

PEER LEADERSHIP: AN ANALYSIS OF PEER MENTORS AT AN URBAN,
HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTION

A Dissertation

by

SARAH PEÑA HO

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

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Chair of Committee,	Summer F. Odom
Committee Members,	Lori L. Moore
	Kim E. Dooley
	Mary E. Bryk
Head of Department,	Mathew Baker

December 2019

Major Subject: Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications

Copyright 2019 Sarah Peña Ho

ABSTRACT

College students are increasingly relied on to assist institutions of higher education in their retention and graduation rates of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students. Although they do help in accomplishing institutional persistence gains, they also provide opportunities to develop leadership. The purpose of this study was to describe the mentoring experience from the perspective of peer mentors at an urban, Hispanic-Serving Institution (UHSI) by exploring the motivation of upperclassmen to mentor freshmen, quantifying the leadership behaviors peer mentors exhibit through mentoring freshmen, and exploring the impact of a peer mentoring experience on an upperclassmen's leadership and career development. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to complete this three-part research.

The first study used a qualitative approach reviewing potential peer mentor applications. Through content analysis, the applications allowed the UHSI peer mentors to reflect on their own experiences as a new student, describe their genuine desire to help others, and articulate their focus on student success. The applications also identified 93 references to peer mentor qualities mostly focused on interpersonal and support characteristics. The study also revealed potential peer mentors anticipate three transferrable themes to their careers: development of skills, working with people, and service to others.

The second study was descriptive and aimed to examine the leadership behaviors of peer mentors at UHSI. Using the Student-Leadership Practices Inventory and demographic items as an instrument, 25 peer mentors completed the survey resulting in a 62.5% response rate. The data suggests the UHSI peer mentors are leaders as they practice all five

exemplary leadership behaviors.

The third study was a qualitative approach to explore how graduating peer mentors at an urban, Hispanic-Serving Institution (UHSI) develop as a leader. A purposive sample was used to identify eight peer mentors who graduate from UHSI in 2019. Focus groups were conducted to collect the peer mentor experience. Data was analyzed using the constant comparative method, and the findings revealed the UHSI peer mentor graduates have developed as a leader and anticipate applying their communication and relationship-building skills to their future careers.

DEDICATION

To my best teachers—Mom and Dad,

To my first role model—Michael,

To my best friend—Edwin, and

To my future—Avery,

I dedicate this achievement to you all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The dissertation is the culminating component in the quest towards a PhD. It is the final piece right before the degree is conferred and graduation is held. This dissertation is the end of my time as a student at Texas A&M University, a collegiate career that spans 18 years. In those years I have come across some remarkable people, all of which deserve a large amount of gratitude.

To the members of my doctoral committee, Drs. Mary Bryk, Kim Dooley, Lori Moore and Summer Odom, you who have provided unlimited amounts of guidance and support. I thank you all for your expertise, insight, and patience as I worked on this degree. You are all strong women, leaders in your fields, who have provided me great examples of the behavior, character and work ethic I hope to one day possess. Thank you!

To my TAMU and UHD colleagues, thank you for your encouragement. You pushed me to continue making a difference in the lives of students while also making a difference in my own. To Dr. Dick Cummins, a mentor who began molding me the summer of 2005. I am thankful you let me begin my higher ed career with you. To Dr. Jemma Caesar, thank you for demonstrating servant leadership and student advocacy. You have made a great impression on my life and taught me lessons I will keep always.

To my family, thank you for the support and nudges to complete this chapter of my life. Mom, Dad, and Michael, thank you for remaining proud of me and providing the inspiration that this was possible. To my in-laws, Benny and Mabel, thank you for your encouragement and your help at home as I made finishing touches. To Edwin, thanks for reminding me daily with your incessant question “Did you work on your dissertation?” and

for loving me through this process.

To the UHSI Peer Mentors, thank you for letting me be a small part of your higher education experience. You amaze me in unimaginable ways, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to work with you and watch you make substantial differences in the lives of new students. You put the needs of your mentees before your own while also achieving your own personal and academic goals. Thank you for your perspective in my quest to understand your mentoring experience.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

Contributors

This work was supervised by dissertation committee consisting of Drs. Summer F. Odom [chair], Lori L. Moore, and Kim E. Dooley of the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communications and Dr. Mary E. Bryk of the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics.

The work conducted for the dissertation was completed by the student independently.

Funding Sources

There is no outside funding contributions to acknowledge related to the research and compilation of this document.

NOMENCLATURE

FTIC	First-time-in-college
RGSC	Retention and Graduation Standing Committee
UHSI	Urban, Hispanic-Serving Institution
GPA	Grade Point Average
EFC	Estimated Family Contribution
RLM	Relational Leadership Model
LID	Leadership Identity Development
S-LPI	Student Leadership Practices Inventory
SOCW	Social Work
NPMT	Non-Profit Management
MKT	Marketing
BPS	Biological and Physical Sciences
POLS	Political Science
ACC	Accounting
GEOS	Geosciences
PSY	Psychology
FINA	Finance
SOC	Sociology
SAD	Structural Analysis and Design
ISS	Interdisciplinary Studies
CJ	Criminal Justice

CHE

Chemistry

COMM

Communication Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES.....	vii
NOMENCLATURE.....	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	x
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
The Context.....	3
The UHSI Peer Mentoring Program.....	4
Overview of Individual Studies.....	7
Study One	8
Study Two	8
Study Three	9
 THE CALL TO MENTOR PEERS: DETERMINING WHY PEER MENTORS AT UHSI CHOOSE TO MENTOR THEIR UNDERCLASSMEN	 11
Overview	11
Introduction	11
UHSI.....	13
Conceptual Framework	14
Continuum of Peer Relationships and Functions of Mentoring	14
The Relational Leadership Model	16
Purpose of Study	17
Methods.....	18
Population and Sample.....	18
Study Approach.....	19
Data Collection.....	19
Data Analysis	21
Measures of Trustworthiness.....	22
Findings.....	23

The Choice to Mentor.....	23
Peer Mentor Qualities.....	27
Career Connections	29
Discussion	32
Implications for Programmatic Modifications and Future Research	36
PEER MENTORING IS TRANSFORMATIONAL: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF PEER MENTORS AT UHSI AND THE FIVE PRACTICES OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP	38
Overview	38
Introduction.....	38
Theoretical Framework	41
The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership.....	41
The Five Practices as an Assessment Tool.....	42
Purpose and Objectives	42
Methodology	43
Instrumentation.....	43
Maintaining Internal Validity	44
Statistical Analysis	45
Data	45
Conclusions	55
Limitations, Future Research, and Program Advancements	57
PEER MENTOR SYNTHESIZES MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PEER MENTOR GRADUATES FROM UHSI.....	59
Overview	59
Introduction.....	59
Conceptual Framework	61
Stages of LID Model	62
LID Model in Other Contexts	63
Purpose of Study	64
Methods.....	64
Sampling.....	64
Data Collection.....	66
Data Analysis	68
Measures of Trustworthiness.....	68
Findings.....	69
Peer Mentor Experience is a Learning Experience	69
Leadership Lessons	70
From Peer Mentor to Future Career	73
Discussion	75
Mentorship and Leadership Identities	75
Life After Mentoring	77
Implications for Programmatic Modifications and Future Research	78

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	80
Summary of Findings	80
Study One	80
Study Two	81
Study Three	81
Conclusions	82
Implications for Future Studies	83
Recommendations for Programmatic Development	85
REFERENCES	87
APPENDIX A CONSENT FORM	96
APPENDIX B PEER MENTOR APPLICATION.....	97
APPENDIX C INSTRUMENT.....	98
Student LPI.....	98
Demographic Items	100
Additional Questions.....	100
APPENDIX D INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	102

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. 2018-2019 Peer Mentor Demographics (N=40)	6
Table 2. List of Peer Mentor Qualities by Career and Psychosocial Function	27
Table 3. Summary of Repeated Peer Mentor Qualities	28
Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Inspire a Shared Vision Leadership Practice (n = 25)	47
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Enable Others to Act Leadership Practice (n = 25)	48
Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Model the Way Leadership Practice (n = 25)	49
Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Encourage the Heart Leadership Practice (n = 25)	51
Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for Challenge the Process Leadership Practice (n = 25)	52
Table 9. Mean Scores for Five Exemplary Leadership Practices by Peer Mentor Characteristic (n = 25)	53
Table 10. Summary of Influential Mentors and their Personal Characteristics	55
Table 11. Peer Mentor Graduates	65

INTRODUCTION

Mentorship is a relationship between people whereby a novice individual learns from an experienced individual. Most of the mentoring literature is situated in the context of businesses or workplace settings. An experienced employee, or mentor, imparts important knowledge to the inexperienced novice or protégé (Kram, 1983). The mentor serves two main functions: to provide career related information and to assist in the psychosocial development of protégés.

In the context of higher education, mentoring definitions, models and programs vary widely. Scholars have attempted to identify a central definition or to operationalize mentoring through a variety of qualitative and quantitative studies with some success (Crisp, 2009; Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Their studies and reviews of literature reveal numerous mentoring relationships, both formal and informal, between peers, with faculty, with staff, and with alumni at two-year and four-year institutions (Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005; Jacobi, 1991). “Traditional mentoring in higher education has included faculty and staff members who provide mostly informal mentoring to graduate students in the university setting” (Budge, 2006, p. 25). This traditional mentor-mentee relationship is occurring in a hierarchical structure between college students and university employees.

Within peer to peer interactions, the structure is less hierarchical. Peer to peer relationships occur between novice college students and peer tutors, supplemental instruction leaders, residence hall advisors, and orientation leaders, all programs utilizing

seasoned college students to assist new students transitioning to the college environment (Shook & Keup, 2012). Thus, “a peer mentor is not just any student, but is rather a student who has learned from experience and has developed skills to successfully guide other students through college” (Sanft, Jensen, & McMurray, 2008, p. 5). Across the country, institutions of higher education rely on peer mentors to assist in the college persistence of their mentees. With this purpose in mind, most research studies of peer mentoring programs focus on the mentee, or protégé, and the gains made in the retention, engagement, and development of students being mentored with respect to psychosocial and academic categories (Budge, 2006; DeMarinis, Beaulieu, Cull, & Abd-El-Aziz, 2017; Pagan, & Edwards-Wilson, 2002; Washburn, 2008).

Some research exists on the development of peer mentors. Colvin and Ashman (2010) found the roles of connecting link, peer leader, learning coach, student advocate, and trusted friend as predominate functions of peer mentors. Furthermore, a qualitative study attempting to identify the learning process and outcomes from the perspective of peer mentors highlighted students’ increased use of self-reflection of personal experiences and collaborative learning with mentees (Harmon, 2006). Regarding leadership, a study used the social change model of leadership and found that “mentorship is linked to...socially responsible leadership capacity” (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012, p. 618). Hastings, Griesen, Hoover, Creswell, and Dlugosh (2015) examined the generativity in college student mentors and found that students who participate in a mentoring relationship had a significantly higher generativity rate than their peers who were not mentors. Although all the studies have contributed much to the

examination of peer mentors in higher education, these are rare analyses of the development of peer mentors and their leadership development as a result of the experience.

The Context

According to the Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (2009), for an institution to be designated as a Hispanic-Service Institution (HSI) a minimum of 25% of its student body must be Hispanic. The context for this study is an urban HSI (UHSI) located in a US city with a population over one million people. UHSI is a four-year institution with a student body over 10,000 students, both undergraduate and graduate, with 50% identifying as Hispanic (UHSI, 2019a). Furthermore, the UHSI students are predominantly female, between the ages of 18-24 years, and represent over 60 countries. Over half of the undergraduate student body is Pell grant eligible, meaning their estimated family contribution (EFC) is less than \$6,000 per year.

UHSI is committed to the success of its students. Of most importance, and specified in the institutional strategic plan, is the retention and graduation of the first-time-in-college students (FTICs) within a six-year period (UHSI, 2016). An FTIC is “a student attending any institution for the first time at the undergraduate level” (UHSI, 2019a, p. 45), including students who earned college credits while still attending high school. The FTIC population at UHSI is over half female and 74% Hispanic. A third of the FTIC students enter UHSI below college ready standards set by the state.

To assist in increasing the graduation rate of FTICs, the UHSI’s administration established the Retention and Graduation Standing Committee (RGSC) made up of

faculty, staff, and students across purposeful divisions within the university: academic colleges and departments, academic advising, career services, financial aid, institutional assessment and research, and student affairs. The RGSC is charged with the following:

- Review UHSI's strategic goals on student success and align retention and graduation programs to support such strategic goals,
- Assess, review, and recommend changes to existing retention and graduation programs,
- Identify key data for regular collection to inform decision making,
- Play an advisory role to external work groups/councils/committees, and
- Develop a communication plan to disseminate information and collect input from the UHSI community. (UHSI, 2018a)

The RGSC members are divided among subcommittees, indicating the focus areas for each year. The first-year experience subcommittee was formed in 2014 to establish successful programs and initiatives designed to increase the retention of first-year students. From the first-year experience subcommittee, several new programs were established at UHSI: a revised and intensive four-day orientation program, a \$2000 grant awarded to FTIC students who complete at minimum 24 credit hours each academic year, freshman seminars, and a mentoring program for freshman students.

The UHSI Peer Mentoring Program

The peer mentoring program at UHSI was established in 2016 (J. Caesar, personal communication, July 29, 2019). Beginning with 37 peer mentors, the mentoring program was a voluntary program that bridged peer mentoring with faculty mentoring.

Following their week-long orientation, new students signed up to participate in the mentoring program. Student who agreed to participate were paired with a faculty mentor and peer mentor in their discipline. According to end of year satisfaction surveys, the roles of the mentors were ambiguous, had minimal impacts on the freshmen, and lacked the programmatic structure for engagement.

