are enrolled in the same courses with the same instructors. Learning communities provide new curricular structures that link courses so that students have opportunities for deeper understanding and integration of the material they are learning, and more interaction with one another and their teachers as fellow participants in the learning experience.”

The desire to bring together faculty, staff, administration, and students to create an enhanced learning environment intended to prepare students for the real world, both life and work, has been the driving factor in the use and development of learning communities in institutions of higher education.

Northouse (2004, p. 4) defines leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Huber (2002, p. 27) said leadership has one goal, “to provide opportunities for people to learn the skills, attitudes, and concepts necessary to become effective leaders.” While this is said, others agree that leadership is often learned by experience (Hirst, Mann, Bain, Pirola-Merlo, & Richver, 2004).

Alexander Meiklejohn can be thought of as the father of learning communities and like Dewey, believed students were bored with traditional schooling, because it had become procedural. They both believed that learning-by-doing was the best course of action, which would also help with student’s social interaction (Talbert & Boyles, 2005).

Dewey (1938) provided true learning is best achieved when we are able to combine it with experientially-based learning. Learning communities allow students to experience academic material, while they are able to learn through doing (Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Mentoring has been adopted in almost every learning forum (McClean, 2004) and goes hand-in-hand with leadership (Mullen, 2006). Browne-Ferrigno and Muth say that “leadership mentoring is a process whereby performance expectations are developed by aspiring and practicing principals through interactions” (Mullen, 2006).

A more specific form of mentoring, and one which has recently become more widely used is peer mentoring. It is a way for students to be assisted with learning and social integration by more experienced people who are familiar with not only the younger people, but also the institutional culture (McLean, 2004).

“Faculty provide students with an academic component, a residential/community component, and a real experience. All three of these combine to create a holistic approach to education for first year freshmen” (Stedman & Rotter, 2005)

Learning Communities

At many colleges and universities students' education may be constructed as a blend of unrelated or slightly related courses. Institutions of higher education may provide a wealth of information; however, it is often hard for students to relate, let alone use the information available and given to them (Harrison, Moore, & Evans, 2006). Many times institutions respond to this lack of connectedness, by simply adding a course or a program. This is where learning communities come into play.

Alexander Meiklejohn came up with the idea of learning communities in the 1920s when he established an experimental college at the University of Wisconsin as a way to help students develop citizenship. It was going to be accomplished through the creation of a “community” as well as an interface between living and learning; the connection was between the real world, where students lived, and the college world, where they learned (Gabelnick, et al., 1990.; Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Jones, Laufgraben, & Morris, 2006). Learning communities have been periodically revived since the 1960s to address issues of retention and achievement (Smith, 2001).

Laufgraben (2004) defines learning communities as “clusters of courses organized around a curricular theme which students take as a group – strengthen and enrich students’ connections to each other, their teachers, and the subject matter they are studying.”

There are many different definitions of learning communities defined by Tinto (1998) and Jones et al. (2006), most commonly they are referred to in one of four ways: linked or clustered courses, cohorts in large courses, coordinated studies programs, and residence based learning communities.

Linked or clustered courses are a way of connecting related courses, so student’s not only learn material which supports the other course, but also allows them to take the courses with the same students; allowing them to develop stronger bonds. Cohorts are similar to interest groups, where students with similar interests take the same courses or merely work together in one course, much like a study group. Coordinated studies programs or team-taught courses allow two or more professors to teach a course, allowing for more information and different teaching styles, while also allowing for a lower student to teacher ratio. Finally, residence based learning communities connect classroom-based content with a residential living component (Jones et al., 2006).

Residence based learning communities, referred to in this study as Living Learning Communities (LLC) live in on-campus residence halls, register for courses designed for their cohort, and participate in a diverse set of co-curricular activities centered on their academic learning (Arnold, Stedman, & Rotter, 2006). Shapiro and

Levin (1999) also describe residential learning communities as a living space that incorporates intentional academic programs.

“One of the most significant efforts to improve freshmen learning has been the development of learning of residential and nonresidential “freshmen learning communities” (FLCs) on campuses.” FLCs emphasize small class sizes, curricular cohesion, collaborative teaching, interdisciplinary learning, instruction by tenured and tenured-track faculty, the formation of peer networks, and out-of-class support and learning (Talbert and Boyles, 2005).

Institutions of higher education have been trying to develop ways to help students with their integration into and adjustment to college life. Often time’s new college students have a hard time adjusting to college life for various reasons: new place, being away from home for the first time, more people, challenging work, etc. To combat these difficulties faced by some students, institutions of higher education are turning to learning communities, while some are taking a stand and using living learning communities.

Research conducted by MacGregor (1987) found students choose to participate in learning communities because they are looking for a classroom environment that is both active and collaborative, in conjunction with building social networks.

Research conducted by Gabelnick et al. (1990), Pike, Schroeder, and Berry (1997), Tinto (1998) says that student involvement in learning communities increases their desire to stay in school; which is supported by findings from Shapiro and Levine (1999), Tinto (1998), Zhao and Zuh (2004), and Thompson, Gregg, and Niska (2004)

which says learning communities provide students with the opportunity for greater academic success and satisfaction.

Browne and Minnick (2005) say “two specific skills play a large role in the successful university experience: critical thinking and moral reasoning. These two skills are important because they are vital to creating the kind of informed citizens necessary for a functional democracy. To the extent that higher education plays an important role in creating and furthering democratic citizens, its goals should be to train students in the use of critical thought and moral reasoning.”

This is supported by Fong (2002), Thomas (2001), Browne and Minnick (2005), and Hotchkiss, Moore, and Pitts (2006) who say universities have a duty to prepare students for the real world, both civically and morally, which are relevant to the democracy they will eventually enter..

There is a general consensus among scholars in educational literature that says institutions of higher education emphasize critical thinking (Williams & Worth, 2002; Harrison et al., 2006). Thomas, Gregg, and Niska (2004) found through participant comments that learning communities lead to students making informed decisions. The mission statement from a large, land-grant institution encompasses this:

Texas A&M University is dedicated to the discovery, development, communication, and application of knowledge in a wide range of academic and professional fields. Its mission of providing the highest quality undergraduate and graduate programs is inseparable from its mission of developing new understandings through research and creativity. It prepares students to assume roles in leadership, responsibility, and service to society. Texas A&M assumes as its historic trust the maintenance of freedom of inquiry and an intellectual environment nurturing the human mind and spirit. It welcomes

and seeks to serve persons of all racial, ethnic, and geographic groups, women and men alike, as it addresses the needs of an increasingly diverse population and a global economy. In the twenty-first century, Texas A&M University seeks to assume a place of preeminence among public universities while respecting its history and traditions (Texas A&M University, 2006).

Cope (1978), McGinty (1987), and Helland, Stallings, and Braxton (2002)

support that learning communities are a great retention tool, they are both proactive and social by nature, which leads to increases in retention. Ebbers (1999) and Hotchkiss et al. (2006), as well as many others, found that learning communities not only increase retention, which can increase graduations rates, but also increase satisfaction with their college experience and student's GPAs, as much as a full letter grade in some cases.

Learning communities can use many different models and emphasize many different things. One common component of learning communities found in the literature, whether it is intended or not, is leadership development.

Schmoker (2004) says "effective team-based organizations, leadership becomes simpler, more manageable, and less dependent on rare qualities like charisma. It becomes a matter of adopting "simple plans" for just a few simple processes – i.e., for generating and sustaining a stream of team-based improvements and breakthroughs."

Developing a function of "team-based learning" is a common component in most leadership text books. Teams work toward a common goal doing so more efficiently than groups or individuals; which leads to better overall results. FLCs link students together, both in and outside of class, facilitating the forming of social networks and support systems. By doing this, FLCs can better foster a team environment leading to

improved leadership skills. These social networks can help with retention, in that they create “emotional attachments and social bonds... two key ways to retain students who might otherwise drop out” (McGinty, 1987).

Leadership skills can also be improved through experiential learning. “Meaningful application of the learning community concept requires a change in the way students experience and interact with curriculum, fellow students, and faculty... Student learning is enhanced by having course content reinforced from different perspectives and applications” (Harrison et al., 2006).

With the use of peer mentoring, students are given the opportunity to learn from more experienced students, who are relatively their own age, while expanding their social network. This can tie in to the different perspectives and experiences Harrison et al. talks about.

The involvement in learning communities, increases students experience from different perspectives, and allows a multi-perspective view of course content, which they can apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate (Harrison et al., 2006). Talburt and Boyles (2005) found the social interaction among students to also be a negative, since students seemed to concentrate more on getting to know each other, than on learning related to course content.

The author’s also state involvement in learning communities has benefits to the teacher(s) as well: from rejuvenation to development to teaching satisfaction. This is supported by findings and research from Gabelnick et al. (1990).

Leadership Development

In recent years the word “leadership” has become a buzz word. Universities are creating majors that revolve around leadership, as well as putting it in their mission statements. But what is leadership? There is no universal definition of leadership, it means something different to everyone, in different situations, and everyone has an opinion or idea about leadership.

Taylor (2005) found that in an “academic development context, leadership is not defined as a prescribed set of characteristics. Rather a synergy among variable characteristics of the person, the academic development role, development strategies, and institutional context determined successful practice and leadership in any giving institution.”

Many times today, blame is placed on the leader of an organization, business, or country for problems. How can one person be responsible for everything? In truth they cannot, they simply are in the position to be recognized and understand that with their position and power, they are viewed as a leader, and because of this bare the blame by all concerned parties.

“Being a university leader has never been easy, give the many – and powerful – stakeholders who care deeply about the quality of college education” (McKee & Smith, 2005).

It can be concluded that this is why institutions of higher education have an emphasis on leadership development. There is a large research base on the topic and many institutions focusing on the concept. Institutions of higher education teach the

concepts and theories of leadership, someone cannot be taught to be a leader, and only through experience can leadership truly be learned.

Leadership development is important in today's society. Employers and society are telling institutions of higher education that there is a need for leadership preparation for today's students to succeed after college in the real world (Brown & Fritz, 1993). According to studies conducted by Texas A&M University (1998) and the University of Georgia (1998) alumni from both schools indicated that skills related to personal interactions, communication, problem solving, critical thinking, conflict management, teamwork, and leadership are important to professional success. These can be improved in their undergraduate experience; however, most were lacking in providing their students with real world situations to help improve these deficiencies.