In 2017, the mentor program grew to 40 peer mentors and was required for all FTICs. As a component of their first-term curriculum, all FTICs enroll in a seminar course. One of the seminar's learning outcomes is student success. To accomplish the success outcome, academic colleges were asked to participate in a pilot program assigning peer mentors to freshman seminars. Infusing peer mentors in the seminar provided the class structure to form a cohort, gave mentors the opportunity to connect with their mentees, and provided opportunities to share important academic calendar items and deadlines. During the second year of the program, the FTICs assigned a peer mentor in their seminar had significant gains in grade point average (GPA), retention from first to second term, and engagement at UHSI. Based on the institutional data for the 2017-2018 academic year, the first-year experience subcommittee recommended to the Provost to institutionalize the peer mentor program in the freshman seminar for all FTICs and push the faculty mentor program to the spring of first-year and fall of second-year.

The 2018-2019 school year marked the first year the UHSI Peer Mentoring Program was an independent initiative for FTICs. Forty peer mentors were selected for the school year. Thirty-six peer mentors were assigned to freshmen seminars in the fall

term creating their group of assigned mentees. The remaining four were still assigned mentees, but there was no seminar for these students because they had already completed dual credit coursework that counted for their seminar in their programs of study. The peer mentors maintained their cohort of 25-30 mentees from the fall to the spring term. For their service, peer mentors were awarded a scholarship each term they were a member of the program. The 2018-2019 peer mentors were undergraduate junior and seniors by classification, with at least one full year experience as an UHSI student. There were predominantly female, Hispanic, and began UHSI as a traditional FTIC.

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the 2018-2019 Peer Mentors at UHSI.

Table 1.
2018-2019 Peer Mentor Demographics (N=40)

Demographic	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	29	72.5
Male	11	27.5
Race/Ethnicity		
Asian	3	7.5
Black	6	15.0
Hispanic	30	75.0
White	1	2.5
Discipline		
Business	7	17.5
Humanities & Social Sciences	16	40.0
Public Service	6	15.0
Science & Technology	11	27.5
Year at UHSI		
Second	16	40.0
Third	14	35.0
Fourth	7	17.5
Fifth	3	7.5

Much like the research of collegiate peer mentor programs and the success markers in the institutional data, the main purpose of the peer mentoring program at UHSI is focused on the retention and graduation of FTICs and the academic gains made by first-year students as a result of the peer mentor influence. Thus, peer mentors serve as role models, advocates, and knowledgeable guides to new students. They collaborate with faculty and staff to assist first-year students in connecting to support resources, setting academic and personal goals, and making successful progress towards their degrees. The peer mentors model the behavior FTICs should demonstrate for a successful first year at UHSI.

While serving as a peer mentor, UHSI students also undergo a unique experience on campus. Through observations of the program leader, peer mentors learn about their mentees and about themselves (J. Caesar, personal communication, July 29, 2019). The impact of the mentoring program on peer mentors, though, has yet to be examined. The purpose of this three-part research study is to investigate the personal development of peer mentors through a leadership lens. This study addresses three main goals: (a) to describe the motivation of upperclassmen to mentor freshmen, (b) to quantify the leadership behaviors peer mentors exhibit through mentoring freshmen, and (c) to explore the impact of a peer mentoring experience on an upperclassmen's development and career preparation.

Overview of Individual Studies

This comprehensive research is comprised of three separate studies. The overall purpose of this research was to describe the development of peer mentors at UHSI.

Through qualitative and quantitative approaches, this study sought to collect various forms of data and deduce an understanding of the peer mentoring experience. Permission was granted by UHSI's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study, and each participant completed a Consent Form (see Appendix A) prior to data collection.

Study One

The purpose of the first research study was to describe the motivation of upperclassmen at UHSI to mentor incoming freshmen. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the study addressed three research questions:

1. Why do junior and senior college students choose to mentor college freshmen?
2. What specific qualities do junior and senior college students believe are critical to effectively mentor freshmen?
3. What do junior and senior students hope to learn through the mentor experience that will prepare them for life after college?

The population for this study were the Peer Mentors at UHSI. The purposive sample were the 40 peer mentors selected for the 2018-2019 school year. The data analyzed in this study were the applications of each of the 40 peer mentors. Each application was analyzed for manifest and latent content (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). A basic coding technique was used to develop content categories (Merriam, 2009). Measures of trustworthiness were established with peer debriefing, member checks, and audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Study Two

The second study was a descriptive study examining the transformational

leadership practices of peer mentors at UHSI. The objectives framing the study included the following:

1. Describe the leadership practices of the peer mentors.
2. Describe the characteristics peer mentors believe to be most significant in their personal mentors.

The population for the study were the 2018-2019 UHSI peer mentors. Of the 40 subjects in the population, 25 completed the survey. The survey consisted of the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI), demographic items, and open-ended questions. Data was analyzed and reported through descriptive statistics in percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Study Three

The third study was qualitative and aimed to explore peer mentor participation of graduating seniors at UHSI and their personal development. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does serving as a peer mentor affect a college senior's leadership identity?
2. How does serving as a peer mentor prepare a college senior for their future profession?

Focus groups were used to collect data of peer mentors at UHSI who graduate in 2019. The population for this study were the peer mentors at UHSI set to graduate. A purposive sample was used based on the following criteria: the peer mentor participated in the program in 2018-2019 and the peer mentor graduated in 2019. The criterion-based sample consisted of eight participants. Two separate focus groups were created based on

years of experience as a peer mentor. An interview guide was used and consisted of questions regarding the overall peer mentor experience, leadership lessons learned, and the applicability of the mentor experience to future professions. Data was analyzed using a constant comparative method to develop themes (Merriam, 2009). Trustworthiness was addressed through member checks and audit trails (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

THE CALL TO MENTOR PEERS: DETERMINING WHY PEER MENTORS AT UHSI CHOOSE TO MENTOR THEIR UNDERCLASSMEN

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the motivation of upperclassmen at an urban, Hispanic-Serving Institution (UHSI) to effectively mentor incoming freshmen. Using an inductive process, this study aimed to develop thematic concepts describing why upperclassmen choose to mentor freshmen, the qualities critical to mentorship, and the anticipated outcomes of the mentor experience. Using a purposive sample, 40 peer mentors were the subject of this study. Data was analyzed from peer mentor applications. Content analysis was used to analyze the data. Findings revealed peer mentors at UHSI imagine their role as an intimate relationship with mentees. Serving as a peer mentor is an intrinsic need to help others, provides opportunities to develop skills, and allows for the relationship building to prepare for future professions.

Introduction

Mentorship is a relationship between a mentor and mentee, typically noted in job-related settings. The purpose of mentoring is to help mentees, or proteges, develop career and psychosocial functions within a hierarchical relationship (Kram, 1983). Career functions include roles supporting the career enhancement of proteges, whereas psychosocial functions enhance a mentee's interpersonal characteristics (Kram, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985).

Like the professional work setting, universities and colleges have developed a

variety of mentoring programs. These programs are mostly a traditional dyad that includes professors, staff, or alumni providing support to students (Budge, 2006; Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005; Jacobi, 1991). Formal or informal, the mentoring programs in the higher education setting are mostly hierarchical and established to assist students in their academic and personal lives. As such, most of the research around mentoring is concentrated on mentees and their learning outcomes (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). College student retention and graduation are at the forefront of university goals and strategic plans (DeMarinis, Beaulieu, Cull, & Abd-El-Aziz, 2017). To meet these goals, institutions have relied on mentoring programs to serve both a career and psychosocial function.

Peer mentoring programs have also been found beneficial in higher education. Sanft, Jensen, and McMurray (2008) explained a peer group can have significant effects on a student's academic and career goals as well as provide the emotional support and social exchanges necessary for college success. Successful peer-mentor relationships help first-year and second-year students transition to new higher education environments and "foster higher academic achievement and student retention" (Ward, Thomas, & Disch, 2004, p. 564). Another study found that peer mentors became members of a support program because of altruistic motivations to want to help others, desire to develop personal skills, and the opportunity to enhance their employability (Muldoon, 2008).

Although these studies contribute to the mentoring literature, most of the research in higher education has occurred in predominantly white institutions and in

residential universities. It is imperative to understand the peer mentor role within minority and under-represented groups of students. Budge (2006) stated that there is a great need for universities to purposefully include students from minority student groups. Even when working with diverse student populations, more research is necessary to understand the effects of mentoring programs on minority student success (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005). Moreover, future research “should also examine how different student populations conceptualize mentoring” (Crisp, 2009, p. 190). Despite the need to study peer mentoring within underrepresented populations, it is even more necessary to research the effects of peer programs at majority minority institutions.

UHSI

The urban, Hispanic-Serving Institution (UHSI) in this study is a non-residential campus offering bachelor’s and master’s degrees in a large US metropolitan area. Designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution because its student body is at least 25% Hispanic (HACU, 2009), UHSI has a student population of 14,000 and half identify as Hispanic or Latino (UHSI, 2019a). Additionally, UHSI students are largely female and come from families with an estimated family contribution (EFC) of \$6,000 or less per year. A major focus of UHSI is the success of its first-time-in-college (FTIC) students, recent high school graduates that attend college for the first time. The last three years of FTIC cohorts entering UHSI are majority female, almost three-fourths Hispanic, and 30 percent place into developmental education coursework to prepare for college level curricula.

The Peer Mentor program at UHSI was established in fall of 2016 (J. Caesar,

personal communication, July 31, 2019). To meet the transition needs of first-time-in-college (FTIC) students, upperclassmen were recruited to serve as peer mentors.

Specifically aimed to increase retention rates from fall to spring terms and minimize the percentage of first-time-college students on probation, the peer mentors were selected and paired with FTICs based on discipline. The peer mentors at UHSI are expected to engage with their mentees beyond their academics. They are tasked with developing a strong relationship with their mentees and support them in all aspects of their lives. The peer mentor at UHSI builds a supportive relationship with mentees, advocates for mentees, shares UHSI experiences with mentees, and helps mentees become familiar with UHSI resources.

Conceptual Framework

According to Sanft et al. (2008), “a mentor is committed to developing a relationship with students that extends beyond the classroom setting” (p. 37). The mentoring relationship focuses on academics and non-academic components of a mentee’s experience. This helping relationship is a peer relationship that provides guidance and support to successfully navigate college life. This relationship is also an interactive environment to achieve positive changes in mentees’ college transitions. Thus, this study is framed by two conceptual models: the continuum of peer relationships and the relational leadership model (RLM).

Continuum of Peer Relationships and Functions of Mentoring

Peer relationships, a helping relationship between people of similar age and experience, are horizontal relationships rather than traditional top-down associations

(Kram & Isabella, 1985). Organized along a continuum, peer relationships include information peers, collegial peers, and special peers. Information peers, informants, share information in the context of the environment. An information peer simply exchanges organizational information that can assist mentees in completing specific tasks (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Collegial peers, or colleagues, not only provide organizational information, they establish trust with one another and provide direct feedback to mentees. Special peers, the far right of the continuum, are friends who provide support in work and personal contexts (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Special peers develop a strong sense of bonding and provide candid personal feedback and emotional support.

Kram's (1983) model of mentoring is built on two specific functions: a career or instrumental function and the psychosocial or intrinsic function. Career functions include information sharing, assistance with task accomplishment and career strategizing, all roles supporting the career enhancement of proteges, whereas psychosocial functions include role modeling, emotional support, counseling and friendship, which enhance a mentee's interpersonal characteristics (Kram, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Along Kram & Isabella's (1985) continuum of peer relationships, the informant is primarily focused on career-enhancement functions. In the middle, the colleague, is a balance of both career and psychosocial functions. The special peer is largely focused on the psychosocial functions of mentoring.

In a comprehensive review of college student mentoring literature, Terrion and Leonard (2007) reviewed and coded 54 articles to develop a taxonomy of mentoring

characteristics using Kram's two-function mentoring model. Ten characteristics were identified resulting in two career-related descriptors and eight psychosocial characteristics. The literature review reveals most college student mentoring is situated between a collegial and special peer relationship. Similarly, peer mentors in a graduate program were found to provide higher levels of psychosocial support than career functions (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2000) another indication of collegial or special peer relationships. In increasing contexts, college students "tend to relate more readily and positively to peer assistance than to supervisory direction" (Inzer & Crawford, 2005, p. 36).

The Relational Leadership Model

The peer mentoring relationship in college is formed between people of similar age and experience with a mentor who provides guidance for mentees to successfully navigate transitions, or change (Sanft et al., 2008; Terrion & Leonard, 2007). The mentor is a leader that influences mentees towards positive college experiences. Thus, peer mentorship is an example of relational leadership, "a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change" (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2013, p. 33).

The relational leadership model "is an aspirational model ...in developing and supporting a healthy, ethical, effective group" (Komives et al., 2013, p. 95). The model is composed of five primary components: (a) purpose, (b) inclusivity, (c) empowerment, (d) ethics, and (e) process-orientation.

An individual focused on purpose must know how change occurs and understand

the common purpose of the group and shared values (Komives et al., 2013). They must be hopeful and remain committed. A purposeful person must identify goals and think creatively to achieve them.

To be inclusive, an individual must know who they are and understand others. They must be open to differences and value equity. Inclusive individuals practice listening skills and build coalitions with others (Komives et al., 2013).

An individual focused on empowerment must understand their own power and understand that personal mastery is essential. They must have a deep concern for others to grow and be willing to share power (Komives et al., 2013). An empowering person shares information and encourages others.

To be ethical, an individual must understand how values are developed and know their own core values (Komives et al., 2013). Ethical individuals must value integrity, remain trustworthy, and put others before themselves. An ethical person's actions must align with their espoused values, they must be reliable, and have courage to act.

An individual striving to be process-oriented must know group processes and understand the relational aspect of leadership (Komives et al., 2013). The individual must value process and outcome and develop a systemic viewpoint. Process-oriented individuals reflect, challenge, and practice feedback loops.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the motivation of upperclassmen at UHSI to mentor incoming freshmen. Using an inductive process, this study aimed to develop thematic concepts of the relationship between peer mentors and

mentees. More specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. Why do junior and senior college students choose to mentor college freshmen?
2. What specific qualities do junior and senior college students believe are critical to effectively mentor freshmen?
3. What do junior and senior students hope to learn through the mentor experience that will prepare them for life after college?

Methods

A qualitative content analysis approach was used for this study. “Content analysis is a technique that enables researchers to study human behavior in an indirect way, through an analysis of their communications” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012, p. 478). As the main instrument for data collection, the researcher’s role was exploratory in determining the general scope of upperclassmen’s desire to mentor first year freshman students.

Population and Sample

The population for this study were the Peer Mentors at UHSI. The sample for this study was purposive. “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Criterion was the specific type of purposive sampling aimed to maximize the information-rich cases in the study (Patton, 2002). For this study, the following criteria were met to be included in the sample: the applicant must have completed all items on the 2018-2019 peer mentor application and the applicant must have been selected as a 2018-2019 peer mentor. Forty

Peer Mentors met the criteria for this study. Twenty-nine were female and 11 were male. Based on race/ethnicity, thirty Peer Mentors were Hispanic, six were Black, three were Asian, and one was White. Sixteen Peer Mentors were in their second-year at UHSI, 14 were in their third-year, seven were in their fourth-year, and three were in their fifth-year.

Study Approach

“Qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsei & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). According to Hsei and Shannon (2005), content analysis can be described through three different perspectives: conventional, directed, or summative. A conventional content analysis begins with observations of a specific phenomenon and codes are derived from the data to develop a concept or model, an inductive process. Directed content analysis, on the other hand, is a deductive approach beginning with a theory and deducing the codes from the theoretical framework and findings. Lastly, a summative approach to content analysis involves identifying keywords to understand their usage contextually. This specific study employed a summative approach to qualitative content analysis to review the surface content and explore the deeper inferences to the Relational Leadership Model and the Continuum of Peer Relationships.

Data Collection

In qualitative research, data is collected through interviews, observations, and/or documents (Merriam, 2009). For this study, data was collected through documents.

Documents are a ready-made source of data that include public and personal records, popular culture items, visuals, and physical material or artifacts (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). This study is concerned with analyzing each peer mentor application (Appendix B) for the 2018-2019 academic year. Each applicant provided personal and academic information, their campus involvement, and responses to three open-ended questions listed below:

- Why are you interested in serving as a Peer Mentor?
- What qualities do you possess that will help you to be a Peer Mentor, and what qualities would you like to develop through the Peer Mentor position?
- What are your career plans, and how would being a Peer Mentor contribute to those plans?

Given the nature of these documents, authenticity and accuracy of data was not of concern for this study. Furthermore, the documents were created independent of this research study meaning they are nonreactive or objective and unobtrusive. Unobtrusive measures indicate the absence of the researcher's influence on the observed data (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Each document was coded for organization purposes and for the audit trail. "Coding is...assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of [the] data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 173). The first application was designated A1 with the applicant's major field of study. This designation served as the document's name and was saved to a secure hard drive. Each subsequent application was identified with the next number in sequence. For example, the third application was an interdisciplinary

studies (ISS) major. The designation for the document was A3_ISS.

Data Analysis

In content analysis, both the manifest and latent content can be analyzed for meaning (Fraenkel et al., 2012). A content analysis study typically involves the frequencies and variety of specific messages or words (Merriam, 2009), also known as manifest content (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The goal for this study was also to evaluate the data beyond word counts and include latent content analysis. Latent content analysis refers to the process of interpretation of content (Holsti as cited in Hsei & Shannon, 2005).

Basic coding was used to analyze the data, taking large quantities of text and reduce them into content categories (Merriam, 2009). To complete this process, each document of data was reviewed. Through the review of an individual document, notes were identified in the margins of the document indicating preliminary connections between the research questions and the data collected (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2009). This process occurred for each application. Once the preliminary coding was completed, notes were grouped into similar topics. The narrowing of comments and codes continued until overarching themes were created that adequately summarize the data in totality and answer research questions 1 and 3 (Merriam, 2009).

To address research question 2, the researcher reviewed responses and created a continuous list of characteristics. Repeated characteristics were noted, and synonymous characteristics were combined (e.g. caring and compassionate). Next, Kram's (1983) two-function mentoring model was used to analyze specific peer mentor characteristics

and categorize according to academic/career or psychosocial functions. Categorization was determined by their purpose: enhancing academic life or enhancing social life. The final list was reviewed by an objective peer at UHSI.

Measures of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative data is measured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). With regards to this study, credibility was established with the use of representative quotes in the narrative describing the findings. Also, referential adequacy materials, the peer mentor applications, provided “a slice of life from the context” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 31). Furthermore, peer debriefing is a technique that was used to seek agreement from colleagues and potential experts. Peer debriefing or peer review is a consultation with peers regarding one’s study that involves a critical examination regarding the researcher’s emergent themes from the raw data (Merriam, 2009). Following the initial review and coding of applications, a peer debriefing was conducted with an objective colleague at UHSI to check the categories and themes created.

To facilitate transferability, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the findings were presented with rich and thick descriptions. Given the type of data collected, there were no issues with changes in data over time, which is critical to dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness also includes questions of confirmability. The findings were sent to members for checks and an audit trail was used to maintain a record of data collection and analysis to include raw data, synthesis of

categories, and all materials used in the study (Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004).

Findings

This study sought to describe the motivation of upperclassmen to mentor freshmen at an urban, Hispanic Serving Institution (UHSI). The first research question was to understand why peer mentors were inclined to apply to be a peer mentor.

The Choice to Mentor

The peer mentors at UHSI identified a variety of reasons for their interest in peer mentoring. After reviewing the applications and coding responses, the data was narrowed to four categories: (a) peer mentors reflected on their first-year experience at UHSI as a student and mentee; (b) peer mentors described their desire to help and support mentees; (c) peer mentors expressed connections to student success; and (d) peer mentors articulated their need to remain involved on campus.

First-Year Experience. A large majority of peer mentors were reflective of their own lived experiences as a new student at UHSI, especially about how they felt during their first year. Collectively, they felt alone and lacked a support system on campus. They also felt uneasy during their first year and “didn’t know what to expect from college and [their] classes” (A15_PSY). They also explained they were qualified to be an effective peer mentor because they had experienced their first-year and “know what mentees think and feel” (A6_POLS).

Not only did peer mentors share their feelings, but they also shared their experience as a first-generation college student. One peer mentor shared the following: “I wish I would have known somebody that could share their college experiences with

me” (A5_BPS). Another went on to say freshmen students “may not have anyone to assist them through the process” (A1_SOCW). They repeatedly stated they needed someone and that having a go-to person or office would have created a smoother transition for them. The following peer mentor summarized it well:

I am a first-generation student who knew nothing about applying to colleges, what to do once I am in, and even where to ask questions on my first day of class. I know just how much I needed someone to go to and someone to help me when I needed it. I want to be that for someone who is a first-generation student too. (A20_CJ)

Peer mentors also had positive reflections regarding their experiences with their own peer mentor. As a mentee, they found their mentor helpful and beneficial as they helped them “find their way” (A7_ACC). Others shared their peer mentor gave them great advice and eased their transition to college. As mentees, they were thankful for their peer mentor’s friendliness, the valuable information they provided, and the deadline reminders. “I admired my mentor and the way they were able to provide me and the rest of the students with help, information, and support with school” (A12_SAD) wrote one aspiring peer mentor. Another stated their peer mentors had such positive impacts on their first year that they wanted to be a peer mentor as well:

I am interested in serving as a peer mentor because I have been a mentee for the past 2 years and have found it very beneficial. I have had 3 different mentors over the years, and each have brought me great enlightenment. My first mentor taught me the aspect of being a college student. My second mentor taught me the

importance of networking. My third mentor taught me to reach my goals. I want to provide that for others. (A17_ACC)

Supporting Others. The peer mentors revealed in their applications that they wanted to be a peer mentor because they ultimately wanted to help, motivate, and empower others. They wanted to be a support system, and “help new students adjust” (A2_SOCW), and make sure new freshmen know there are “plenty of people who can help guide them.” Peer mentors mentioned wanting to be an encourager and the guide or source of motivation. They would like to “give knowledge that can empower students to become more successful in their first year of college” (A10_FINA).

One peer mentor stated, “I would like to become a peer mentor because of the chance to make a positive impact on one’s life” (A11_SOC). Others articulated their desire to help others gain confidence and be a resource or friendly face on campus. Peer mentors want to be able to give advice, “help new freshmen feel welcomed and reduce the overwhelming feelings of a new environment” (A18_COMM). Another peer mentor shared “I am excited to give advice to people who really need it, and I am willing to motivate others who struggle in their first year at UHSI” (A4_MKT). Other peer mentors want to provide reassurance to new students that it is ok to “take risks” and “step out of their comfort zones” (A3_NPMT).

Student Success. The peer mentors focused on student success with regard to academic and engagement at UHSI as their reason for applying to the program. They mentioned peer mentoring was an opportunity to “provide students with the resources they need to succeed” (A19_POLS) and that they “value the success of others”

(A13_ISS). They specifically addressed helping FTICs develop study habits and manage their time more effectively. The following excerpt addresses the importance of learning success strategies early in college:

I learned my study habits during my first year. So, I feel it's essential to develop healthy adaptive skills during the first year of college because it will lay the foundation for how a person will perform in the future. (A15_PSY)

The peer mentors also shared that serving as a peer mentor would help strengthen their own success strategies. By teaching others, they would put the study skills into practice and use the resources UHSI has established for academic success as evident in the following: "Being a peer mentor will allow me to reinforce my own study skills, knowledge of subjects, and the resources on campus" (A11_SOC).

Campus Involvement. In addition to success, the peer mentors expressed their desires to remain involved on campus and engaged with activities and people. A peer mentor shared "I enjoy meeting new people which is an opportunity that this program can provide me with" (A14_CJ). Another peer mentor focused on campus and community activities:

I am currently interested in becoming a Peer Mentor because it will give me the opportunity to get involved with the student life on campus. It will be a great opportunity to engage with activities on and off campus to help mentees get a better grasp of college life and being downtown. (A9_PSY)

A peer mentor also shared their lack of involvement: "I didn't get involved during my first year and that was a mistake. Peer mentoring will require me to know about campus

events and the UHSI culture” (A16_CHEM).

Peer Mentor Qualities

The second research question focused on specific qualities required of a peer mentor. The data collected from the applications identified the individual attributes the applicant believed to be important to the peer mentoring experience. After review of the data, there were a total of 93 references to qualities peer mentors believed important to their role working with freshmen.

To describe the peer mentor qualities, Kram’s (1983) mentoring functions were used to categorize the qualities into career/academic and psychosocial lists (see Table 2). Thirty-six unique qualities were identified after distinguishing the repeats. Twelve were classified as providing support for careers or academics; the remaining 24 were classified as providing psychological support.

Table 2.
List of Peer Mentor Qualities by Career and Psychosocial Function

Career/Academic Function	Psychosocial Function
Institutional knowledge	Conflict resolution
Obtain knowledge	Perceptive of others
Professionalism	Understand others
First-hand knowledge	Responsible
Work individually	Determination
Work in groups	Caring and compassionate
Time management	Friendly
Organization	Accept change
Develop goals	Trustworthy
Coordinate	Generous
Take initiative	Open minded
Solve problems	Accepting attitude
	Charismatic
	Patient

Table 2 Continued

Career/Academic Function	Psychosocial Function
	Communication
	Leadership
	Maintain confidentiality
	Give advice
	Building relationships
	Motivate others
	Active listening
	Building confidence
	Teach others
	Create change

Table 3.

Summary of Repeated Peer Mentor Qualities

Quality	Function	<i>f</i>	%
Communication	psychosocial	12	15.8
Leadership	psychosocial	9	11.8
Building relationships	psychosocial	8	10.5
Time management	career/academic	6	7.9
Responsible	psychosocial	4	5.3
Friendly	psychosocial	4	5.3
First-hand knowledge	career/academic	4	5.3
Trustworthy	psychosocial	4	5.3
Caring and compassionate	psychosocial	3	3.9
Motivate others	psychosocial	3	3.9
Active listening	psychosocial	3	3.9
Professionalism	career/academic	2	2.6
Maintain confidentiality	psychosocial	2	2.6
Solve problems	career/academic	2	2.6
Give advice	psychosocial	2	2.6
Organization	career/academic	2	2.6
Build confidence	psychosocial	2	2.6
Teach others	psychosocial	2	2.6
Institutional knowledge	career/academic	2	2.6
	Total Repeats	76	100.0

Of the 36 peer mentor qualities identified, 19 were identified more than once totaling 76 repeats. Table 3 presents the peer mentor qualities that were identified repeatedly using frequencies and percentages.

Career Connections

The last research question intended to make connections between the peer mentor experience and career preparation. Potential peer mentors were asked about their career plans and how their role as a Peer Mentor would contribute to those plans. Following the analysis of the data, three broad themes emerged: (a) skill development; (b) working with people; and (c) service to others.

Skill Development. The Peer Mentors identified skills critical to their career that would be further developed through the peer mentor experience. The predominant skills articulated were communication, leadership, and interpersonal skills. An excerpt from a peer mentor application addressed both:

To be a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), I know that I must communicate effectively to understand others and share what I know. I must also have the ability to listen and be a leader in my profession. As a peer mentor, [the program] will help me exercise these qualities. (A11_SOCW)

With regard to interpersonal skills, one peer mentor stated “I am a very introverted person and I am trying to be more outgoing and social. Becoming a peer mentor will strengthen my social skills” (A17_ACC). Another shared “being a peer mentor would help me strengthen my communication and personal skills, allowing me to expand my social network” (A1_SOCW).