There has been a response to these findings and findings by others Andelt, Leverne, & Bosshamer (1997), and Radhakrishma and Bruening (1994); which as lead institutions of higher education to respond by providing leadership training and development to students.

“Leadership and leadership development are increasingly seen as key to developing the effectiveness of educational organizations across different areas of provision” (Muijs, Harris, Lumby, Morrison, & Sood, 2006).

Leadership had many components: networking, delegation, change, mentoring, ethics, values, mission, vision, theories, models, and concepts, just to name a few. It is up to the student to take all of the information and assimilate it, saving it for the right

time and knowing when to use it, this is learned through experience, the real teacher of leadership.

To learn all of these things students need as Wallin (2006) states a “more complete understanding of personal strengths and challenges through meaningful assessment, individuals will be motivated to seek out further leadership development experiences and opportunities for continued growth and professional competence, an increased level of preparation, and confidence in assuming new responsibilities”.

Learning is at the root of leadership. Mavrinac (2005) says learning is essential for organizational survival in a rapidly changing world; learning is change. This leads to the concept of learning cultures, which is simply a state of perpetual learning.

For a learning culture to take place it must be at the core of an organization (Mavrinac, 2005). This is true of institutions of higher education; their main goal is to teach students. Mavrinac (2005) states that one way for organizations to foster this learning culture is through the use of mentoring programs. Mentoring can be used “to address the current challenges of the recruitment and retention of talented people” (Mavrinac, 2005).

“Leadership is never a destination. It is a life-long journey – one of constantly seeking self-knowledge. Only through a leader’s taking that journey can she or he continue the journey of becoming the best self... help other leaders to grow in their leadership skills” (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005).

Usually people are not seen to be leaders; they have to first earn the respect of others. Kouze and Posner (2003) found, through survey results over the past 20 years,

the individuals must pass certain tests, before they are viewed as leaders by others. The four most important things a leader must possess, according to Kouzes and Posner (2003), are honesty, forward thinking, competency, and the ability to inspire.

“The best leaders create resonance: They are highly attuned to themselves and to the greater world, both the local and the broader national and global communities” (McKee & Smith, 2006).

Being highly attuned to what is happening around them leaders can focus on assumptions about the world and their self, which allows them to focus their attention on reflection. Knutson, Miranda, & Washell (2005) along with Senge (1990) agree that as “stewards, leaders are charged with the task of maintaining and overseeing all of those elements which are related to the well-being of not only each member of the organization but the whole organization and its mission.” This can all be tied into the mission of the university as a whole, and the learning communities, since both, in some way or form, facilitate the growth of leaders.

Knutson (2001) and Senge (1990) believe that leaders help their followers grow and that social interest plays a part in this through learning organizations. To do this, leaders need to be able to see things from other points of view and be impartial. Ansbacher (1991) ties this in with social interest, saying it involves the interest in themselves, but also the interest in others.

Knutson (2001) says this leadership can affect the culture of a learning organization by either supporting or hindering change through psychological assumptions. This is added to by Knutson and Miranda (2000) and Miranda, Goodman,

and Kern (1996) who say that leadership facilitates the transformational learning in learning organizations and that this is a form of socialized charismatic leadership that promotes social interest among the followers and which in turn allows them to learn to do the same when they lead others.

Knutson et al. (2005) found that the “transformation that occurs in learning organizations may be explained not by the characteristic of the organization alone, but by the social interest of its leaders and teachers. A conclusion drawn from this finding can be that the leaders and teachers of learning organizations (learning communities) affect the way their followers view the world and make decisions, which in turn affects who they will be as leaders.

There is a consistent component among leadership theories which suggests there is a process of influence between leaders and followers (Hollander, 1985).

Taylor (2005) found that “effective leaders not only engage others in their ideas, but also enable others to participate in their implementation.” This can be used in the development of teams, which goes along with the group development as well. Taylor also found that “team building or the “sort of ‘on the ground’ leadership being displayed – it’s that notion of a captain-coach – of being there and helping to build up the whole group” was also essential to contributing to a sense of community ownership of the vision.”

Bennis and Nanus (1985) define vision as “an image of an attractive, realistic, and believable future. They found that to be successful, the vision needs to grow and change along with the whole organization and be accepted by everyone in the

organization. Northouse (2004, p. 180) says “leaders play a large role in articulating the vision; the emergence of the vision originates from both the leaders and the followers within the organization.”

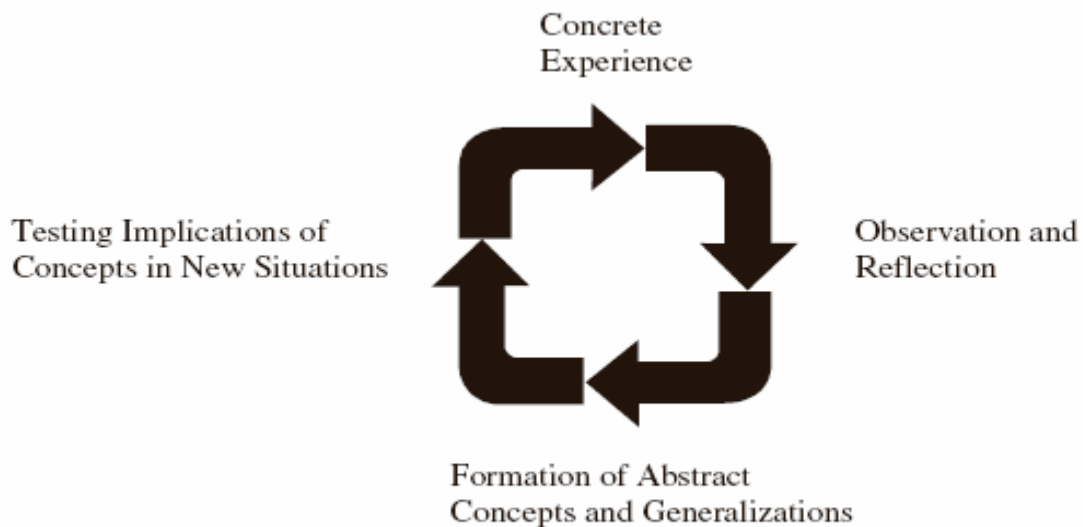


FIGURE 1: Kolb's Model of Experiential Learning
SOURCE: Kolb (1984)

Experiential learning can help both leaders and followers. It allows for scenarios to be played out and learned from, which can be readily applied to real world situations. There are two big models on experiential learning Kolb (1984) which has a four stage process occurring in a cycle and Joplin (1981) specifically developed for outdoor settings. Kolb's Model of Experiential learning consists of first a concrete experience, which lays the foundation for observation and reflection, which can then be organized or assimilated to theorize new implications which leads to active experimentation (see Figure 1).

Leadership can be learned in many ways and at many different times.

Institutions of higher education have responded to their shortcomings by offering various leadership development programs, but students do not always learn the most from their in class experiences. Often times, students develop their leadership skills through experiences outside of the classroom; experiential learning. This experience has been traced to extracurricular activities, as well as, curricular activities. According to a study done by Love and Yoder (1989) more than two-thirds of students surveyed, indicated they developed their leadership skills as a results of both curricular and extracurricular activities.

One way students can have an experiential education is through the use of learning communities. They allow students to be guided through a process with a common goal, which whether intended or not, is leadership development. This claim is supported by findings from Schmoker (2004) who found leadership becomes less complex in learning communities, making it easier to learn.

Another way leadership can be learned experiential in learning communities is through the use of peer mentors. Experiential learning is not just learning through doing yourself, but also through learning from others. Peer mentors bring with them their experiences, and being relatively the same age, but with more experience, which is related to the new students, it allows for a passing of knowledge. This passing of knowledge can be done through the use of stories, activities, etc. much like how information used to be passed from one generation to the next through the use of story telling.

Mentoring

The idea of mentoring has been around for thousands of years. The term mentoring first appeared in Homer's the *Odyessy* around 1200 B.C. In the story Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom disguises herself, periodically, as Mentor, a trusted friend of Odysseus. At the request of Odysseus, Mentor serves as a model, advisor, and teacher to Telemachus (Odysseus' son) for ten years. Mentor is asked to look after Telemachus because Odysseus is going to fight in the Trojan War and wants his son to be well looked after and continue in his journey in becoming a man.

Like leadership, mentoring has many different definitions depending on the context. Traditional mentoring has "been around for a long time and various definitions of mentoring exist in the literature... The definition is changing" (Le Cornu, 2005). Gibson, Tesone, and Buchalski (2000) say that mentoring, according to the definition, is a trusted advisor and coach.

"In an effort to revitalize our nation's competitive vigor, the school reform movement has co-opted a strategy of the ancient Greeks: mentoring... As Odysseus entrusted his son and posterity to a sage elder, moderns have recognized a resource in seasoned educators and seek to exploit their wisdom for future generations" (Healy & Welchert, 1990).

Gibson et al. (2000) along with Healy et al. (1990) have researched the new era in mentoring finding that during the 1970s corporations and government agencies started using mentoring programs. Healy et al (1990) goes on to say that during the 1980s institutions of higher education, school districts, and states starting to use mentoring

programs. These programs were first instrumented to enhance the quality of faculty and administrators through the use of mentoring. Then during the 1990s mentoring moved to the student level, where students were mentored by faculty and staff, both in high school and college.

Jekielek, Moore, Hair, and Scarupa (2002) define mentoring as “a sustained relationship between a young person and an adult in which the adult provides the young person with support, guidance, and assistance. The very foundation of mentoring is the idea that if caring, concerned adults are available to young people, youth will be more likely to become successful adults themselves.”

In much of the literature reviewed mentoring is associated with both networking and coaching. Although networking and coaching are not the same as mentoring, they are related. Networking refers to connected systems of contacts being created for mutual use. While coaching involves mentoring, it is an explicit relationship with someone else to support the personal and professional effectiveness of one person.

“Mentor leaders are building networks in many places that benefit aspiring and practicing leaders and the worlds they in turn influence” (Mullen, 2006).