Several Peer Mentors also identified leadership skills as an outcome of their peer mentoring. One peer mentor stated, “I believe the program will grant me the ability to work not only as a leader but a team as it is an important skill for any STEM student” (A8_GEOS). Another peer mentor explained working as a peer mentor “would develop my proficiency skills in leadership....to be a successful accountant” (A10_FINA). Similarly, “being a peer mentor would also help me improve my leadership skills by trying to be a role model for freshmen” (A16_CHEM). A future creative director shared being a peer mentor would help them gain “the experience in managing a group of people and motivating them to be better” (A4_MKT).

Working with People. The majority of Peer Mentors made connections between the peer mentor experience and the need to appreciate differences among people and the interactions with potential customers. They viewed being a peer mentor as an opportunity to get to know more people and “experience working with people who have different personalities and experiences” (A15_PSYC). In the workplace, one peer mentor stated, “I need to learn to work with people that may be different from who I am” (A14_CJ). A few other peer mentors focused on the relationships they must build with their potential customers. They shared the need to focus on their customers and understanding them rather than judging them. A peer mentor hoping to work in public relations focused on the applicability of public relations in peer mentoring:

Working as a Public Relations Specialist, I would have to make sure there is a positive relationship between an organization and the public. Becoming a Peer Mentor would contribute to my career goals because I would make sure there is a

positive relationship between the university and the student. For example, I would ensure the freshman student has good understanding of the university and its resources. Peer mentoring will help me learn to have a better understanding of what a client wants or needs from an organization. (A18_COMM)

A future child psychologist shared “being a peer mentor would help contribute to [their] plans because [they] would get the valuable experience of learning how to give effective advice...and become a non-biased therapist for children” (A15_PSY).

Service to Others. The potential peer mentors viewed the role of peer mentoring as an opportunity to help others, giving them the familiarity to professionally serve others in the future. One peer mentor shared the following:

My career plans consist of finishing my bachelor’s degree and obtaining a social work internship to help me learn more about my chosen field. Being a Peer Mentor would help me seek ways to help others as a future social worker. (A1_SOCW)

Furthermore, an aspiring lawyer wrote the peer mentor experience would “help open [their] eyes to other people’s experiences and have a feel for what type of injustices to fight for” (A6_POLS). A non-profit management student aspired to create a non-profit organization to serve inner-city teens and believed “mentoring freshmen students [would] give [them] the opportunity to live out a desire and assist in cultivating the skills needed to be a substantial mentor to troubled teens” (A3_NPMT). Another peer mentor expressed their “duty to serve people and translate [their] knowledge to the public” (A16_CHEM) as a future cancer researcher. They went on to state “serving my peers

now will teach me new things about my community and I will be more socially aware to conduct new research projects.” A future homicide investigator revealed the following in their application:

My career plans are to become a police officer and then become a homicide investigator. Being a peer mentor contributes to my career plans because I will have a job that requires helping the public. I will be helping the people in need. The Peer Mentor program allows me to help the students who I may one day serve. (A14_CJ)

A prospective high school science teacher shared “I am hoping to teach one day...I think being in the Peer Mentoring Program will allow me to work with other students and share with them what I know” (A5_BPS).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand why students were drawn to serve as a peer mentor at UHSI. Through a summative analysis, themes emerged addressing the motivation of peer mentors, critical mentor qualities, and expected transference to future careers.

The peer mentor application asked potential peer mentors why they were interested in becoming a member of the program. Reviewing and analyzing the first question from the peer mentor applications revealed several findings. The peer mentors describe the peer mentoring role as an opportunity to share their college experiences. A peer mentor can only be successful in mentoring other college students if they have learned to successfully maneuver in the university setting (Terrion & Leonard, 2007).

The peer mentors at UHSI detailed how they felt in their first-year and how they are uniquely qualified to mentor other first-year students based on their experience with the institution.

This experience describes the anticipated process between peer mentors and mentees. Komives et al. (2013) explains that the process component of the RLM requires cooperation and meaning making. Peer mentors anticipate creating a cooperative relationship with FTICs as “cooperation helps the other person...achieve their own goals” (Komives et al., 2013, p. 136). Likewise, peer mentors value their first year at UHSI and see value in sharing the lessons learned with others. This is very apparent for first generation peer mentors. Peer mentors, who were the first in their family to attend college, supported the notion that peers provide more support about the college experience than their family members (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005). First generation college students navigate the college experience with support of their peers who have shared experiences. The shared experience is an important factor to the process of mentoring from the potential peer mentor perspective.

Moreover, peer mentors described their genuine desire to support others in their college transition and purposefully engage in their peers’ success at UHSI. Supportiveness and empowerment are critical to the mentoring relationship (Terrion & Leonard, 2007). Like Muldoon’s (2008) work, peer mentors had a sincere desire to help first-year students and reflected on their positive experiences with their own peer mentor.

These characteristics echo Komives et al.’s (2013) empowerment component of

the RLM. Relational leadership is empowering. The peer mentors demonstrated their role as a peer mentor to also be empowering. Peer mentors were detailed in assisting others and demonstrating a genuine concern for the well-being and success of FTICs. A key component to empowerment is understanding the power of information and readily sharing it with others.

The peer mentors at UHSI described the relationship they anticipate with their mentees. The findings support the collegial and peer relationships on the Continuum of Peer Relationships (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Collegial relationships provide both career/academic and psychosocial functions. Peer mentors understand their experience can assist FTICs both academically and socially, providing guidance towards success at UHSI. The special peer relationship is characterized by four main ideas: confirmation, emotional support, personal feedback, and friendship (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Peer mentors are motivated by the desire to support freshmen students and be a friend to eliminate feelings of isolation or loneliness.

The peer mentors also mentioned reinforcing success strategies to their own college experience and further developing at UHSI. Supporting Colvin and Ashman's (2010) findings, the peer mentors at UHSI identified "being able to support students and [reapply] concepts to their own lives" (p. 127) as benefits of the peer mentor-mentee relationship.

The data also identified numerous qualities potential peer mentors believed important to the peer mentor role. To address the second research question of the study, the peer mentors identified characteristics they would maximize by being a peer mentor

and those they anticipated developing as a result of the program. Although the intent of the UHSI program is to make positive gains in student academic performance, the peer mentors highlighted the supportive functions more often. In line with Terrion and Leonard's findings (2007), communication skills were reported more frequently by the peer mentors at UHSI. Thus, to be an effective peer mentor, one must be able to communicate well and be personable.

The last part of the study addressed the connections between a peer mentor role and career. The peer mentors identified skills, working with others, and serving others. The peer mentors reiterated the importance of communication skills and serving others. The UHSI peer mentors also provided great description of working with others in the career setting. Identifying the peer mentor role as an opportunity to prepare for the workplace signifies connections to the career enhancing function of mentoring (Kram, 1983; Terrion & Leonard, 2007).

Overall, the peer mentors understand their purpose and impact on student success at UHSI. As the RLM describes purpose as the center of the model (Komives et al., 2013), the peer mentor's purpose provides the focus of their mentoring behaviors and their motivation to help other students. In addressing all three research questions, it is apparent the peer mentors take their role seriously and understand the relationship with mentees as central to guiding them through their first year. They also shared their desire to be involved with campus life. As Muldoon (2008) summarized, peer mentors "want to help, meet people, to get more involved, to give something back to the university and to develop skills and personal attributes such as mentoring skills, communication skills,

confidence levels and leadership skills.” (p. 210).

Implications for Programmatic Modifications and Future Research

As a result of the data collected, the peer mentor program at UHSI would benefit from reviewing applicant data to develop intentional training and development opportunities for peer mentors. The peer mentors shared their motivations, qualities, and anticipated career preparation. This information can inform the learning of peer mentors and provide opportunities to develop their qualities, their individual characteristics and transferable skills, meeting their unique expectations or needs of the program.

Even though the purpose of the UHSI peer mentor program is to positively influence academic performance of freshmen, the peer mentors at UHSI identified a large number of emotional support qualities important to the mentoring role. Given the small number of career or academic enhancing characteristics, the UHSI peer mentor program should be intentional in teaching peer mentors how to provide the career or academic enhancing functions. Specific attention should be made to address discipline specific content and career pathways.

Based on the findings, this study provides a springboard to continue research. This study was limited to only one type of data – peer mentor applications. To develop a better understanding of a peer mentor’s intentions and expectations, individual interviews can be incorporated into the application processes that specifically addresses peer mentor motivations, qualities, and transferrable skills to the workforce. Collecting applicant responses through interviews would assist the researcher to triangulate the findings with another source of data.

Also, this study provides a very specific inductive analysis of one peer mentor cohort at UHSI. More research is needed to understand the whole population, all three cohorts, of peer mentors and their motivation for serving their peers. This same study can be done with all peer mentor applications. Moreover, this analysis methodology can be repeated with other peer groups at UHSI. Including supplemental instructors, writing consultants, peer tutors, and other peers in unique support roles on campus. This line of research will help compare the peer role and understand if these findings are unique to peer mentors or if they are found within all peer influenced groups at UHSI.

Further research should also include students engaged as mentees. Just as potential peer mentors complete their applications, new students can complete similar surveys identifying their specific perspectives. Data from mentees can provide a needs assessment from the perspective of the those being mentored. This research would shed light on the connections or disconnects between mentors and mentees.

PEER MENTORING IS TRANSFORMATIONAL: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF PEER MENTORS AT UHSI AND THE FIVE PRACTICES OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

Overview

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine the leadership behaviors of peer mentors at an urban, Hispanic-Serving Institution (UHSI). With a survey research approach, the study sought to measure *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* across various student demographics. The population for this study was 40 peer mentors at UHSI. Twenty-five respondents, 62.5%, completed a survey measuring leadership behaviors, providing demographic information, and identifying personal mentors and characteristics. Descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the findings. UHSI peer mentors practice all five exemplary leadership behaviors indicating they are leaders.

Introduction

College residential and orientation programs were the first settings college students were relied on to influence their peers (Shook & Keup, 2012). As residential assistants and orientation leaders, college students helped guide their peers through on-campus living and navigation situations. More recently, the number of university settings has expanded the co-curricular uses of peers and includes curricular and support resource settings. Peers take on multiple positions on college campuses within several peer groups. Supplemental instructors, tutors, advisors, teaching assistants, class leaders and research collaborators, are all the positions college students work in the higher

education environment (Douglass, Smith, & Smith, 2013; Priest & de Campos Paula, 2016; Priest & Donley, 2014).

Another peer group that is more frequently established on college campuses is the peer mentor responsibility. According to Sanft, Jensen, and McMurray (2008), a peer mentor has five significant roles of trusted friend, connecting link, learning coach, student advocate, and peer leader. A trusted friend is personable and approachable; a mentor serves as connecting link by recognizing the needs of their mentees and serving as the liaison to campus resources. A learning coach recognizes demonstrates effective study strategies; a student advocate protects the interests of their mentees. A peer leader inspires others and sets the example. Peer leaders are “students who have been selected, trained, and designated by a campus authority to offer services to their peers...intentionally designed to assist peers toward attainment of educational goals” (Newton & Endner, 2010, p. 6).

At one urban, Hispanic-Serving Institution (UHSI), the Peer Mentoring Program was designed to assist first-time-in-college (FTIC) students in their transition to UHSI and persist through their academic degree programs. Annually, UHSI Peer Mentoring Program recruits high-performing students to apply. The selection process includes an application and individual interview. Once selected, peer mentors are brought together for a three-day training session prior to the first week of each semester. Thereafter, peer mentors attend biweekly training and professional development workshops through each fall and spring terms. The content in the workshops is geared to provide peer mentors the knowledge, skills, and resources to effectively teach new students. Thus, the UHSI peer

mentors are peer leaders.

As peer mentor programs grow and provide opportunities for students to engage in developmental experiences, it is critical to assess these programs and their impact on leadership. In response to the Multi-Institutional Study for Leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2007), there were several recommendations to enrich campus leadership programs. One was to develop mentoring relationships and design distinct programs for specific groups. Although not the intention of the UHSI Peer Mentor program, the program is a unique context to assess leadership.

There is some research that explored the development of peer mentors in a leadership context. One study of mentors and student leaders found that mentoring for personal development was a positive predictor of socially responsible leadership capacity. (Campbell, Smith, Dugan, & Komives, 2012, p. 618). Hastings, Griesen, Hoover, Creswell, and Dlugosh (2015) examined peer mentors and found that students who were mentors had higher rates of developing the next generation, generativity, than those students who were not peer mentors. A qualitative study (Harmon, 2006) found that peer mentors “indicated they had learned valuable career-related leadership skills from their experiences” (p. 75) enhancing communication skills and discovering group management techniques dynamics. Even though the studies have contributed to the analysis of collegiate peer mentor groups, more research is needed to investigate the development of peer mentors and assess their leadership experiences. The UHSI peer mentors take on a role of leading mentees. This study provides an opportunity to assess peer mentoring programs as leadership development opportunities in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

The UHSI peer mentors are specifically attempting to transform their FTICs and motivate them to successfully transition academically and socially into their college experience. This process is best described by transformational leadership and serves as the theoretical framework for this study. Transformational leadership occurs when “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, 2013, p. 186).

The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership

Kouzes and Posner (2012, 2014) advanced transformational leadership with their research of leaders and managers across businesses and industries and among school youth to establish *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership*. Through their research, the most effective leaders engaged in the five practices more often and made significant differences in the lives of their constituents than those that did not engage in the practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). *The five practices for exemplary leadership* include ten commitments that serve as the foundation to leadership learning:

1. Model the Way: (a) clarifying one’s own values and affirming shared values, (b) setting the example;
2. Inspire a Shared Vision: (a) envisioning the future through imagination, (b) enlisting others through shared aspirations;
3. Challenge the Process: (a) searching opportunities to take initiative and innovation, (b) experimenting and taking risks;
4. Enable Others to Act: (a) fostering relationships through trust, (b)

strengthening other's confidence and knowledge;

5. Encourage the Heart: (a) recognizing contributions, (b) celebrating victories (Kouzes & Posner, 2014, p. 15).

The Five Practices as an Assessment Tool

Kouzes and Posner's (2014) five practices for exemplary leadership have been used in a variety of collegiate studies to assess student leadership behaviors. Arendt and Gegoire (2005) found that students pursuing degrees in hospitality management perceived themselves exercising the five practices most frequently in class and work settings. Following the incorporation of a service-learning activity, nursing students were found to have increases in the five practices (Foli, Braswell, Kirkpatrick, & Lim, 2014). In a personal leadership education course, the five practices were purposefully introduced as content and students reflected on the practices they wanted to further develop (Burbank, Odom, & Sandlin, 2015). Another study used the five practices of exemplary leadership in a pre and post-test evaluation of undergraduate health professionals enrolled in a leadership course (McKinney & Waite, 2016). Through reflections, Hirsch (2016) found that peer mentors practice leadership and attribute their development to their experience.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this descriptive study was to examine the transformational leadership practices of peer mentors at UHSI. Specifically, the study addressed the following objectives:

1. Describe the leadership practices of the peer mentors.

2. Describe the characteristics peer mentors believe to be most significant of the personal mentors in their lives.

Methodology

Descriptive, or survey, research was the approach used in this study. The major purpose of survey research “is to describe the characteristics of a population” (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012, p. 393). This study sought to examine how peer mentors self-assess their leadership practices. The population for this study was the 40 UHSI peer mentors for the 2018-2019 academic year. This was a census study as the researcher attempted to survey all members of the population (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Twenty-five subjects completed the survey resulting in a response rate of 62.5 percent. Of the 25 respondents, 17 were female (68%) and eight were male (32%). Sixty-eight percent of respondents self-identified as Hispanic ($n = 17$), 88% were first-time-in-college students ($n = 22$) upon admission to UHSI, 80% were first-generation ($n = 20$), and 56% were senior classification ($n = 14$).

Instrumentation

The instrument for this study included the Student Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI), student demographic items, and open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The S-LPI is an instrument measuring the frequency of 30 specific leadership behaviors associated with the five leadership practices (Posner, 2012). The instrument consists of six items per practice measured on a five-point response scale: 1 (*Rarely or Seldom*), 2 (*Once in a While*), 3 (*Sometimes*), 4 (*Often*), and 5 (*Very Frequently*). The reliability, consistency of scores, and validity, the appropriateness of the inferences

based on scores, of the S-LPI have been established (Posner & Brodsky, 1992; Posner, 2004; Posner, 2012). The internal consistency of model the way was $\alpha = .69$, inspire a shared vision $\alpha = .78$, challenge the process $\alpha = .73$, enable others to act $\alpha = .69$, and encourage the heart $\alpha = .80$. Furthermore, the S-LPI differentiates between effective and ineffective leaders supporting validity of the instrument.

The Tailored Design Method was used to develop and distribute the survey (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). To motivate response, specific procedures were used to establish trust, maximize rewards, and minimize costs of participation. Each peer mentor was invited to participate in the study via university email. The invitation included the study information as required by the Institutional Review Board with specific statements regarding the importance of the study and assurance of confidentiality. The email communication included the hyperlink to complete the survey and ended with a request for their assistance. The survey for this study was administered through an online survey tool-Qualtrics, which is both web and mobile friendly, increasing the convenience of response. Participants were prompted to provide informed consent at the beginning of the survey. Participants were given a three-week window to complete the survey. At the end of each week, a reminder email was sent to the peer mentors that had not completed the instrument, and peer mentors who did complete the survey received an email communication expressing appreciation for their time and effort.

Maintaining Internal Validity

A research study with internal validity is one in which researchers have done due

diligence to control for extraneous variables (Frankel et al., 2012). For this study, there were potential threats to internal validity. A location threat can occur if the specific location where data is collected affects the result. To minimize the threat of location, surveys were only collected online through Qualtrics allowing each participant to complete the survey in the location of their choice. Instrumentation threats of decay and data collector bias were minimized by using the S-LPI scoring software and scoring the data once the survey window was closed.

Statistical Analysis

The data collected in this study was quantitative and categorical (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Quantitative data was collected in the form of scores from the S-LPI. The demographic items from the instrument resulted in categorical data. To address the research objectives, data was analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were calculated in the form of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations (Fraenkel et al., 2012).

Data

The first research objective of this study was to describe the leadership practices of the peer mentors. The respondents in this study scored The Five Exemplary Leadership Practices in the following order from highest to smallest mean scores: *Inspire a Shared Vision, Enable Others to Act, Model the Way, Encourage the Heart,* and *Challenge the Process*. Each practice and its corresponding items from the S-LPI is identified in the following tables with percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations.

The *Inspire a Shared Vision* leadership practice is presented in Table 4. “I look ahead and communicate about what I believe will affect us in the future” was the item with the highest mean ($M = 4.36, SD = 0.57$). Three additional statements were above a mean score of four indicating the item is practiced often or very frequency. The item with the lowest mean was “I seek to understand how my actions affect other people’s performance” ($M = 3.72, SD = 0.94$).

The descriptive statistics for the *Enable Others to Act* leadership practice are presented in Table 5. Three items have means greater than four and three items with means less than four. The statement with the highest mean was “I treat others with dignity and respect” ($M = 4.68, SD = 0.48$). The statement was also the highest of all the items on the S-LPI. The next highest mean was “I actively listen to diverse points of view” ($M = 4.56, SD = 0.65$). The lowest item was “I provide opportunities for others to take on leadership responsibilities” ($M = 3.48, SD 0.77$).

Table 6 presents the descriptive statistics of *Model the Way*. The item with the highest mean was “I follow through on the promises and commitments I make” ($M = 4.32, SD = 0.75$). Closely following was “I set a personal example of what I expect from other people” ($M = 4.24, SD = 0.72$). The remaining items were below a mean score of four, indicating the item is practiced sometimes, once in a while, or rarely/seldom. The lowest item was “I seek to understand how my actions affect other people’s performance” ($M = 3.72, SD = 0.94$).

Table 4.
Descriptive Statistics for Inspire a Shared Vision Leadership Practice (n = 25)

Item	Responses % (f)					M	SD
	Rarely or Seldom	Once in a While	Sometimes	Often	Very Frequently		
I look ahead and communicate about what I believe will affect us in the future.	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (1)	56 (14)	40 (10)	4.36	0.57
I describe to others in our organization what we should be capable of accomplishing.	0 (0)	0 (0)	16 (4)	44 (11)	40 (10)	4.24	0.72
I talk with others about a vision of how we could be even better in the future.	0 (0)	0 (0)	20 (5)	64 (16)	16 (4)	3.96	0.61
I talk with others about how their own interests can be set by working toward a common goal.	0 (0)	8 (2)	24 (6)	44 (11)	24 (6)	3.84	0.90
I am upbeat and positive when talking about what we can accomplish.	0 (0)	16 (4)	8 (2)	32 (8)	44 (11)	4.04	1.10
I speak with passion about the higher purpose and meaning of what we are doing.	0 (0)	8 (2)	0 (0)	48 (12)	44 (11)	4.28	0.84

Note: Grand Mean = 4.17. Scale: 5 = *Very Frequently*, 4 = *Often*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 2 = *Once in a While*, 1 = *Rarely or Seldom*.

Table 5.

Descriptive Statistics for Enable Others to Act Leadership Practice (n = 25)

Item	Responses % (f)					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	Rarely or Seldom	Once in a While	Sometimes	Often	Very Frequently		
I foster cooperative rather than competitive relationships among people I work with.	0 (0)	0 (0)	24 (6)	24 (6)	52 (13)	4.28	0.84
I actively listen to diverse points of view.	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (2)	28 (7)	64 (16)	4.56	0.65
I treat others with dignity and respect.	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	32 (8)	68 (17)	4.68	0.48
I support the decisions that other people make on their own.	0 (0)	0 (0)	40 (10)	52 (13)	8 (2)	3.68	0.63
I give others a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.	0 (0)	8 (2)	24 (6)	44 (11)	24 (6)	3.84	0.90
I provide opportunities for others to take on leadership responsibilities.	0 (0)	8 (2)	44 (11)	40 (10)	8 (2)	3.48	0.77

Note: Grand Mean = 4.09. Scale: 5 = *Very Frequently*, 4 = *Often*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 2 = *Once in a While*, 1 = *Rarely or Seldom*.

Table 6.
Descriptive Statistics for Model the Way Leadership Practice (n = 25)

Item	Responses % (f)					M	SD
	Rarely or Seldom	Once in a While	Sometimes	Often	Very Frequently		
I set a personal example of what I expect from other people.	0 (0)	0 (0)	16 (4)	44 (11)	40 (10)	4.24	0.72
I spend time making sure that people behave consistently with the principles and standards we have agreed upon.	0 (0)	8 (2)	20 (5)	40 (10)	32 (8)	3.96	0.93
I follow through on the promises and commitments I make.	0 (0)	0 (0)	16 (4)	36 (9)	48 (12)	4.32	0.75
I seek to understand how my actions affect other people's performance.	0 (0)	24 (6)	36 (9)	32 (8)	24 (6)	3.72	0.94
I make sure that people are creatively recognized for their contributions.	0 (0)	0 (0)	20 (5)	40 (10)	32 (8)	3.88	1.13
I talk about my values and the principles that guide my actions.	0 (0)	0 (0)	24 (6)	64 (16)	12 (3)	3.88	0.60

Note: Grand Mean = 4.00. Scale: 5 = *Very Frequently*, 4 = *Often*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 2 = *Once in a While*, 1 = *Rarely or Seldom*.

Table 7 illustrates *Encourage the Heart* leadership practice. For *Encourage the Heart*, two items had the highest means: “I praise people for a job well done” ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.65$) and “I express appreciation for the contributions that people make” ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.77$). The statement with the lowest mean was “I make it a point to publicly recognize people who show commitment to shared values” ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.19$).

The last exemplary practice is presented in Table 8. All the items measuring the *Challenge the Process* leadership practice resulted in mean scores of four or less. Both “I search for innovative ways to improve what we are doing” ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.82$) and I take initiative in experimenting with the way things can be done” ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.714$) were the highest.

Table 7.

Descriptive Statistics for Encourage the Heart Leadership Practice (n = 25)

Item	Responses % (f)					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	Rarely or Seldom	Once in a While	Sometimes	Often	Very Frequently		
I praise people for a job well done.	0 (0)	0 (0)	8 (2)	40 (10)	52 (13)	4.44	0.65
I encourage others as they work on activities and programs.	0 (0)	0 (0)	32 (8)	24 (6)	44 (11)	4.12	0.88
I express appreciation for the contributions that people make.	0 (0)	0 (0)	16 (4)	24 (6)	60 (15)	4.44	0.77
I make it a point to publicly recognize people who show commitment to shared values.	8 (2)	8 (2)	40 (10)	20 (5)	24 (6)	3.44	1.19
I find ways for us to celebrate accomplishments.	0 (0)	8 (2)	52 (13)	16 (4)	24 (6)	3.56	0.96
I make sure that people are creatively recognized for their contributions.	0 (0)	0 (0)	40 (10)	28 (7)	32 (8)	3.92	0.86

Note: Grand Mean = 3.99. Scale: 5 = *Very Frequently*, 4 = *Often*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 2 = *Once in a While*, 1 = *Rarely or Seldom*.

Table 8.

Descriptive Statistics for Challenge the Process Leadership Practice (n = 25)

Item	Responses % (f)					<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	Rarely or Seldom	Once in a While	Sometimes	Often	Very Frequently		
I look for ways to develop and challenge my skills and abilities.	0 (0)	8 (2)	16 (4)	56 (14)	20 (5)	3.88	0.83
I look for ways that others can try out new ideas and methods.	0 (0)	8 (2)	24 (6)	48 (12)	20 (5)	3.80	0.87
I search for innovative ways to improve what we are doing.	0 (0)	0 (0)	32 (8)	36 (9)	32 (8)	4.00	0.82
I ask, "What can we learn from this experience?" when things do not go as we expected.	8 (2)	0 (0)	24 (6)	44 (11)	24 (6)	3.76	1.09
I make sure that big projects we undertake are broken down into smaller and do-able parts.	0 (0)	8 (2)	16 (4)	56 (14)	20 (5)	3.88	0.83
I take initiative in experimenting with the way things can be done.	0 (0)	8 (2)	24 (6)	52 (13)	24 (6)	4.00	0.71

Note: Grand Mean = 3.89. Scale: 5 = *Very Frequently*, 4 = *Often*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 2 = *Once in a While*, 1 = *Rarely or Seldom*.

In addition to the S-LPI statements, respondents were asked to complete demographic items identifying their gender, race/ethnicity, student type, first-generation, and grade classification. The average scores were calculated for each of *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* based on subject characteristics (see Table 9). Females, representing 68% of respondents, scored higher in all five practices compared to males. The highest practice for females was *Inspire a Shared Vision* ($M = 25.41$). The highest practice for males was *Enable Others to Act* ($M = 24.00$). The *Challenge the Process* leadership practice was the lowest for both females ($M = 24.29$) and males ($M = 21.25$).