Rosser and Egan (2003) claim that “successful individuals often point to mentors as supporting their success by providing support, guidance, and confidential counsel... mentoring relationships can be a critical component in the success of individuals both personally and professionally.” According to research conducted by Jekielek et al. (2002), Mavrillac (2005), Angelique, Kyle, and Taylor (2002), and Chao (1997) mentoring can increase attendance, improve attitudes towards school, reduce some

negative behaviors, and promote positive social attitudes, and relationships. The researchers go on to say that the longer the mentoring takes place the better the outcome.

There are many different types of mentoring: traditional, peer, cross, formal and informal. Traditional mentoring is done between someone who is both older and more experienced than the younger by passing down information and knowledge. In this relationship experience is passed down from the older to younger person. Peer mentoring is much like traditional mentoring, but is done between people of relatively the same age, with one having more experience than the other (Angelique et al., 2002).

Formal mentoring can be thought of as an established program, where it is not spontaneous and guided by an organization. Informal mentoring happens more spontaneously and is not guided by the overall organization. Peer mentoring is usually a formal process with specific goals and defined boundaries, but is more flexible than traditional mentoring (Angelique et al., 2002). Mavrinac (2005) says that “traditional mentoring continues to be a popular and enduring learning process... and can help with recruitment and retention.”

Angelique, Kyle, and Taylor (2002) found that “over the last three decades, interest in mentoring and attempts to implement successful mentoring programs have increased throughout higher education. Review of the literature on mentoring suggests that the types of mentoring programs vary greatly.” Review of the literature by the author supports the claims made by Angelique et al. (2002).

Hunt and Michael (1983) define mentoring as any age difference of half a generation apart. From this we can surmise that peer mentoring would be less than a

half a generation in age between the mentor and the protégé. A protégé is the person the mentor is working with and trying to help.

If students are allowed to share their experiences with their peers possibilities are limitless. Peer mentoring could be a great opportunity for students to learn things that they cannot learn in class. Research shows that peer mentoring is beneficial, not only to the protégé, but also the mentor. There is an argument that says if the mentor and protégé are too far away in age, then the protégé will view the mentor as a father figure, is that so bad? At the same time if they are too close in age they could view it more of a friendship.

In a study done at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, they found the peer mentors reduced the number of underclassmen participating in house parties (Santovec, 2004). The university had a problem with underclassmen drinking heavily in a social atmosphere to meet new people, so the university developed a peer mentoring program to reduce these numbers, while still allowing new students to meet new people.

Santovec (2004) said the results from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse study showed peer mentors gained leadership opportunities, allowing them to hone their skills, while the new students were able to meet people in a social setting that did not revolve around drinking. McLean (2004) found that students who were mentored were more apt to learn and identified the mentors as role models, while the mentors underwent personal development as well.

Jekielek et al. (2002) claim that college students are a good source of mentoring, if they have the time. A study done at the Tanfield School in England found that peer

mentors helped ease the transition of primary school pupils into the secondary school but also provided the opportunity of the peer tutors and the peer mentors to improve basic skills and become more self confident through active participation (Nelson, 2003).

To support peer mentoring, Gartner and Riessman (1999) claim that there is a peer movement taking place. There is a peer movement abroad that represents a number of different forces, which need to be recognized and harnessed to address the problems that face our youth. The answer to many of the problems youth are facing today is other young people, their peers. When young people are viewed as assets and resources with something to give instead of problematic vessels to be filled up with adult concern, the chance for growth and academic advancement is tremendous (Gartner and Riessman, 1999).

According to Gartner and Riessman (1999), peer education is not a new concept, but if the smart kids just keep teaching other students, without the other students being allowed to show what they have learned and allow them to give back it just perpetuates the cycle of the rich getting richer. This is basically the same thing Dopp and Block (2004) said when working with students with disabilities, the students need to be allowed to give back and show what they have learned, for the learning to actually 'stick'.

Treston (1999) did a study at James Cook University Cairns in Australia. The ethos of the program involves the offer of a friendly helping hand from a continuing student for each new student in his or her first semester. Research from many countries identified that students benefit from a formalized interaction program. In Australia,

there are formal mentoring programs at many levels. There are programs set up where college students mentor high school students, new college students mentored by upperclassmen and faculty, and ready to graduate college students are mentored by people already in the workforce. This program has been in place for eight years and people at James Cook University Cairns; say it would be hard to imagine the university without a mentoring program. The program has become a tradition at the university, benefiting not only the students, faculty, and staff involved, but also other stakeholders (Treston, 1999).

According to Angelique et al. (2002) “peer mentoring promotes information sharing, career planning, and job related feedback... By drawing upon their own immediate experiences, peer mentors may more readily offer empathetic emotional support rather than just sympathetic support.” This is supported by McLean (2004) who says peer mentors provide support, but also adds that the mentors benefit as well from the relationship, and students state they want mentors with similar experiences.

Peer mentoring has many components that encompass it. One part of peer mentoring that is thought to be important is transformational leadership. Transformational change, transformational leadership, and learning cultures or learning organizations have all become popularized and somewhat utopian in their claims that these practices can address challenges and cure all of what ails an organization (Mavrinac, 2005). Transformation Leadership is defined as “the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower” (Northouse, 2007, p 176). For

transformational leadership to be applied to mentoring, you need to think about learning cultures. Learning cultures obviously place learning at the centre of organizational activities, valuing it as a core asset (Mavrinac, 2005). Peer mentoring preserves most of the benefits of traditional mentoring; while at the same time, it is in greater congruence with values-based transformational leadership and change (Mavrinac, 2005).

McLean (2004) says that when mentoring programs are applied to an academic context, the mentors assist students 'socialization' into the academic culture; therefore optimizing their learning experience by providing emotional and moral support. The author goes on to say that their relationship must be characterized by mutual respect, understanding, empathy, and trust.

From the review of literature it appears that mentoring and more importantly peer mentoring helps not only the person being mentored, but also the mentor. Mentoring can increase recruitment and retention rates, while at the same time helping the protégé improve their educational and social performance (McLean, 2004; Mavrinac, 2005). The mentor is given the satisfaction of helping someone, which can in turn help them with their own personal development. In general mentoring seems to help with the passing of experience, even when participants are of relatively the same age.

Peer mentoring is typically a formal process with designated outcomes (Angelique et al., 2002). The outcomes of mentoring can include improved socialization into the environment and improved leadership skills. With the use of learning communities to guide and facilitate the process peer mentoring can increase many other skills, by allowing for a conducive learning environment.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of a leadership living learning community on the leadership development of freshmen in transition at Texas A&M University. The purpose guided the development of specific research objectives which were written to identify, not only the leadership development of the freshmen, but also the perceptions of the freshmen of the peer mentors. The following methodology was used to accomplish this purpose.

This was accomplished through a causal-comparative study. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996) define a casual-comparative study as beginning with subjects who differ on dependent variables and test how they differ on independent variables. Causal-comparative research can test hypotheses concerning the relationship between an independent variable, X, and a dependent variable, Y.

Research Design

The instrument used was designed so it could be taken after the course and allow the student to reflect back on what they knew before the course compared to what they knew after the course. This type of procedure is called a post-then test developed and created by Howard and Dailey (1979). A post-then test utilizes one test to test student's after the course on their perceptions before the course compared to after the course. It is done after the course so that participants have a better understanding of the material and can more accurately gauge their understanding of the material both before and after the

course. Students were asked their perceptions of both leadership skills and attitudes before and after the course.

The dependent variable for the study is the peer mentors, while the independent variables are race, gender, experience in high school and college, and credit hours already completed. The study commenced in the fall semesters of 2005 and 2006. The 2005 semester was the first semester of the program and no peer mentors were used. Peer mentors were used for the 2006 semester and the results both before and after the course for year one will be compared to year two to see if in fact the peer mentors made a difference.

Post-Then Method

It was acknowledged during the research that self-perception is difficult to measure with validity; however, self-report measures were used to evaluate participants understanding of the variables which change throughout the course. During this procedure participants are assumed to have the required competence and have the ability to express their own beliefs on the questions being asked and have no reason to lie. This is done through trust between the researcher and the student. Howard and Dailey (1979) stated that training can alter a student's perception on his or her evaluation. After conducting research on testing methods Howard and Dailey found that instead of asking students before and then after a course what they believed their abilities were that it would be best to ask them after the course both what they believed their abilities were before the course compared to. This was done so that student's, after the course, would

have a better understanding of the material and thus could more accurately gauge their abilities before the course compared to after.

Rohs (1999) also conducting research on testing methods found results that also say it is better to use a post-then method for testing students. For his study Rohs was looking at students leadership skills. Rohs broke participants into two groups, one would use the traditional pre-post test, in which they would receive a test on the first day and then again on the last, while the second group would use the post-then method and only receive a test on the last day asking them about their skills both before and after the course.

It was found that the students in the post-then method cited more dramatic changes in the self-perceptions compared to the students in the pre-post method. Since the students had a better understanding of leadership after taking the course Rohs concluded that their answers were more accurate than those of the pre-post method. Rockwell and Kohn (1989) came to similar conclusions when they said that using a post-then method or a pre-post method allowed participants to have a better understanding of the material being asked after the course allowing them to more accurately gauge the understanding of the material before the course, compared to their understanding after.

Description of Population

At the time of the study, the Leadership Living Learning Community had N=118 participants during both years. The students represented in the population were a mix of majors, races, and both genders. During the first year (N=61) most of the participants were female and in a business oriented major, while during the second year (N=57) there

was an almost even split between male and female and a better dispersal of majors. The target population for this study was freshmen students who applied to be a part of the Leadership Living Learning Community and who lived in on-campus housing. From year one's population (N=61) participants could choose to participate in year two as peer mentors and were required to fill out an application before being allowed to mentor year two participants.

With the size of the total population (N=118) being relatively small, it was decided to do a census of the entire population. Census, as defined by Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996), is a survey that covers the entire population of interested. For year one all participants (N=61) were surveyed the last day of class during the first semester. For year two 48.14% (N=26) were surveyed during the end of the first semester banquet. The remainder of the population for year two (N=31) chose not to attend the banquet and therefore chose not to participate in the study. To account for the census error, the participants who did not attend the banquet for year two during the end of the first semester were counted as choosing not to participate because of lack of involvement.