Table 9.
Mean Scores for Five Exemplary Leadership Practices by Peer Mentor Characteristic (n = 25)

Characteristic	n (%)	Model	Inspire	Challenge	Enable	Encourage
Gender						
Female	17 (68%)	25.06	25.41	24.29	24.76	24.82
Male	8 (32%)	21.75	23.25	21.25	24.00	22.00
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian	2 (8%)	28.00	28.00	26.00	28.00	29.00
Black	5 (20%)	23.60	22.80	25.00	24.60	23.20
Hispanic	17 (68%)	24.18	25.35	23.06	24.18	23.94
Caucasian	1 (4%)	15.00	17.00	14.00	23.00	17.00
Student Type						
FTIC	22 (88%)	24.50	25.00	23.82	24.64	24.23
Non-Trad.	1 (4%)	26.00	28.00	22.00	26.00	26.00
Transfer	1 (4%)	20.00	23.00	23.00	22.00	22.00
Veteran	1 (4%)	15.00	17.00	14.00	23.00	17.00
First Gen.						
Yes	20 (80%)	24.35	25.20	23.25	24.70	24.45
No	5 (20%)	22.60	22.80	23.60	23.80	21.80
Grade Class.						
Senior	14 (56%)	24.86	26.43	25.00	24.71	25.29
Junior	11 (44%)	21.55	21.00	19.91	22.18	20.64

Note: Scores range from 6 (low) to 30 (high)

The leadership practice with the highest mean for Asians was *Encourage the Heart* ($M = 29.00$), for Blacks – *Challenge the Process* ($M = 25.00$), and Hispanics – *Inspire a Shared Vision* ($M = 25.35$). First Time in College students represented 88% of respondents. The five practices in order from largest to smallest average scores are the following: *Inspire a Shared Vision* ($M = 25.00$), *Enable Others to Act* ($M = 24.64$), *Model the Way* ($M = 24.50$), *Encourage the Heart* ($M = 24.23$), and *Challenge the Process* ($M = 23.82$). First-generation students averaged highest for *Inspire a Shared Vision* ($M = 25.20$) and lowest on *Challenge the Process* ($M = 23.25$). Fifty-six percent of the respondents were classified as seniors. They scored higher on all leadership practices when compared to juniors. Seniors scored highest for *Inspire a Shared Vision* ($M = 26.43$) and juniors scored highest for *Enable Others to Act* ($M = 22.18$).

The second objective of this research study was to describe the characteristics peer mentors believe to be most significant of the personal mentors in their lives. In addition to the survey items, respondents were asked to identify the most influential mentors in their lives and describe the traits, characteristics, and behaviors of their own mentors. Table 10 is a summary of the respondent's answers. The respondents ($n = 25$) identified eight unique individuals as the most significant mentors in their lives; the influential mentors can be grouped as family members, parents and grandparent, and educational professionals, UHSI administrators, staff, professors, and high school teacher/coach.

All the mentor characteristics identified by respondents were unique to either the family member mentors or the educator mentors except for two. *Kind* and *caring* were

the characteristics identified for both groups of influential mentors.

Table 10.
Summary of Influential Mentors and their Personal Characteristics

Influential Mentors	Personal Characteristics
Mom	Never give up, persevere
Dad	Kind, caring, friendly
Grandmother	Hardworking
	Strong
	Values education, constant learner
	Gives back to community
	Encourages goal-setting
	Work-life balance
	Sets the example
	Teamwork
	Organizational skills
	A leader
UHSI Administrator/Staff	Kind, caring, encouraging
UHSI Professor	Trusting, understanding
High school Teacher/Coach	Knowledgeable, resourceful
	Involved with global issues
	See potential in others
	Strong motivator
	Intelligent
	Master teachers

Conclusions

The peer mentors at UHSI self-reported using leadership behaviors, as peer mentors scored in all five exemplary practices. The overall means for all leadership behaviors on the S-LPI were 3.44 or higher, indicating peer mentors engaged in the leadership practice *sometimes, often, or very frequently*.

The highest leadership practice among the UHSI peer mentors was *Inspire a Shared Vision*. *Inspire a Shared Vision* is characterized by envisioning the future and

enlisting others (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). To envision the future leaders must imagine the possibilities and find a common purpose. *Inspire a Shared Vision* was the highest leadership behavior for peer mentors who were females, first-time-in-college, first-generation, and senior students. When asked to identify the key characteristics of their personal mentors, the respondents stated familial mentors *encourage goal-setting* and educators *see the potential in others*. Both characteristics are focused on the future.

Regarding *Enable Others to Act*, peer mentors reported they *often* or *very frequently* treat others with dignity and respect, actively listen to diverse points of view, and foster cooperative relationships among people. Furthermore, peer mentors identify mentor characteristics that confirm *Enable Others to Act*. Of all the five leadership practices, the peer mentors identified the most characteristics in their personal mentors that align with *Enable Others to Act*. *Kind* and *caring*, the two descriptors articulated for both family mentors and educating mentors are qualities that help leaders build trust by demonstrating concern for people. “The concern [shown] for others is one of the clearest and most unambiguous signals of...trust” (Kouzes & Posner, 2012, p. 223).

In addition, the peer mentors mentioned the qualities of *friendly, encouraging, trusting, understanding, and teamwork*. All the characteristics are key to building trusting relationships and helping foster cooperation (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). The peer mentors also identified the influential educators in their lives as *intelligent* and *master teachers*, both of which contribute to exemplary leaders building confidence in others by strengthening competence (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Model the Way is also leadership practice practiced by the peer mentors. Peer

mentors value promises, commitments, and setting the example. In the open response of key mentoring characteristics, peer mentors mentioned their significant mentor as someone who sets an example, demonstrating how one should act. According to Kouzes & Posner (2014), “exemplary leaders ... must be models of the behaviors they expect of others” (p. 10). Only with alignment will exemplary leaders build unity and credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

“Student leaders who more frequently use *The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership* are considerably more effective than those who don’t” (Kouzes & Posner, 2014, p. 16). Thus, the peer mentors do engage in the five practices indicating they are leaders. Overall, college students are more satisfied and feel appreciated when their peer leaders engage in the leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2014). Therefore, the five practices can serve as a framework the UHSI peer mentors can use to communicate and evaluate their leadership behaviors when working with their mentees. Moreover, as suggested by Posner and Brodsky (1992), the S-LPI can be used to evaluate leadership capacities of UHSI peer mentors.

Limitations, Future Research, and Program Advancements

The limitation of this study is the small sample size. Thus, inferential statistics could not be calculated to measure differences in means among student characteristics. Furthermore, the data is self-reported data and does not identify the specific experiences that cause peer mentors to exercise these leadership behaviors. Given the limitations, more research is required.

Further research should include a pre- and post-test using the S-LPI. To measure the significance of the peer mentoring experience, leadership behaviors need to be assessed prior

to mentoring and following the mentoring experience. Additionally, qualitative data, in the form of interviews and focus groups, should be conducted to specifically address the S-LPI measures and give peer mentors an opportunity to explain their scores. Specific attention should be given to explore the potential cultural impacts on each of the five leadership practices, especially *Challenge the Process*. Although Kouzes and Posner (2014) share the five practices are not affected by demographics, it is worth the research to specifically investigate cultural factors beyond ethnicity. Identifying as a first-generation student, as most of the peer mentors do, opens the door to expand research of the five practices.

Furthermore, the S-LPI should be completed from the observer's perspective. Observers of the UHSI peer mentors include mentees and seminar faculty. Weekly interaction with these key members of the mentoring experience can provide a 360-degree assessment of leadership behaviors in peer mentors.

Based on the results of this study, leadership development should be an articulated outcome of the UHSI peer mentoring program and content should be used in the training and professional development of peer mentors at UHSI. Peer mentors provide a unique service to UHSI and FTICs. Serving as their role model is providing the opportunity to develop as a leader on campus. Thus, formal leadership workshops can be incorporated in the peer mentor experience to prepare them for their peer leader role.

Lastly, data can be collected for programmatic improvements. Specific outcomes of peer mentors should be developed and form the base for an assessment plan. Then quantitative and qualitative measures can be collected and routinely evaluated to measure UHSI peer mentor development.

PEER MENTOR SYNTHESIZES MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF PEER MENTOR GRADUATES FROM UHSI

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how peer mentors at an urban, Hispanic-Serving Institution (UHSI) develop as a result of their mentoring experience. The population for this study was peer mentors at UHSI. The criterion-based sample were eight peer mentors who graduate from UHSI in 2019. Data was collected through focus groups with topics covering the peer mentor experience, lessons learned, and the applicability of the peer mentor experience to future professions. The data was analyzed using the constant comparative method to elicit overall themes and connections to leadership identity. Findings revealed peer mentor graduates from UHSI have developed a leadership identity and anticipate lessons from their peer mentoring experience transfer to their future jobs.

Introduction

Peer mentoring programs result in several positive outcomes for both mentees and mentors (Nora & Crisp, 2007; Ward, Thomas, & Disch, 2014). In a qualitative study of peer mentors, Harmon (2006) investigated the learning processes and outcomes of a mentoring experience. As a result of the experience, peer mentors learned organization and planning skills, identifying student needs, group dynamics, and career related skills. In a six-year evaluative study of a peer mentor program servicing first-year students, mentors shared the mentor experience helped them develop self-confidence and several personal and employment skills (Hall & Jaugietis, 2011).

At an urban, Hispanic-Serving Institution (UHSI), general education outcomes drive the competencies of all undergraduate degrees (UHSI, 2018b). The critical competencies include the following: (a) think creatively and to innovate; (b) conduct inquiry and analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information; (c) effectively develop, express and interpret ideas through written, oral, and visual communication; (d) manipulate and analyze data or observable facts, resulting in an informed conclusion; (e) consider different points of view; (f) work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal; (g) demonstrate intercultural competence; (h) articulate knowledge of civic responsibility; (i) engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities; and (j) connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making. These competencies are components of each major field of study at UHSI, “ensuring that students graduate with 21st century skills” (UHSI, 2019b).

Similarly, the *National Association of Colleges and Employers* (2018) annually surveys employers to project the upcoming job market. Through the annual survey, highly sought-after degrees/top majors are identified as well as resume attributes and career readiness competencies. The top undergraduate degrees in demand are finance and accounting. Resume attributes include communication written skills, problem-solving skills, and the ability to work in a team. The *essential* or *absolutely essential* career readiness competencies include critical thinking/problem solving, teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, and oral/written communication.

Peer mentoring programs also have been found to influence leadership identity and career preparedness. Researchers in a mixed method study found that peer mentors

have higher generativity levels than those who do not mentor, and peer mentors use the mentoring experience as a place to practice generativity, or guide the next generation (Hastings, Griesen, Hoover, Creswell, & Dlugosh, 2015). Furthermore, generativity was found to be a positive predictor of socially responsible leadership (Hastings & Sunderman, 2019). Priest and Donley (2014) completed a case study evaluating the leadership impact on students who were mentored by alumni. Career professionals provided much needed career guidance as college students were beginning the transition to early careers.

As more mentoring programs develop in higher education, it is imperative researchers and practitioners recognize peer mentor programs as an opportunity to develop leadership and prepare students for professional lives following graduation. “Peer leadership mentoring programs provide an opportunity for students to build meaningful relationships with upperclass students and for peer leaders to gain valuable skills” (Haber, 2011, p. 72) to help them grow as leaders beyond their college experiences. The UHSI peer mentor graduates are entering the workforce with valuable content knowledge and competencies. This study provided an opportunity to expand research of peer mentors and the benefits/outcomes tied to leadership development and career preparation.

Conceptual Framework

Of the thousands of college students across the world, there is no universal model describing student development or growth through the college experience. Many scholars have theorized how college students mature and create their identity, mostly by

membership within specific demographic categories (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Chickering and Reisser (2003) have combined some of the theorists' work and "propose the seven vectors as maps to help ... determine where students are and which way they are heading" (p. 34).

With regard to leadership, student leadership competencies have been established (Seemiller & Murray, 2013) to intentionally design collegiate programs to prepare students for career roles. Leadership practices, processes, and values have been identified that lead to effective leadership through the five practices of exemplary leadership, the relational leadership model, and the social change model of leadership development (Komives, Dugan, Owen, Slack, Wagner, & Associates, 2011).

The conceptual framework for this study is the leadership identity development (LID) model to understand how leadership is developed. The LID model consists of six stages and five developmental factors (Komives, Longersbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006). Students (a) expand their definition of leadership, (b) develop self, (c) understand group influences, (d) change view of self, and (e) engage in developmental opportunities (Komives et al., 2006). The five developmental components help students make meaning of leadership and identify themselves as leaders. As each component broadens, students transition through the stages of LID model.

Stages of LID Model

The first stage is *awareness*, where leadership is understood to exist, and leaders are individuals other than oneself (Komives et al., 2006). *Exploration/Engagement*, stage two, is characterized by one's desire to be involved in groups. Komives et al. (2006)

noted that the first two stages in the LID model occur prior to college. The third stage, *Leader Identified*, is leader-centric and where most college students function. Stage four, *Leadership Differentiated*, is where college students begin to transition and begin to recognize that leadership is not just positional. *Generativity*, stage five, is depicted as one's acceptance and responsibility to develop others and contribute to society. The last stage, *Integration/Synthesis*, is where college students develop a systems lens and focus on continued engagement.

LID Model in Other Contexts

The LID model has been used to describe the leadership identity of various college student groups. The LID model has also been used to describe incoming first-year college student leadership beliefs and attitudes with gender as a significant characteristic to leadership thinking and identity development (Wielkiewicz, Fischer, Stelzner, Overland, & Sinner, 2012). Men were found to strongly believe in hierarchical leadership and operate in the second and third stages of the LID model whereas women were more systemic and operate in the third and fourth stages. In a study of first-year college students, researchers sought to understand student's awareness stage of the LID model and found that both internal and external factors shape leadership identity (Shehane, Sturtevant, Moore, & Dooley, 2012). Leadership identity and group identity, specifically gender and sexual orientation, were found to intersect in later stages of the LID model (McKenzie, 2018; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005). The LID model was also used as a framework in a leadership education course where personal growth projects were found to promote the "developing self" developmental factor of students' leadership

identity (Odom, Boyd, & Williams, 2012). Furthermore, the LID model provided the framework for exploring leadership mindsets as a form of program assessment indicating more leadership experiences and formal leadership education increases college student systemic thinking moving students from a less leader-centered to a more systems-centered viewpoint (Dunn, Ho, Odom, & Perdue, 2016; Ho & Odom, 2015).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to analyze the peer mentor participation of graduating seniors at UHSI on their personal development. Examining from a naturalistic perspective, this study intended to understand how undergraduate seniors make meaning from their peer mentor experiences. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does serving as a peer mentor affect a college senior's leadership identity?
2. How does serving as a peer mentor prepare a college senior for their future profession?

Methods

A basic qualitative design was used for this study (Merriam, 2009). The overall purpose of a basic qualitative study is "to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 23). For this study, the researcher sought to understand how peer mentors, about to transition from college to the workforce, describe their development while serving as a peer mentor.

Sampling

Peer mentor graduates from UHSI were the population for this study. Criterion-

based sampling was used in this study. A form of purposeful sampling, a criterion-based sample must meet predetermined criteria to determine its usefulness in a study (Merriam, 2009). “The logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 2002, p. 238). For this study, all participants served as a peer mentor for the 2018-2019 school year. A second criteria was peer mentors who are in their last year of their undergraduate studies—senior students graduating in spring, summer, or fall of 2019. There were eight peer mentors who met the criteria for the sample and participated in this study: three graduated in spring 2019, two graduated in summer 2019, and three will graduate in fall 2019. The participants served as peer mentors for one or two years and enrolled at UHSI for two to four years. Seven of the participants began UHSI as an FTIC; one was a transfer student. Five of the peer mentors are first-generation college students, and all participants are members of a minority race or ethnicity. To maintain each peer mentor’s confidentiality, each participant was asked to select a pseudonym to be used in the findings of the study following each focus group (see Table 12).

Table 11.
Peer Mentor Graduates

Pseudonym	Peer Mentor Yrs	UHSI Yrs
Angie	2	4
Bonny	2	3
Hank	1	2
Liya	1	2
Nani	1	2

Table 11 Continued

Pseudonym	Peer Mentor Yrs	UHSI Yrs
Natalie	2	3
Roland	1	2
Tina	1	2

Data Collection

Data was collected through focus groups. “A focus group interview is an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic” (Patton, 2002, p. 385). To gain a variety of perspectives, the researcher conducted focus groups allowing willing participants to offer their perspectives face to face. The purpose of the focus group is to gather more information at one time as compared to an individual interview (Patton, 2002). Another key purpose is to allow for the interaction between participants. A system of checks and balances can occur through the focus group interview providing the researcher with quality data (Patton, 2002).

The first focus group was made of peer mentors with only one-year experience as a peer mentor and consisted of five participants. The second focus group consisted of three participants with two years of experience as a peer mentor. Years of experience was used to separate participants into focus groups to reduce the influence experience had on participant responses and to maintain homogenous membership as suggested by Patton (2002).

Focus groups were conducted by the researcher. The researcher has been a student of leadership for a decade and has published works focused on college student

leadership experiences and thinking. The researcher is a second-generation college graduate, of Hispanic descent, and enrolled in a predominantly white institution as an FTIC. The researcher first met the UHSI peer mentors in the summer of 2019 while employed at UHSI. Aimed to further develop the UHSI Peer Mentoring program at UHSI, the researcher conducted this study to understand how graduating mentors develop as a leader.

To maintain a natural and comfortable setting for the participants, the focus groups took place in the Peer Mentor Lounge on UHSI's campus. Prior to interviewing, each participant was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix A) detailing the purpose of the study, the procedures in data collection, confidentiality, the risk/benefits, and permission to be audio recorded. All participants agreed to participate in the study and be audio recorded. Each focus group was approximately 90 minutes. To maintain confidentiality, participants were urged to refrain from using names to eliminate their true identities from the recordings and keep responses from being traced to individual participants. An interview schedule (see Appendix D) was used for both focus groups to keep the researcher on point throughout the discussion and maintain focus on just their experience as a peer mentor. The subjects addressed in each focus group concentrated on the way each peer mentor described their mentoring experience, leadership lessons learned through peer mentoring and how they impacted their mentoring behavior, and how the lessons learned apply to the peer mentor's future career with attention to behaviors in future jobs, and how peer mentors now view themselves as a result of the peer mentoring experience.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam (2009), data analysis is an inductive process where the researcher reads through every piece of data to identify significant ideas or thoughts within the data. The findings emerge from the data through the interaction of researcher and information (Patton, 2002). All data was analyzed using a constant comparative method. The constant comparative method is a technique of comparing each set of new idea with the previous data (Merriam, 2009). Through each source of data, the researcher made notes in the margin and labeled each independent idea. These ideas or categories were reviewed and collapsed into similar themes. The names for themes were derived from the respondent's words or from the literature, which are two sources for naming categories (Merriam, 2009). For this study, the focus group interviews were analyzed within two days after each data collection point.

Measures of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established through a variety of techniques. Following each focus group, the recordings were transcribed verbatim. The researcher listened to each interview and reviewed the transcription simultaneously to ensure the data was transcribed correctly. Following the focus group transcription, member checks were completed with each participant. A member check is one method to ensure credibility where the researcher sends initial interpretations to the respondents for review (Merriam, 2009; Shenton, 2004). For confidentiality purposes, each respondent received only their individual responses for member checking. An audit trail was maintained to trace the findings back to the raw data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Findings

The main purpose of this study was to evaluate the peer mentoring experience from the perspective of graduating seniors and investigate connections to their future careers. The first research question was to investigate how serving as peer mentor affects a college senior's leadership identity.

Peer Mentor Experience is a Learning Experience

The peer mentors described their peer mentor experience as a learning experience. Peer mentors learned empathy and patience in working with mentees. One peer mentor shared the following: "I am more sympathetic now. I grew from the experience" (Natalie). Tina said she "feel[s] more comfortable now working with others" as a result of her peer mentor experience. Nani explained that she "learned from her mistakes" and was able to keep her mentees from making the same ones. Additionally, peer mentors learned to approach people and understand that students have "different reactions so you can't have a closed mind in handling situations with students" (Bonny).

Peer mentors expressed that a good mentor strives to be a good person. And, a good peer mentor needs to experience hardship to be able to help others through difficult times. "A great mentor is someone who has gone through the struggle. They have battle scars and have experienced obstacles" (Hank). Peer mentors collectively articulated that experiencing difficult situations helps them feel more comfortable in helping others persevere through similar difficulties. A good peer mentor is an experienced person who wants to make an impact, even when that impact is not seen immediately. Angie stated

“[she] wasn’t sure that [she] had an impact at all until two years in” the program. The peer mentor experience can have lingering effects on mentees, some of which may appear several years later as mentees reconnect with their peer mentor.

Leadership Lessons

Following the analysis of data, there were several conversations and disagreements regarding leadership lessons. Some peer mentors identified the power differentiation between a leader and mentor and shared varying definitions. Other peer mentors synthesized their role as a peer mentor with being a leader.

Leaders Defined. The peer mentors defined a leader as an individual who has power. Leaders were believed to focus on tasks and “get things done” (Nani). They also identified a leader by position and as someone with authority. Roland shared “you associate power with assertiveness. If you have a position of higher power, you are more aggressive. As a peer mentor I don’t want to be aggressive.”

Another participant had a very strong response in not wanting to be a leader:

I don’t want to be perceived as a leader because I want [mentees] to be in charge of their own lives. I don’t want them to feel like they have no choice. I want them to have the choice. Mentees perceive a leader as someone in command. (Hank)

Mentor Defined. Peer mentors shared that being a peer mentor does not equal being a leader. Hank explained, “To me, a mentor is less of a leader and more of a counselor.” The word *mentor* was determined to evoke friendliness and approachability. And, it was that kind of person the peer mentors strived to be referenced as: “I’m more of a mentor. [Mentees] will probably see me more as mentor” (Nani).

Participants further differentiated a peer mentor from their ideas of a leader:

As a peer mentor you have to really humble yourself and understand you're not their boss. You're not their mother or their father. You're more like their partner.

(Tina)

Being a peer mentor was all about helping people and less about leading people. Liya shared she didn't think she had leadership skills. Instead she "had advice to give." Some peer mentors agreed that they were not leaders, but they still wanted to assist their mentees.

Mentor = Leader. The participants with two years of experience as peer mentor at UHSI used mentor and leader interchangeably indicating their role as a peer mentor is synonymous with peer leader. Natalie shared "a good leader and good mentor is someone you consider wise because of experience." She believed both a leader and mentor have special wisdom to impart on mentees. Along the same lines, another peer mentor believed one role equaled the other role:

Being a good leader means you're a good mentor. I don't think of a leader as giving orders. I think of them as being a part of the group, just given the charge.

They are not in charge but leading the charge. (Bonny)

The peer mentors view leadership as one without a formal position but with great responsibility.

Another peer mentor discussed their intention to develop their leadership skills.

I am a natural born leader. I've always been involved in different organizations. I consider myself as a leader. So this job was perfect for me because I knew the

job will help me develop more leadership skills. (Natalie)

Bonny echoed the same sentiment:

I felt I had leadership skills. I also had mentors or something similar like that in our [high] school, but I grew up with those people. I know all of them. But I think at UHSI I learned new stuff because I don't know who the mentees are. They're all from different backgrounds. So, it's a different type of skill, a different type of leadership.

“In general, to be a leader for other people they don't have to be given a position. It's their actions that makes them a leader.” (Angie)

In disagreement with less experienced peer mentors, the participants with two years of experience articulated leaders were not always authoritative and that a peer mentor is a leadership role. To illustrate this point, Natalie shared the following:

A peer mentor is not an authoritative person because you're a peer. You're a confidant, a big sister or brother. We're still leaders. They can rely on us as a friend, in a sense, like a mature friend.

Along the same lines, Bonny explained that leaders and peer mentors both have power:

Leaders have power. We have somewhat of a power towards the students.

Mainly, that power is experience. By telling them your life story you are leading them.

Many of the peer mentors discussed their experience in adapting to situations and remaining flexible. As Angie states, “you have a plan and sometimes it doesn't go as planned; you have to adapt.” Others expressed the same sentiment. Even though plans

may get off track, “you have to keep persisting, don’t give up” (Bonnie).

From Peer Mentor to Future Career

The second research question framing this study was to describe how peer mentor graduates think serving as a peer mentor prepares them for their future profession. The focus group participants made several connections between their peer mentoring experience and their future professions. The themes were evident across both focus groups and collapsed in two comprehensive topics: (a) effective communication and (b) focus on relationships.

Effective Communication. One of the most repeated concepts the peer mentors stated was necessary for their future professions was communication. The peer mentors believe it is important to recognize each person must adjust their communication styles. There is “no one size fits all” (Natalie) and in the job setting you must learn to “communicate differently with different people” (Nani). Likewise, a peer mentor explained the differences among people with the following excerpt:

In any job, it doesn’t matter what the job is, you’re going to have to talk to people. You have to work with all kinds of people that maybe don’t share your same viewpoints. They think differently. They have different ideas. But you have to show respect, take their ideas into consideration, and keep lines of communication open. (Hank)

As a future medical professional, Tina shared “I learned how to approach different types of people. I don’t assume anything, try to listen, and understand.” Other peer mentors shared that their peer mentor experience has helped them become better public speakers.

Nani shared the following:

As a peer mentor I was asked to give presentations in seminar class in front of my mentees. To prepare me for teaching, I now have experience with public speaking. The public speaking skills are valuable in every profession.

Delivering student success strategy presentations for seminar faculty helped the peer mentors organize their messages, develop visuals, and deliver content.

Focus on Relationships. The peer mentors described their ability to build relationships through their mentoring experience. Overall, mentors describe these relationships as “building connections” (Bonny) and “networking” (Liya) with their UHSI faculty, staff, and fellow mentors. Peer mentors believed connections are essential for future career recommendations and references (Bonny, Hank, Liya, & Nani). One peer mentor even suggested it was important to “not burn bridges” (Bonny) with people because “you never know...when you might need someone.” Other peer mentors described the relationships they have built with their mentees as “long lasting friendships” (Bonny). The relationships built during their peer mentoring experience at UHSI are those peer mentors hope to maintain as years progress and rely on through their early careers.

The peer mentoring experience also allows mentors the ability to recognize everyone’s contribution to the larger group and focus on working together. Liya shared “everyone has different strengths and weaknesses, and if we work together, you can be my strength and I can be your strength. We can help each other out.” Hank echoed the same sentiment focused on being a team player:

I feel like I will be a better team player. When someone is trying to lead you must understand and listen. You can't be a proper leader if you don't know how to be a follower and work with other people.

Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how graduating seniors at UHSI make sense of their peer mentor experience. Specifically, the study sought to make connections between mentoring and leadership identity and understand the lessons peer mentors can transfer to their future professions.

Mentorship and Leadership Identities

Through their peer mentoring experience, the participants have personally developed and can connect their learning experience to their future professional selves. With respect to their leadership identity, peer mentor graduates have interesting perspectives. The peer mentor experience at UHSI was found to be a learning experience. The peer mentor program was a group influence giving peer mentors the opportunity to learn from other mentors in the program (Komives et al, 2006). Likewise, the program created developmental influences with interactions with other mentors and mentees.

Komives et al. (2000) explained that students advance through stages of the Leadership Identity Model (LID) one by one and in a helix progression. Moreover, college students typically enter college at stage three, leader identified, believing leadership is a position (Komives et al., 2000). However, these suppositions are not necessarily the case with the peer mentors at UHSI.

Some peer mentor graduates at UHSI have developed an awareness of leadership. They have also explored or engaged with leadership, stage two of the LID model, as they expressed their desire to be involved with the peer mentor program at UHSI and further develop their own personal skills. Other peer mentor graduates also have a sense of stage three – leader identified as they articulate a leader holds a position and must accomplish tasks.

With stage four in mind, not all peer mentors have broadened their view of leadership to include non-positional leaders. Mentors with one year of mentoring experience have yet to transition to the leadership differentiated stage. These peer mentors are still trying to make sense of the characteristics and behaviors of a leader versus a mentor. It is somewhat troubling that most of the peer mentor graduates do not recognize leadership outside of positions or a hierarchical structure.