Texas A&M University was selected as the research site because a program for peer mentoring was in its early years of development and revolved around the development of leadership skills. The department of on-campus housing (Residence Life) was working with an educational department focused on leadership (Agricultural Development, Education, and Communications) to develop such a program.

Study Procedures

The respondents for this course are freshmen students who applied for and were accepted to the Leadership Living Learning Community and chose to live on campus. Before the instrument was dispersed the researcher read the participants a statement of the purpose of the study, its confidentiality, and made sure they understood it was not required to participate as part of the course. Participants were informed of their rights in accordance with the guidelines as outlined by the Institution Review Board at Texas A&M University. The data was collected during the last day of class for 2005, and at the end of fall 2006 semester banquet after the semester had finished.

Survey Instruments

This survey used a self-perceived leadership skills inventory and demographic questions.

Leadership Skills Inventory

The Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI) was developed by Carter and revised by Carter and Townsend (1983). It was used to assess student's self-perceptions of leadership skills before and after completing a course. The LSI (See Appendix A) consists of 21 questions which relate to leadership and life skills and are grouped in five scales for analysis: working with groups, positional leadership, communication, decision-making, and understanding self. Responses are based on a five-point Likert-type scale with the following categories for responses: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=agree, and 5= strongly agree. Three of the questions scales were reversed coded to catch participants who pattern responded.

A higher numeric value on a particular question indicated a stronger agreement with the question. For this study, the reliabilities according to Cronbach's alpha coefficient were computed for each of the five internal scales; the reliabilities for before taking the course were: Working with Groups - .75, Positional Leadership - .62, Communication - .56, Decision-Making - .42, and Understanding Self - .76. The reliabilities for year two participants on the questions relating to peer mentoring according to Cronbach's alpha coefficient were .91.

Historical reliabilities according to Cronbach's alpha coefficient were computed for each of the five internal scales; the reliabilities were: Working with Groups - .69, Positional Leadership - .84, Communication - .74, Decision-Making - .69, and Understanding Self - .78 (Rutherford, Townsend, Briers, Cummins, and Conrad).

Scale Items for Working with Groups

The following statements assessed the participant's skill of working in groups:

1. I can cooperate and work in a group.
2. I get along with people around me.
4. I believe in dividing the work among group members.
8. I listen carefully to the opinions of the group members.
12. I believe that group members are responsible persons.

Scale Items on Understanding Self

The following statements assessed the participant's skill of understanding self:

3. I feel responsible for my actions.
5. I understand myself.

- 13. I am sure of my abilities.
- 17. I accept who I am.
- 18. I feel responsible for my decisions.

Scale Items on Communication

The following statements assessed the participant's skill of communication:

- 10. I can lead a discussion.
- 14. I am a good listener.
- 19. I can give clear directions.
- 20. I can follow directions.

Scale Items on Making Decisions

The following statements assessed the participant's skill of making decisions:

- 7. I consider all choices before making a decision.
- 11. I use past experiences in making decisions.
- 15. I use information in making decisions.

Scale Items on Positional Leadership

The following statements assessed the participant's skill of leadership.

- 6. I feel comfortable teaching others.
- 9. I am respected by others my age.
- 10. I can lead a discussion.
- 16. I feel comfortable being a group leader.
- 19. I can give clear directions.
- 21. I can run a meeting.

The remainder of the questions were demographic in nature. They were typical questions related to gender, age, race, family college experience, and major (See Appendix A). The questions were asked to gain a better understanding of their background.

The LSI was revised for the fall of 2006 to include questions about the peer mentors (See Appendix B). Twenty questions were added to ask participants about the peer mentors. These questions were asked to see if the freshmen felt the peer mentors were doing what they were intended to do and see what needed to be change for following years. Questions related to the five categories about their self-perceptions about leadership and general questions about the peer mentors to see what the perceptions were of the peer mentors by the freshmen.

Scale Items for Peer Mentoring

The following statements assessed the participant's skill of the peer mentors:

43. The peer mentors were not supportive.
44. The peer mentors spent enough time helping me.
45. The peer mentors gave me positive feedback.
46. The peer mentors were good role models.
47. I felt that I had a personal relationship with the peer mentors.
48. The peer mentors helped my leadership skills.
49. The peer mentors were knowledgeable about TAMU.
50. The peer mentors helped me to adjust to college.
51. The peer mentors did not help me with problems.

52. The peer mentors helped me to realize my prejudices.
53. The peer mentors helped with my communication skills.
54. The peer mentors helped me with time management.
55. The peer mentors helped me understand various situations that I might encounter.
56. I was able to learn from the peer mentors' experiences.
57. I felt uncomfortable with the peer mentors.
58. It was easy to communicate with the peer mentors.
59. The peer mentors helped me to set goals.
60. The peer mentors helped me to get involved.
61. The peer mentors did not use peer pressure to get me to do something negative.
62. The peer mentors helped me to identify my strengths and weaknesses.

Treatment Procedure

Students attended class one day a week throughout the semester put on by two instructors, one from the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications Department and the other from the Department of Residence Life, lived in the same residence hall, attended various programs put on by the course instructors, graduate students, and the Department of Residence Life, including fieldtrips. Lecture topics were given in a manner to promote the understanding of various leadership theories and built upon the various programs. These opportunities allowed the students to expand their understanding of leadership theories and skills through the programs, lectures, discussions, and fieldtrips. The instructors were skilled in leadership theories and facilitation.

Data Collection

The instrument was administered on the last class day for the fall 2005 semester and at the end of the year banquet during the fall 2006 semester. Prior to filling out the instrument participants were informed of their rights according to the Internal Review Board at Texas A&M University and about the study. Participants accepted these guidelines and consented to participating in the study by filling out the instrument.

Participants were informed on the confidentiality of the information gained from the study and how the information would be used and handled. They were told to be honest and forth coming with their answers and if they did not want to participate or answer any specific questions then they could skip them.

Participants were asked to first answer the question on their attitude before taking the course and then after for each of the questions. After they finished the first three sections they were asked to answer questions about their involvement while in college and then demographic questions. The instrument required approximately ten minutes to complete, were collected by the researcher; the instructors had previously left the room. The instruments were then compiled and ready for analysis and entered into an Excel spreadsheet.

Data Analysis

After the data was entered into Excel it was exported into SPSS^R. Once in SPSS^R the data was run using statistical analysis tools present in the program. The data generated was descriptive in nature. SPSS^R procedures are referenced in capital letters.

Descriptive statistics generated by SPSS^R procedure FREQUENCIES

were used to report the results of the research questions. The frequencies, percentages, and means were calculated for all of the variables for years one and two.

Procedure PAIRED SAMPLES T-TEST was used to determine the difference before and after among the 2-tailed level of significance for the individual questions and then the LSI Scales of Working in Groups, Positional Leadership, Communication, Decision-Making, and Understanding Self for year one and two. The two years were then compared using a ONE-WAY ANOVA according to their means for each grouping by year. Procedure ONE SAMPLE T-TEST was used to determine what year two participants perceptions were about the peer mentors and the differences between years one and two LSI scales. To determine statistical significance, an alpha level of $p < .05$ was established as a priori for all analyses.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of a leadership living learning community on the leadership development of freshmen in transition at Texas A&M University. The purpose guided the development of specific research objectives which were written to identify, not only the leadership development of the freshmen, but also the perceptions of the freshmen of the peer mentors. The following methodology was used to accomplish this purpose.

This purpose was accomplished through a causal-comparative study. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996) define a casual-comparative study as beginning with subjects who differ on dependent variables and test how they differ on independent variables. Causal-comparative research can test hypotheses concerning the relationship between an independent variable, X, and a dependent variable, Y.

The specific research objectives, guided by the purpose, of the study were to:

- 1) the leadership development, as measured on the LSI, of year one L3C participants,
- 2) the leadership development, as measured on the LSI, of year two L3C participants,
- 3) the leadership development, as measured on the LSI, between years one and two, and
- 4) the perceptions of year two L3C participants about the role of peer mentors.

Description of Population

At the time of the study, the L3C had N=61 participants during the first semester of year one and N=57 participants during the first semester of year two. Summary of demographics are found in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographics by Year

Demographics (N=118)			
Year	Total	Responded	Percent
1	61	54.00	88.52
2	57	26.00	45.61
Total	118	80.00	67.80

During the first year n=32 of the participants who responded were female, while during the second year there were n=17 female participants who responded. Summary of gender demographics are found in Table 2 and Table 3. The target population for this study was freshmen students who applied to be a part of the Leadership Living Learning Community and who lived in on-campus housing.

Table 2. Gender Demographics

Participant Gender Demographics (N=80)		
	Responded	Percent
Male	29	36.25
Female	49	61.25
Total	78	97.50
Missing	2	2.50
Total	80	100.00

With the size of the total population (N=118) being relatively small, it was decided to do a census of the entire population. The population for year one was N=61 and N=57 for year two.

Table 3. Gender Demographics by Year

Participant Gender Demographics (N=118)			
Year	Female	Male	Missing
1	32	20	2
2	17	9	0
Percent	53.13%	45.00%	1.87%
Total	39	29	2

Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996) define census as a survey that covers the entire population of interest. Texas A&M University was selected as the research site because a program for peer mentoring was in its early years of development and revolved around the development of leadership skills.

Findings Related to Objective One

A Paired Sample *t*-Test was used to test for objective one, to determine if there were any differences of the leadership development for year one L3C participants, as measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory. All findings were determined to be statistically significant if the alpha coefficient ($p < .05$) set as a prior was reached. The responses to before taking the course were compared to those after taking the course for year one, for the first semester.

Table 4. *t*-Test for Paired Samples: Individual questions of year one L3C participants

Paired questions	Individual questions of year one L3C participants (N=53)				
	Begin and End	N	Mean	SD	2-Tail Prob.
Cooperate		45	-0.27	0.49	0.00
Get along		52	-0.25	0.44	0.00
Responsible		53	-0.23	0.51	0.00
Delegating		53	-0.28	0.74	0.00
Do not understand self		53	-0.30	1.03	0.04
Teach others		52	-0.35	0.86	0.00
Listen to opinions		52	-0.37	0.66	0.00
Consider choices		52	-0.46	0.67	0.00
Respected		52	-0.56	5.63	0.48
Lead discussion		53	-0.34	0.78	0.00
Do not use experiences		53	-0.34	0.68	0.00
Believe in people		53	-0.32	0.73	0.00
Confident		53	-0.13	0.76	0.21
Good listener		53	-0.17	0.55	0.03
Informed		52	-0.17	0.59	0.04
Comfortable		53	-0.38	0.74	0.00
Accepting of self		53	-0.15	0.77	0.16
Responsible decisions		53	-0.28	0.49	0.00
Clear directions		53	-0.28	0.74	0.01
Follow directions		53	-0.17	0.51	0.02
Cannot run mtg.		53	-0.34	0.66	0.00

Individually all questions, except questions nine (“I am respected by others my age”) ($M=-0.56$, $SD=5.63$), thirteen (“I am sure of my abilities”) ($M=-0.13$, $SD=0.76$), and seventeen (“I accept who I am”) ($M=-0.15$, $SD=0.77$), revealed statistically significant findings according to a Paired Sample t -Test at the 2-tailed level ($p<.05$). Summaries of the individual questions are found in Table 4.

Using a One Sample t -Test to look at the differences between measurement scales, all scales revealed statistically significant findings for year one ($p<.05$). These results indicated that L3C participants for year one improved on their leadership skills, as measured by the LSI. The scales measured by the LSI, which indicate increased perceptions about their abilities, were: making decisions, working with groups, understanding themselves, communication, and leadership. Summaries of these results are found in Table 5.

Table 5. *t*-Test for One Sample: LSI scale of year one L3C participants

LSI Scale	LSI scale for year one L3C participants			2-Tail Prob.
	N	Mean	SD	
Beginning Decision Making	53	4.14	0.60	0.00
Ending Decision making	53	4.43	0.50	0.00
Difference Decision Making	51	-0.28	0.42	0.00
Beginning Working with Groups	46	4.17	0.51	0.00
Ending Working with Groups	46	4.46	0.37	0.00
Difference Working with Groups	45	-0.34	0.43	0.00
Beginning Understanding Self	54	4.16	0.51	0.00
Ending Understanding Self	54	4.38	0.54	0.00
Difference Understanding Self	53	-0.22	0.47	0.00
Beginning Communication	54	4.06	0.61	0.00
Ending Communication	53	4.29	0.57	0.00
Difference Communication	53	-0.24	0.43	0.00
Beginning Leadership	54	4.01	1.13	0.00
Ending Leadership	51	4.22	0.61	0.00
Difference Leadership	51	-0.19	1.06	0.19

Findings Related to Objective Two

A Paired Sample *t*-Test was used to test for objective two, to see if there were any differences in the leadership development for year two L3C participants, as measured by the LSI. The responses to before taking the course for one semester were compared to the responses after taking the course for one semester for year two, for the first semester. Statistically significant findings were found on questions: one ($M=-0.33$, $SD=0.57$), five ($M=-0.38$, $SD=0.88$), six ($M=-0.58$, $SD=0.83$), seven ($M=-0.50$, $SD=0.83$), eight ($M=-0.50$, $SD=0.72$), nine ($M=-0.50$, $SD=0.78$), ten ($M=-0.42$, $SD=0.83$), sixteen ($M=-0.00$, $SD=0.83$), eighteen ($M=-0.38$, $SD=0.77$), and twenty ($M=-0.54$, $SD=0.66$) (see Appendix B) according to a Paired Sample *t*-Test at the 2-tailed level ($p<.05$). Summaries of the individual questions are found in Table 6.

The remaining eleven questions were found to have no statistical significance at the Paired Sample *t*-Test at the 2-tailed level ($p<.05$). These were questions: two ($M=-0.17$, $SD=0.57$), three ($M=-0.21$, $SD=0.59$), four ($M=-0.01$, $SD=0.89$), eleven ($M=0.04$, $SD=1.23$), twelve ($M=-0.04$, $SD=0.91$), thirteen ($M=-0.33$, $SD=0.82$), fourteen ($M=-0.25$, $SD=1.19$), fifteen ($M=-.38$, $SD=1.01$), seventeen ($M=-0.25$, $SD=0.85$), nineteen ($M=-0.13$, $SD=0.74$), and twenty-one ($M=0.13$, $SD=1.33$).

Table 6. *t*-Test for Paired Samples: Individual questions of year two L3C participants

Paired questions Begin and End	Individual questions of year two L3C participants (N=24)			
	N	Mean	SD	2-Tail Prob.
Cooperate	24	-0.33	0.57	0.01
Get along	24	-0.17	0.57	0.16
Responsible	24	-0.21	0.59	0.09
Delegating	24	-0.01	0.89	0.19
No understanding	24	-0.38	0.88	0.05
Teach others	24	-0.58	0.83	0.00
Listen to opinions	24	-0.50	0.83	0.01
Consider choices	24	-0.50	0.72	0.00
Respected	24	-0.50	0.78	0.01
Lead discussion	24	-0.42	0.83	0.02
Do not use experiences	24	0.04	1.23	0.87
Believe in people	24	-0.04	0.91	0.82
Confident	24	-0.33	0.81	0.06
Good listener	24	-0.25	1.19	0.31
Informed	24	-0.38	1.01	0.08
Comfortable	24	-0.00	0.83	0.00
Accept self	24	-0.25	0.85	0.16
Responsible	24	-0.38	0.77	0.03
Clear directions	24	-0.13	0.74	0.42
Follow directions	24	-0.54	0.66	0.00
Cannot run mtg.	24	0.13	1.33	0.65

A One Sample *t*-Test was used to look at the LSI measurement scales for year two. Analysis of the differences between measurement scales showed statistically significant ($p<.05$) findings for year two; excluding the differences between beginning leadership and ending leadership, as measured by the LSI.

These results indicate that L3C participants for year two improved on their leadership skills, as measured by the LSI between the beginning and the end of the first semester. The scales measured by the LSI, indicating increased perceptions about their abilities were: making decisions ($M=-0.28$, $SD=0.44$), working with groups ($M=-0.26$, $SD=0.48$), understanding self ($M=-0.31$, $SD=0.39$), communication ($M=-0.33$, $SD=0.51$), and leadership ($M=-0.34$, $SD=0.52$). Summaries of these results are found in Table 7.

Table 7. *t*-Test for One Sample: LSI scale of year two L3C participants

LSI scale for year two L3C participants				
LSI Scale	N	Mean	SD	2-Tail Prob.
Beginning				
Decision Making	26	3.93	0.57	0.00
Ending				
Decision making	24	4.19	0.49	0.00
Difference				
Decision Making	24	-0.28	0.44	0.01
Beginning				
Working with Groups	24	4.23	0.42	0.00
Ending				
Working with Groups	26	4.47	0.46	0.00
Difference				
Working with Groups	24	-0.26	0.48	0.02
Beginning				
Understanding Self	24	4.03	0.51	0.00
Ending				
Understanding Self	26	4.32	0.53	0.00
Difference				
Understanding Self	24	-0.31	0.39	0.00
Beginning				
Communication	24	4.09	0.52	0.00
Ending				
Communication	26	4.40	0.53	0.00
Difference				
Communication	24	-0.33	0.51	0.00
Beginning				
Leadership	24	3.91	0.67	0.00
Ending				
Leadership	26	4.21	0.53	0.00
Difference				
Leadership	24	-0.34	0.52	0.00

Findings Related to Objective Three

A Paired Sample *t*-Test was used to test for objective three, to see if there were any differences of the leadership development for year one L3C participants compared to year two L3C participants, as measured by the LSI. The responses to before taking the course for one semester were compared to those after taking the course for year one and year two for the first semester. By looking at the means, standard deviations, and 2-tailed significant level ($p < .05$), year one participants' indicated more of an improvement between before and after the first semester of participating in the L3C.

Year one showed statistically significant findings on eighteen questions, while year two only show statistically significant findings on ten questions. Questions: nine, thirteen, and seventeen for both years showed no statistically significant findings at the 2-tailed significance level ($p < .05$). The findings on those questions were: question nine (year 1: $M=0.56$, $SD=5.63$ and year 2: $M=-0.50$, $SD=0.78$), question thirteen (year 1: $M=-0.13$, $SD=0.76$ and year 2: $M=-0.33$, $SD=0.82$), and question seventeen (year 1: $M=-0.15$, $SD=0.77$ and year 2: $M=-0.25$, $SD=0.85$). A more detailed description of the remaining questions for both years one and two which were found to have no statistically significant findings can be found in the findings of objectives two and three. Summaries of the individual questions are found in Table 8.

Table 8. *t*-Test for Paired Samples: Individual questions years one and two compared

Paired questions Begin and End	Individual questions of year one and year two L3C participants				
	Year	N	Mean	SD	2-Tail Prob.
Work in group	1	45	-0.27	0.49	0.00
	2	24	-0.33	0.57	0.01
Get along with people	1	52	-0.25	0.44	0.00
	2	24	-0.17	0.57	0.16
Responsible	1	53	-0.23	0.51	0.00
	2	24	-0.21	0.59	0.09
Delegating	1	53	-0.28	0.74	0.00
	2	24	-0.25	0.89	0.19
Do not understand self	1	53	-0.30	1.03	0.04
	2	24	-0.38	0.88	0.05
Comfortable teaching	1	53	-0.35	0.86	0.01
	2	24	-0.58	0.83	0.00
Consider choices	1	52	-0.37	0.66	0.00
	2	24	-0.50	0.83	0.01
Listen to opinions	1	52	-0.46	0.67	0.00
	2	24	-0.50	0.72	0.00
Respected	1	52	0.56	5.63	0.48
	2	24	-0.50	0.78	0.00
Lead discussion	1	52	-0.34	0.78	0.00
	2	24	-0.42	0.83	0.02
Do not use experiences	1	53	-0.34	0.68	0.00
	2	24	0.04	1.23	0.87
People are responsible	1	53	-0.32	0.73	0.00
	2	24	-0.04	0.91	0.82
Confident	1	53	-0.13	0.76	0.21
	2	24	-0.33	0.82	0.06
Listen	1	53	-0.17	0.55	0.03
	2	24	-0.25	1.19	0.31
Informed decisions	1	52	-0.17	0.59	0.04
	2	24	-0.38	1.01	0.08
Comfortable as leader	1	53	-0.38	0.74	0.00
	2	24	-0.54	0.83	0.00
Accept self	1	53	-0.15	0.77	0.16
	2	24	-0.25	0.85	0.16
Responsible for decisions	1	53	-0.28	0.49	0.00
	2	24	-0.38	0.77	0.03
Clear directions	1	53	-0.28	0.74	0.01
	2	24	-0.13	0.74	0.42
Follow directions	1	53	-0.17	0.51	0.02
	2	24	-0.54	0.66	0.00
Can not run meeting	1	53	-0.38	0.66	0.00
	2	24	0.13	1.33	0.65

Table 9. *t*-Test for One-Way ANOVA: LSI scale differences for years one and two

Differences on LSI Scales	LSI scale differences for years one and two L3C participants				
	Year	N	Mean	SD	2-Tail Prob.
Decision Making	1	51	-0.28	0.42	0.00
	2	24	-0.28	0.44	0.01
Working in Groups	1	45	-0.34	0.43	0.00
	2	24	-0.26	0.48	0.02
Understand Self	1	53	-0.22	0.47	0.00
	2	24	-0.31	0.39	0.00
Communication	1	53	-0.24	0.43	0.00
	2	24	-0.33	0.51	0.00
Leadership	1	51	-0.19	1.06	0.19
	2	24	-0.34	0.52	0.00

A One-Way ANOVA was used to compare year one L3C participants' to year two L3C participants' difference on the LSI scales. Year one showed a greater difference between beginning and ending on the LSI scales of working with groups (year 1: $M=-0.34$, $SD=0.43$ and year 2: $M=-0.26$, $SD=0.48$) and making decisions (year 1: $M=-0.28$, $SD=0.42$ and year 2: $M=-0.28$, $SD=0.44$). While year two L3C participants showed a greater difference between beginning and ending on the LSI scales of understanding self (year 1: $M=-0.22$, $SD=0.47$ and year 2: $M=-0.31$, $SD=0.39$), communication (year 1: $M=-0.24$, $SD=0.43$ and year 2: $M=-0.33$, $SD=0.51$), and leadership (year 1: $M=-0.19$, $SD=1.06$ and year 2: $M=-0.34$, $SD=0.52$) ($p<.05$). Summaries of these results are found in Table 9.

The One-Way ANOVA also showed there were no statistically significant findings related to the difference of year one and year two L3C participants' differences between beginning and ending their first semester. The LSI scales are: working in

groups (year 1: $M=-0.34$, $SD=0.43$ and year 2: $M=-0.26$, $SD=0.48$), understanding self (year 1: $M=-0.22$, $SD=0.47$ and year 2: $M=-0.31$, $SD=0.39$), communication (year 1: $M=-0.24$, $SD=0.43$ and year 2: $M=-0.33$, $SD=0.51$), decision making (year 1: $M=-0.28$, $SD=0.42$ and year 2: $M=-0.28$, $SD=0.44$), and leadership (year 1: $M=-0.19$, $SD=1.06$ and year 2: $M=-0.34$, $SD=0.52$). Summaries of these results are found in Table 10.

Table 10. *t*-Test for One-Way ANOVA: LSI scale differences for years one and two compared

Differences on LSI Scales	LSI scale differences for years one and two L3C participants				
	Year	N	Mean	SD	
Working with Groups	1	45.00	-0.34	0.43	
	2	24.00	-0.26	0.48	
Understand Self	1	53.00	-0.22	0.47	
	2	24.00	-0.31	0.39	
Communication	1	53.00	-0.24	0.43	
	2	24.00	-0.33	0.51	
Decision Making	1	51.00	-0.28	0.42	
	2	24.00	-0.28	0.44	
Leadership	1	51.00	-0.19	1.06	
	2	24.00	-0.34	0.52	

Findings Related to Objective Four

A One Sample *t*-Test was used to measure year two L3C participants' attitudes toward the peer mentors. All questions showed to be statistically significant at the 2-tailed level of significance ($p < .05$). Year two participants indicated that the peer mentors were supportive ($M=4.27$, $SD=0.60$), gave positive feedback ($M=4.00$, $SD=0.69$), were good role models ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.71$), were knowledgeable about Texas A&M University ($M=4.19$, $SD=0.75$), were easy to communicate with ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.77$), and did not use peer pressure to persuade them to do anything negative ($M=4.16$, $SD=0.75$) according to the means and standard deviations for the questions. See Appendix B for more detail on the questions.

A Likert-type scale of one to five (5-strongly agree, 4-agree, 3-neither agree nor disagree, 2-disagree, 1-strongly disagree) was used and any means above four were considered to be significant. All questions had a mean above three, except question 52 ("The peer mentors helped me to realize my prejudices"), which had a mean of 2.96. Summaries of these results are found in Table 11.

Table 11. One Sample *t*-Test: Questions on peer mentor by year two L3C participants

L3C Year Two Peer Mentoring Questions (N=26)				
Peer Mentors Questions	N	Mean	SD	2-Tail Prob.
Not supportive	26	4.27	0.60	0.00
Helped me	26	3.46	0.91	0.00
Positive feedback	26	4.00	0.69	0.00
Good role models	26	4.23	0.71	0.00
Personal relationship	26	3.54	0.95	0.00
Developed leadership	26	3.31	0.93	0.00
Knowledgeable	26	4.19	0.75	0.00
Helped me adjust	26	3.77	0.86	0.00
Did not help me	26	3.89	0.86	0.00
Realize prejudices	25	2.96	0.46	0.00
Communication skills	24	3.25	0.79	0.00
Time management	26	3.15	0.83	0.00
Understand situations	26	3.39	0.98	0.00
Learn from experiences	26	3.69	0.79	0.00
Felt uncomfortable	25	3.92	1.38	0.00
Easy to communicate	26	4.23	0.77	0.00
Help me set goals	26	3.39	0.85	0.00
Helped me get involved	26	3.50	0.86	0.00
No peer pressure	25	4.16	0.75	0.00
Strengths & Weaknesses	26	3.42	0.86	0.00

Summary of Findings

The findings from this study indicated that the Leadership, Living, Learning Community (L3C) helped participants during years one and two, as measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI). Year one participants during the first semester; however, indicated more improvements on their leadership skills both on the individual

questions and on the leadership scales, as measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory, then year two participants during the first semester.

Year two participants indicated that the peer mentors helped them by being supportive, giving them positive feedback, being good role models, being knowledgeable about Texas A&M University, being easy to communicate with, and not using peer pressure to get them to do anything negative. Discussions, implications, and recommendations for these findings can be found in Chapter 5, starting on the next page.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of the study was to determine the impact of a leadership living learning community on the leadership development of freshmen in transition at Texas A&M University. The purpose guided the development of specific research objectives which were written to identify, not only the leadership development of the freshmen, but also the perceptions of the freshmen of the peer mentors. The following methodology was used to accomplish this purpose.

This purpose was accomplished through a causal-comparative study. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996) define a casual-comparative study as beginning with subjects who differ on dependent variables and test how they differ on independent variables. Causal-comparative research can test hypotheses concerning the relationship between an independent variable, X, and a dependent variable, Y.

Year one and two findings showed that the Leadership Living Learning Community (L3C) improved participants' leadership abilities, as measured by the Leadership Skills inventory. When year one and two were compared, year one was found to show great improvement. Year two findings showed the peer mentors had a positive effect on year two participants; however, the improvement of their leadership skills cannot be contributed to the peer mentors. Terenzini and Pascarella (1991) found that the "cumulative result of a set of interrelated and mutually supporting experiences,

in class and out, sustained over an extended period of time” impacted college students more so than a single experience.

Summary Review of Literature

Texas A&M University has sought to establish learning communities designed to address the freshmen year experience. According to Texas A& M University the underlying reasons of freshmen learning communities is to simulate the feeling of a smaller college and by doing so increase the experience for freshmen. Not only do the students attend class together, but live together to help with the overall experience of their freshmen year (Texas A&M, 2005).

The impact on institutions of higher education using learning communities is more important than the structure of the learning communities themselves. This allows the opportunity for faculty, staff, and student development, as well as, spurring the development of better teaching methods (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 2004). Yet, the learning communities provide students with the opportunity for greater academic success and satisfaction (Shapiro & Levine, 1999; Tinto, 1998; Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Leadership education is driven by the desire to educate learners in the theoretical foundations of leadership, organizational development, and organizational change. These foundations are supported by psychology, sociology, and philosophy. The intent of leadership education is to provide learners with tools to be successful in a variety of contexts. The mission of all agricultural leadership education programs is “to discover, teach, and disseminate leadership theory, principles, and practices in Agricultural and

Life Sciences contexts to develop leadership for organizations, businesses, governmental agencies and communities” (National Summit for Agricultural Leadership Education, 2004; Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications, Texas A&M University, 2005).

Dewey (1938) said the true learning is best achieved when it is a combination between academic learning and experientially-based learning. This is the basic construct of the learning community, providing academic learning and then the opportunity to learn through experience. Learning communities provide a unique way for students to experience academic learning, while providing them with support (Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Hirst, et al. (2004) concluded leaders learn best when presented with challenging work, solving complex problems, leading a team, but additionally, they foster communication and enhance team performance. Solving problems, leading teams, and communicating are important attributions of a leader and have been found in research assessing student leadership development (Brick, 1998; Rotter, 2004; Townsend & Carter, 1983). These concepts allowed for the application of the Tuckman and Jensen Group Development Model (1977).

Hunt and Michael (1983) define mentoring as any age difference of half a generation apart. From this we can surmise that peer mentoring would be of less than a half a generation in age between the mentor and the protégé.

Santovec (2004) said the results from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse study showed peer mentors gained leadership opportunities, allowing them to hone their skills, while the new students were able to meet people in a social setting that did not

revolve around drinking. McLean (2004) found that students who were mentored were more apt to learn and identified the mentors as role models, while the mentors underwent personal development as well.

Objectives

Leadership, for the purpose of this study, consists of skills improved over the course of the semester, assisted by peer mentors. The five aspects on which leadership skills were based included communication, working in groups, leadership, understanding self, and decision- making. Based on the objectives of this study and the parameters listed above, the following objectives were formulated.

The specific research objectives, guided by the purpose, of the study were to:

- 1) the leadership development, as measured on the LSI, of year one L3C participants,
- 2) the leadership development, as measured on the LSI, of year two L3C participants,
- 3) the leadership development, as measured on the LSI, between years one and two, and
- 4) the perceptions of year two L3C participants about the role of peer mentors.

Conclusions and Implications

The conclusions of this study identified leadership characteristics of the participants of the Leadership Living Learning Community (L3C) of years one and two in relation to before and after the first semester of participating in the program. The findings showed year one participant's had a greater overall improvement on their

leadership skills then year two participants; however, both years showed improvement of their leadership skills during their first semester participating in the Leadership, Living, Learning Community (L3C), as measured by the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI). Year two findings also suggested a positive perception of the peer mentors.

Year two participants indicated that the peer mentors helped them become acquainted with Texas A&M University, were supportive, gave positive feedback, were good role models, were easy to communicate with, and did not use peer pressure to persuade them to participate in negative behaviors. From these responses by year two participants we can conclude that the peer mentors did in fact assist them with their transition from high school to college and had other positive effects on them, but we cannot prove to what extent they effected year two participant's leadership development, as measured by the LSI.

As the program progresses, it will be easier to compare the years, since more of the variables remain the same. The difference between years one and two were different activities/field trips, participants lived in different residence halls, a different text book was used, and use of peer mentors. Year one was used as a test for the program and adjustments were made to improve the course. It is the conclusion of the researcher that these adjustments made a difference, and did in fact improve the course to some degree; although it is not known to what degree and what overall affect the peer mentors did have on year two participants.

The findings for objectives one and two are supported by findings from Thorp (1997), Tabke (1999), Hanselka (2001), Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt (1999), Cress,

Aston, and Zimmerman-Oster (2001), Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway and Lovell (1999), and Rotter (2004). It was concluded that leadership skills of L3C participants increase due to involvement in the program and effects their leadership development throughout college.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Objective One

Year one of the L3C proved to be informative. The course instructors learned which aspects of the course/program were useful and which were not. The text book was found to be too “juvenile” by participants, as were some of the programs. These were taken into consideration for year two and improvements were made accordingly. Participants in year one showed statistically significant improvement on most individual questions on all but one of the LSI scales. The one scale lacking in statistical significance was the difference in leadership, between the beginning and ending of the first semester.

These findings show that the L3C did help participants, overall, as measured by the LSI, on their leadership development. The program proved to have the greatest improvements on participants’ abilities to work in groups, make decisions, and communication. Rotter (2004) found that “student leaders who completed the academic leadership course displayed a self-perceived increase in their ability to work in groups, work in positions of leadership, communicate, make decisions, and in their awareness of self.”

This can be attributed to the design of the program in which participants live in close proximity to one another and often work in group settings. It is recommended that more emphasis be put on the leadership aspect of the course. This can be done through the continued use of the current program design, while helping students bridge the connection to activities they are participating in and basic leadership skills. If the students had a better understanding of the different scales of the LSI, then greater improvement might be made.

Objective Two

The changes made after year one, seemed to improve the overall aspects of the program. The program size was kept small, to allow for greater bonds to be formed among participants. The changes in this year, compared to year one, were the use of a new text, since the previous was thought to be too juvenile, new programs/field trips, which year one participants indicated they received nothing from, all participants lived in the same residence hall, the gender breakup of participants was more evenly split, and year one participants were used as peer mentors.

Research in the area of student involvement in extracurricular activities and student organizations revealed that student self perceptions were increased due to the involvement in these programs. Additional studies have also shown involvement in a leadership education course can increase student's perceptions about themselves and their leadership abilities, when combined with involvement in extracurricular activities and student organizations (Rotter, 2004).

Results from year two participants indicated an increase in their overall abilities of leadership, understanding of self, and communication. Approximately half of the individual questions proved to be significant. This can be attributed to the participants in year two possibly not understanding the concepts or misinterpreting the questions.

An observation by the researcher suggests that most participants were distracted by a sporting event that was going on the evening of the end of semester banquet, which was the time when the research was being conducted. It is recommended that research be gathered the first and last day of the course the first semester and the last day the second semester. This will allow for students to be in the frame of mind necessary to more properly answer the questions.

Objective Three

The comparison of year one to year two L3C participants showed no significant difference between the scales on the LSI. Although, individually the LSI scales for years one and two L3C participants provided significant differences to before and after the first semester. Overall year two L3C participants showed the greatest difference in mean between beginning and ending the semester compared to year one.

It can be concluded that year two L3C participants showed a somewhat greater improvement over year one on the LSI scales. The changes made for year two helped students with their leadership development, as measured by the LSI. The exact cause of these differences is unknown and cannot be contributed to any one variable.

Recommendations for comparing the years are to continue collecting data on the program for the years to come. In doing this instructors and interested parties can be

assured their time and resources are helping participants. It will be easier to compare the coming years, since changes will remain minimal, as compared to the changes made after year one.

Objective Four

Although it is unknown the exact effects the peer mentors had on year two L3C participants, there were more differences on the scales of the LSI when compared to year one. The variables which contributed to these changes are unknown, but the peer mentors were one such variable and contributed to the changes in some way. The peer mentors did help year two L3C participants to adjust to college in some way, learn about Texas A&M University, improve their communication skills, help them to better work in groups, were supportive, offered positive feedback, and did not try to use peer pressure to persuade them to participate in negative behaviors.

This is supported by findings from Jekielek et al. (2002), Mavrinac (2005), Angelique, Kyle, and Taylor (2002), and Chao (1997) who said that mentoring can increase attendance, improve attitudes towards school, reduce some negative behaviors, promotes positive social attitudes, and relationships.

Jekielek, Moore, Hair, and Scarupa (2002) define mentoring as “a sustained relationship between a young person and an adult in which the adult provides the young person with support, guidance, and assistance. The very foundation of mentoring is the idea that if caring, concerned adults are available to young people, youth will be more likely to become successful adults themselves.” By looking at this definition of

mentoring it can be concluded that year two L3C participants were mentored and it had positive effects.

The peer mentors should continue to be from the previous years L3C participants and should self-select to continue as peer mentors in the program. By allowing them to self-select participants are showing they care about the program and received something out of it. These concepts go back to experiential learning in which participants use skills and experiences gained to help others. This also shows that the program is working and the peer mentors are effective.

The number of peer mentors should continue to remain small, so they are mentoring the students in small groups, which will continue to foster the skills of the LSI, which the program is based on. The role of the peer mentors might be increased somewhat to use their experiences with the program to help instructors to make improvements to better help the next year's participants.

Programmatic Implications

The L3C has shown to be effective both with and without the use of peer mentors; however, the use of peer mentors allows for more improvements than without them. The use of peer mentors will allow the course to grow and better engage participants, as long as instructors are receptive to what the participants think are the most useful activities and continue to change as needed. Rotter (2004) recommended the use of a leadership development program early-on in the college career to further enhance understanding of leadership concepts. The Leadership, Living, Learning

Community is one such program which hopes to increase participants understanding of leadership.

As of now the instructors have been responsive to participant's suggestions and making changes. The continued use of these suggestions will allow instructors to ensure participants are getting the most out of the program and the program remains on course with its objectives.

At the conclusion of the second semester it is noted that one of the instructors will be leaving. Their replacement is unknown at this time, as well as the involvement of the leadership department. These two factors alone have great implications for the future of the program, since they were both instrumental in its creation. It is the hope of the researcher that someone will try to fill the role of the leaving instructor so the department stays committed to the program and future participants may reap its benefits.

Money needs to continue to be available to the program and the budget edited on a yearly basis to account for the changes that need to be made to ensure the continued improvement of participants. These improvements could be more experiential learning opportunities and other ways for participants to relate what they are learning in the class to both leadership and the real world.

Recommendations for Future Research

A continued longitudinal study needs to be conducted every semester to make sure the program focused on its objectives. The LSI is a good tool to measure the leadership development of participants from semester to semester; however, a new instrument needs to be created to judge the effects of the peer mentors.

There are too many variables at this time to account for the effects of the peer mentors on L3C participants. If the variables can be determined and accounted for, then the effects of the peer mentors can be determined to make sure the improvements are solely based on them and they are worth the additional resources of the program.

The data from this research needs to be collected the same time each semester to avoid the loss of the population participating in the study. Research should be collected the first and last day of class the first semester, as well as the last day of class the second semester, administered by an outside party. This will ensure the majority of the population is present and in the frame of mind for the inventory.

A continued longitudinal study needs to be conducted on the peer mentors themselves, to determine if they perceive they are assisting in the development of participants. This data should then be compared to what participants perceive about the peer mentors. It is also suggested that data be collected at the end of each year L3C participants are in college and compared to a control group who also live in the same residence hall, but are not part of the program. This additional data, although overwhelming, might prove useful in determining the benefits L3C participants gain from participating in the program.

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APPENDIX A
SURVEY INSTRUMENT YEAR 1

UIN: _____ Initials: _____

Instructions for completing the form:

Results are confidential.

At the beginning of my first semester at TAMU -						At the end of my first semester at TAMU -				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	1. I can cooperate and work in a group.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	2. I can get along with people around me.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	3. I feel responsible for my actions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	4. I believe in dividing the work among group members.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	5. I understand myself.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	6. I feel comfortable teaching others.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	7. I consider all choices before making a decision.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	8. I listen carefully to opinions of group members.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

At the beginning of my first semester at TAMU -						At the end of my first semester at TAMU -				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	9. I am respected by others my age.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	10. I can lead a discussion.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	11. I use past experiences in making decisions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	12. I believe that group members are responsible persons.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	13. I am sure of my abilities.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	14. I am a good listener.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	15. I use information in making decisions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	16. I feel comfortable being a group leader.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	17. I accept who I am.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	18. I feel responsible for my decisions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	19. I can give clear directions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	20. I can follow directions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	21. I can run a meeting.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

22. Was Texas A&M University your first choice of universities?

- Yes
 No

23. Did you attend Fish Camp?

- Yes
 No

24. Are you involved in any student organizations?

- No – Proceed to Question 25.
 Yes - Please answer 24a, 24b, and 24c.

24a. Name of Organization	24b. How many hours a week?
	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 hour week. <input type="radio"/> Between 1-2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> More than 2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> Don't know.
	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 hour week. <input type="radio"/> Between 1-2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> More than 2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> Don't know.
	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 hour week. <input type="radio"/> Between 1-2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> More than 2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> Don't know.
	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 hour week. <input type="radio"/> Between 1-2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> More than 2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> Don't know.

24c. Are you able to apply what you learn in your courses to your student organization involvement?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

Please explain your answer:

25. Are you working to pay for your expenses?

- No. Proceed to question 27.
 Yes - Please answer a and b.
- a. How many hours a week?
- 1-10 hours a week.
 11-20 hours a week.
 More than 20 hours a week.

b. Are you able to apply what you learn in your courses to your job?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

26. Have the following study tactics been beneficial to your academic success? (Please rank 1 most important to 4 least important)

- _____ Studying with my peers
 _____ Studying with my friends
 _____ Group projects
 _____ Studying by myself

27. Overall, how have you adjusted to college life?

- Very Successfully
 Somewhat Successfully
 Not Very Successfully

Please explain your answer:

28. During your first semester at Texas A&M University have you made a change in your declared major?

- Yes
 No

If yes, please explain, provide old major – to new major:

Demographics:

Please select the most accurate responses to the following questions:

28. Gender

- Male Female

29. Age (please write in): _____

30. Ethnicity

- Caucasian
 African American
 Hispanic
 Asian/Pacific Islander
 American Indian/Native American
 Other (please specify): _____

31. Are you the first person in your immediate family (parents, siblings) to go to college?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

APPENDIX B
SURVEY INSTRUMENT YEAR 2

The Impact of Peer Mentors on the Leadership Living Learning Community at Texas A&M University



Questionnaire

December 2006

Dear L3C Participant:

I need your help in a study of people who have participated in the Leadership Living Learning Community (L3C) to see if peer mentors were beneficial. This study will help the L3C, better prepare it's participants to be peer mentors, work with peer mentors, and develop their leadership skills.

Since you are a participant in the L3C you understand what it is like to have a peer mentor and are aware of the effects that peer mentors can have and this information is crucial to the life of the L3C.

Your answers are completely confidential and will not be shared. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. However, you can help us by taking a few moments of your time and share with us your experiences from the L3C. If you prefer not to participate please return your blank questionnaire to the proctor. Choosing to participate in this study or not, will in no way affect your grade.

This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board–Human Subjects Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through Ms. Angelia M. Raines, IRB Coordinator, Office of the Vice-President for Research and Associate Provost for Graduate Studies at (979) 458-4067 (araines@vprmail.tamu.edu). (IRB# 2005-0588)

If you have any questions or comments about this study, I would be happy to talk with you. My phone number is 979-845-2085 or you can email me at farnold@aged.tamu.edu.

It is only with the help of people like you that this research can be done. I would like to thank you for helping with this important study. By participating in this study you understand that your grade will in no way be affect and the information will be kept confidential.

Sincerely,

Felix Arnold
Graduate Student
Texas A&M University

Section 1

Instructions: This section refers to the beginning of your first semester at TAMU. Think back to the beginning of your first semester and answer the questions according to how you felt by filling in the bubble (○) that best describes how you felt.

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neither Agree or Disagree (NAD), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

At the beginning of my first semester at TAMU					
	SA	A	NAD	D	SD
1. I can cooperate and work in a group.	○	○	○	○	○
2. I can get along with people around me.	○	○	○	○	○
3. I feel responsible for my actions.	○	○	○	○	○
4. I believe in dividing the work among group members.	○	○	○	○	○
5. I do not understand myself.	○	○	○	○	○
6. I feel comfortable teaching others.	○	○	○	○	○
7. I consider all choices before making a decision.	○	○	○	○	○
8. I listen carefully to opinions of group members.	○	○	○	○	○
9. I am respected by others my age.	○	○	○	○	○
10. I can lead a discussion.	○	○	○	○	○
11. I do not use past experiences in making decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
12. I believe that group members are responsible persons.	○	○	○	○	○
13. I am sure of my abilities.	○	○	○	○	○
14. I am a good listener.	○	○	○	○	○
15. I use information in making decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
16. I feel comfortable being a group leader.	○	○	○	○	○
17. I accept who I am.	○	○	○	○	○
18. I feel responsible for my decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
19. I can give clear directions.	○	○	○	○	○
20. I can follow directions	○	○	○	○	○
21. I cannot run a meeting.	○	○	○	○	○
Please continue to next page. >>>					

Section 2

Instructions: This section refers to the end of your first semester at TAMU. Answer these questions according to how you now feel at the end of your first semester by filling in the bubble (○) that best describes how you feel.

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neither Agree or Disagree (NAD), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

At the end of my first semester at TAMU					
	SA	A	NAD	D	SD
22. I can cooperate and work in a group.	○	○	○	○	○
23. I can get along with people around me.	○	○	○	○	○
24. I feel responsible for my actions.	○	○	○	○	○
25. I believe in dividing the work among group members.	○	○	○	○	○
26. I do not understand myself.	○	○	○	○	○
27. I feel comfortable teaching others.	○	○	○	○	○
28. I consider all choices before making a decision.	○	○	○	○	○
29. I listen carefully to opinions of group members.	○	○	○	○	○
30. I am respected by others my age.	○	○	○	○	○
31. I can lead a discussion.	○	○	○	○	○
32. I do not use past experiences in making decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
33. I believe that group members are responsible persons.	○	○	○	○	○
34. I am sure of my abilities.	○	○	○	○	○
35. I am a good listener.	○	○	○	○	○
36. I use information in making decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
37. I feel comfortable being a group leader.	○	○	○	○	○
38. I accept who I am.	○	○	○	○	○
39. I feel responsible for my decisions.	○	○	○	○	○
40. I can give clear directions.	○	○	○	○	○
41. I can follow directions	○	○	○	○	○
42. I cannot run a meeting.	○	○	○	○	○
Please continue to next page. >>>					

Section 3

Instructions: This section refers to your attitudes about peer mentors during your first semester at TAMU. Think about peer mentors and your first semester and answer the questions according to how you feel about peer mentors by filling in the bubble (○) you feel best describes your attitudes towards peer mentors.

Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neither Agree or Disagree (NAD), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

Your attitude towards the peer mentors					
	SA	A	NAD	D	S D
43. The peer mentors were not supportive.	○	○	○	○	○
44. The peer mentors spent enough time helping me.	○	○	○	○	○
45. The peer mentors gave me positive feedback.	○	○	○	○	○
46. The peer mentors were good role models.	○	○	○	○	○
47. I felt that I had a personal relationship with the peer mentors.	○	○	○	○	○
48. The peer mentors helped develop my leadership skills.	○	○	○	○	○
49. The peer mentors were knowledgeable about TAMU.	○	○	○	○	○
50. The peer mentors helped me adjust to college.	○	○	○	○	○
51. The peer mentors did not help me with problems.	○	○	○	○	○
52. The peer mentors helped me to realize my prejudices.	○	○	○	○	○
53. The peer mentors helped with my communication skills.	○	○	○	○	○
54. The peer mentors helped me with time management.	○	○	○	○	○
55. The peer mentors helped me understand various situations that I might encounter.	○	○	○	○	○
56. I was able to learn from the peer mentors' experiences.	○	○	○	○	○
57. I felt uncomfortable with the peer mentors.	○	○	○	○	○
58. It was easy to communicate with the peer mentors.	○	○	○	○	○
59. The peer mentors helped me to set goals.	○	○	○	○	○
60. The peer mentors helped me to get involved.	○	○	○	○	○
61. The peer mentors did not use peer pressure to get me to do something negative.	○	○	○	○	○
62. The peer mentors helped me to identify my strengths and weaknesses.	○	○	○	○	○
Please continue to next page. >>>					

Section 4**Place an X on the circle to the most appropriate answer.**

63. Was Texas A&M University your first choice of universities?

- Yes
 No

64. Did you attend Fish Camp?

- Yes
 No

65. Does your current major have its own learning community?

- Yes
 No

66. Are you involved in any student organizations?

- No – Proceed to Question 67.
 Yes - Please answer 66a, 66b, and 66c.

66a. Name of Organization	66b. How many hours a week?
	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 hour week. <input type="radio"/> Between 1-2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> More than 2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> Don't know.
	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 hour week. <input type="radio"/> Between 1-2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> More than 2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> Don't know.
	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 hour week. <input type="radio"/> Between 1-2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> More than 2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> Don't know.
	<input type="radio"/> Less than 1 hour week. <input type="radio"/> Between 1-2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> More than 2 hours a week. <input type="radio"/> Don't know.

Please continue to the next page. >>>

Section 4 continued**Place an X on the circle to the most appropriate answer.**

66c. Are you able to apply what you learn in your courses to your student organization involvement?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please explain your answer:

67. Are you working to pay for your expenses?

- No. Proceed to question 27.
- Yes - Please answer a and b.
 - a. How many hours a week?
 - 1-10 hours a week.
 - 11-20 hours a week.
 - More than 20 hours a week.

b. Are you able to apply what you learn in your courses to your job?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

68. Have the following study tactics been beneficial to your academic success? (Please rank 1 most important to 4 least important)

- _____ Studying with my peers
- _____ Studying with my friends
- _____ Group projects
- _____ Studying by myself

69. Overall, how have you adjusted to college life?

- Very Successfully
- Somewhat Successfully
- Not Very Successfully

Please explain your answer:

Please continue to the next page. >>>

Section 5**Place an X on the circle to the most appropriate answer:**

70. Gender

- Male Female

71. Age (please write in): _____

72. Ethnicity

- Caucasian
 African American
 Hispanic
 Asian/Pacific Islander
 American Indian/Native American
 Other (please specify): _____

73. Are you the first person in your immediate family (parents, siblings) to go to college?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

74. Major (please write in): _____

Thank you for participating in this study, the questionnaire is now complete.

Please return the questionnaire to the proctor.

VITA

Name: Felix Wallace Arnold III

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Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications

Email Address: felixarnold@aggienetwork.com

Education: B.S., Agricultural Development, minor in Agricultural Journalism,
Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, 2005.
M.S., Agricultural Education, Texas A&M University, College
Station, TX, 2007.

Professional: Association of Leadership Educators