On the other hand, the peer mentors with two years of experience as a mentor have clearly immersed themselves and practice leadership with their peers. They understand their role as peer mentor is one of leadership even without having a positional title. This stage is more evident with the more experienced peer mentors as they have explored their personal power and the influence they have on their peers. Also, their continued membership in the peer mentor program may mean the group influence is necessary to transition to a more system perspective of leadership. “Students who were committed to a group over time seemed more likely to gain relational skills” (Komives et al., 2006, p. 417).

Regarding stage five – generativity – it appears all peer mentors are operating in

this stage regardless of years of experience mentoring. Generativity is characterized by students who are “interested in teaching and developing younger peers who need their support” (Komives et al., 2006, p. 411). All the UHSI peer mentors accepted their peer mentoring role to help support and guide other students. The characteristics of the generativity stage in the LID model are central to the UHSI peer mentor program.

Life After Mentoring

The peer mentor experience can be transferrable to the workplace. Following their peer mentoring experience, the peer mentors explain effective communication and working with others as transferrable concepts to their future careers. Those same competencies are termed Career Readiness Competencies by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. In the most recent job outlook, teamwork/collaboration and oral/written communication are termed *essential* and are in the top four career competencies (NACE, 2019). The findings also support Hall and Jaugietis’s (2011) work that peer mentors identify enhancements in communication and social skills as a result of mentoring others.

With regard to people, peer mentors articulated skills in working with diverse viewpoints, being open to different ideas, and considering everyone’s strengths and weaknesses. This same sentiment was expressed in Harmon’s (2006) research: “mentors...learned valuable career-related leadership skills ...and discover[ed] the complexities of interacting with and managing diverse groups of people” (p. 75). The peer mentor’s experience confirms Kram’s (1983) two function model of mentoring: mentors enhance their personal and career-related functions.

Implications for Programmatic Modifications and Future Research

Based on the findings, the UHSI peer mentor program should dedicate time to address the development of valuable skills necessary after graduation. The job outlook report from NACE should be reviewed periodically to ensure peer mentors engage in opportunities to practice career competencies in their mentoring role. Communication skills can be developed through small group presentations and student success workshops with mentees.

Leadership development should be an intentional component to peer mentor outcomes. The peer mentors at UHSI need to be introduced to specific leadership content and apply leadership to their purpose as a peer mentor. As peer mentors serve a variety of roles with their mentees, above all they are influencing the behavior of others through a relationship. This context is an opportunity to teach leadership. Likewise, purposefully recognizing peer mentors as leaders on UHSI's campus is critical to their individual development.

To really understand the leadership identity developed within peer mentors at UHSI, it is critical to understand where they begin. Komives et al. (2006) states that college students enter college with an awareness and engagement with leadership. However, that is a simple assumption of all college students. The peer mentors at UHSI represent various demographics and therefore may experience the early stages of leadership differently. Through surveys and reflection exercises, the UHSI peer mentors can identify if they have experienced leadership and then describe their leadership experience.

Moreover, research studies should evaluate the leadership identity development of peer mentors and impact of cultural influences such as generation in college, FTIC, immigrant/non-immigrant, and ethnic/racial groups. The LID model consists of five developmental components (Komives et al., 2006), but none clearly address the impact of cultural influences. Although they may be considered a component of the fifth component, developmental influences, with this specific demographic a sixth component may be more appropriate to further describe how the UHSI peer mentors define and develop as a leader.

Researchers should also collect reflective data from peer mentors as they are engaged in their mentoring experience. As peer mentors interact with their peers, they can detail their learning and help researchers understand as what point peer mentors progress through the stages of the LID model and what specific situations or influences trigger the movement from one stage to another.

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This three-part study aimed to make connections between a peer mentor program at UHSI and the development of peer mentors. The peer mentors in this study served as peer mentors for the 2018-2019 academic year and were predominantly female, first-generation, and Hispanic.

Study One

The first study was a qualitative inquiry to develop understanding for the motivation to mentor from the UHSI peer mentor perspective, the qualities necessary to mentor, and the relationship between the experience and future career plans. Addressing the first research question, why upperclassmen choose to mentor freshmen, the data revealed three themes. Peer mentors provided glimpses of their own experiences as a new student and the positive experience with their mentor. Peer mentors also had a genuine desire to help new students. Lastly, peer mentors were invested in freshman student success and their own involvement at UHSI.

To address the second research question, applications revealed 93 mentions of peer mentor qualities; 36 were unique. The peer mentor qualities were classified according to the career and psychosocial functions of mentoring (Kram, 1983). Peer mentors identified more interpersonal and support characteristics. The repeated qualities included communication, leadership, and building relationships.

The third research question addressed career connections. The peer mentors

identified three transferrable topics to their profession: development of skills, working with people, and service to others.

Study Two

The second study was a descriptive study to understand the leadership behaviors peer mentors at UHSI engage in. The leadership practice with the highest mean scores was *Inspire a Shared Vision* (*Grand Mean* = 4.17). Females ($n = 17$), 68 percent of the sample, scored higher than males in all five leadership practices. Hispanics also represented 68% of the subjects; their highest leadership practice was *Inspire a Shared Vision*. The same was true for the first-time-in-college (FTIC) students ($n = 22$) and first-generation students ($n = 20$). When asked about the significant mentors in their lives, the respondents listed family or educators.

Study Three

The third study was an attempt to synthesize the peer mentor experience with new UHSI graduates. The peer mentors at UHSI described their mentoring experience as a learning experience and an opportunity to learn from mentees. Mentors identified empathy, patience, and open-mindedness as areas they developed. They also expanded on facing adversity and using their personal mistakes to guide mentees.

With respect to leadership, the focus groups differed in their connections between being a mentor and being a leader. UHSI peer mentors with only one year as a mentor keep them separated whereas peer mentors with two years of experience use leader and mentor interchangeably. The peer mentors experience the stages of the

Leadership Identity Development (LID) model differently based on years of experience as a peer mentor.

Furthermore, the peer mentors at UHSI identified two broad areas they developed in their mentoring role that will be useful in their future profession: communication and building relationships.

Conclusions

Peer mentors at UHSI are motivated by the opportunity to share their experiences, be the support system for others, and contribute to student success. The unique qualities of peer mentors are predominantly skills, especially communication. Peer mentors are also motivated by the opportunity to use the mentoring experience as preparation for life after college. The experience develops their skillset, provides a learning environment to work with others, and an opportunity to practice servant qualities.

The UHSI peer mentors do demonstrate the five practices of exemplary leadership. Peer mentors demonstrate highest experience with *Inspire a Shared Vision* and *Enable Others to Act*. The UHSI peer mentors identify important characteristics of their personal mentors closely aligned with *Enable Others to Act*. The peer mentors are effective leaders as they engage in all five leadership practices.

UHSI peer mentor graduates learned valuable lessons through their mentoring experience and did develop a leadership identity as a result. Although peer mentors are not in agreement with leaders as mentors or vice versa, the peer mentors have experienced leadership and will continue to develop their individual self. Peer mentors

also integrated their learning through the peer mentor experience with their new ones following graduation.

Implications for Future Studies

Although not generalizable to other contexts, the researcher developed a better understanding of the peer mentoring experience from the mentor perspective as a result of the study. By analyzing peer mentor applications, surveying current peer mentors, and interviewing peer mentors transitioning to the workforce, this study provided a full-circle analysis of the peer mentor experience at UHSI. With an attempt to connect three frameworks for college student leadership development, this study helped broaden the research of peer mentor development in post-secondary educational settings through a mixed method approach.

Given the demographics of UHSI and of the peer mentors, this study is a start to begin addressing research needs with diverse and under-represented student groups. Crisp (2009) stated, “research is needed to understand the specific conceptual differences that appear to exist among students of different ethnic groups” (p. 190). This study included many first-time-in-college students who identified as first-generation college students. The peer mentors were also more female and self-identified mostly as Hispanic. More research should pay attention to peer mentors in minority student groups and their conceptualization of peer mentoring.

Expanding on Crisp’s call for research of ethnic groups, additional studies are exclusively needed to further explore the applicability of the Leadership Identify Model to ethnic and racial minority students in peer mentoring roles. The UHSI peer mentors

have developed a leadership identity, but their identity does not follow Komives et al.'s (2006) stages as the model intends. The peer mentors with less years of experience as a mentor mostly operate in stage three: leader identified where leadership is seen as positional and someone who must complete tasks. Yet, despite this viewpoint, the same mentors also show characteristics of stage five: generativity, especially accepting the development of others as their responsibility. More discussions with mentors are necessary to explore this process. Also, it is important to also understand and investigate the five categories that influence the development of a leadership identity in college students.

Due to the low number of participants in the studies, it is recommended to expand the current research studies to include all cohorts of peer mentors at UHSI. Although the peer mentor program has evolved over time, the data may reveal new conclusions or help strengthen the findings reported with this sample. Future cohorts of peer mentors should also be included in research and potentially evaluate peer mentors using pre- and post-tests for quantitative results. Likewise, upcoming groups of peer mentors could maintain journals or participate in reflective exercises to capture qualitative data as they experience their peer mentoring role.

Furthermore, research involving other peer to peer interactions should be conducted. UHSI relies on peers to assist other students through tutoring, supplemental instruction, college ambassadors, and student orientation. This study can be expanded with all peer leader groups at UHSI to conceptualize the development of peer leaders in a variety of supporting contexts and with different student populations on campus,

especially with first-generation and Hispanic groups. Along the same lines, other Hispanic-Serving Institutions can be included in a future study to establish a larger population of inquiry and provide for the opportunity to generalize findings.

Recommendations for Programmatic Development

The underlying factors motivating upperclassmen to mentor freshmen, the leadership practices necessary for successful peer mentoring, and the impact of the experience on the peer mentor's identity have significant impacts on the peer mentor program at UHSI. The peer mentors clearly articulate their purpose for becoming a peer mentor and their anticipated development as a member. Thus, more deliberative developmental opportunities should be established to address their needs.

With respect to peer mentor qualities and career development, specific attention should be made to address institutional and national competencies through the peer mentor program at UHSI. Not only should mentee development be a priority outcome of the program, but the development of peer mentors should also be a significant outcome. A mission statement and learning outcomes should be created that signify the overall purpose of the UHSI peer mentor program and the anticipated learning as a result of involvement with the program. These exercises, though, should include both former and current mentors.

Once purpose and outcomes are established, it is imperative the peer mentor program at UHSI develop an assessment plan and schedule. Specific evaluative tools should be used to measure each outcome. Programmatic data should be collected in the form of quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of reflections, journaling, and like

strategies should be used to capture rich descriptions from the perspective of mentees, mentors, and university faculty/staff working with the mentoring program.

Likewise, specific leadership modules should be developed for peer mentors. The studies shed light on the UHSI peer mentors as a peer leader and their development of a leadership identity. From the time they apply to when they graduate the UHSI mentors mention developing their leadership skills. Thus, a specific outcome should address leadership. Then leadership training and education should be incorporated into the peer mentor experience.

REFERENCES

- Arendt, S. W., & Gregoire, M. B. (2005). Leadership behaviors in hospitality management students. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Education, 17*(4), 20–27. doi: 10.1080/10963758.2005.10696838
- Budge, S. (2006). Peer mentoring in post-secondary education: Implications for research and practice. *Journal of College Reading and Learning, 37*(1), 73–87.
- Burbank, M., Odom, S. F., & Sandlin, M. R. (2015). A content analysis of undergraduate students' perceived reasons for changes in personal leadership behaviors. *Journal of Leadership Education, 14*(2), 182–197. doi: 1012806/V14/I2/R12
- Campbell, C. M., Smith, M., Dugan, J. P., & Komives, S. R. (2012). Mentors and college student leadership outcomes: The importance of position and process. *The Review of Higher Education, 35*(4), 595–625. doi: 10.1353/rhe.2012.0037
- Chickering, A.W., & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Colvin, J. W., & Ashman, M. (2010). Roles, risks, and benefits of peer mentoring relationships in higher education. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 18*(2), 121–134. doi: 10.100/13611261003678879
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crisp, G. (2009). Conceptualization and initial validation of the College Student Mentoring Scale (CSMS). *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(2), 177–

194.

- Crisp, G., & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education, 50*(6), 525–545. doi: 10.1007/s11162-009-9130-2
- DeMarinis, M., Beaulieu, J., Cull, I., & Abd-El-Aziz, A. (2017). A mixed-methods approach to understanding the impact of a first-year peer mentor program. *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, 29*(2), 93–107.
- Dennis, J. M., Phinney, J. S., & Chuateco, L. I. (2005). The role of motivation, parental support, and peer support in the academic success of ethnic minority first-generation college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 46*(3), 223–236. doi: 10.1353/csd.2005.0023
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail, and mixed mode surveys: The tailored design method*, (3rd ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Douglas, A. G., Smith, D. L., & Smith, L. J. (2013). An exploration of the characteristics of effective undergraduate peer-mentoring relationships. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnerships in Learning, 21*(2), 219–234. doi: 10.1080/13611267.2013.813740
- Dugan, J. P., & Komives, S. R., (2007). *Developing leadership capacity in college students: Findings from a national study*. A Report from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership. College Park, MD: National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs.
- Dunn, A. L., Ho, S. P., Odom, S. F., & Perdue, E. R. (2016). Influence of formal

- academic leadership programs on undergraduates' leadership mindset: An assessment of a Corps of Cadets program. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 15(4), 57–74. doi: 10.12806/V15/I4/R5
- Erlandson, D. A., Harris, E. L., Skipper, B. L., & Allen, S. D. (1993). *Naturalistic inquiry: A guide to methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Evans, N.J., Forney, D.S. & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1998). *Student development in college*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Foli, K. J., Braswell, M., Kirkpatrick, J., & Lim, E. (2014). Development of leadership behaviors in undergraduate nursing students: A service-learning approach. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 35, 76–82. doi: 10.5480/11-578.1
- Fraenkel, J. R., Wallen, N. E., & Hyun, H. H. (2012). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (8th edition). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Girves, J. E., Zepeda, Y., & Gwathmey, J. K. (2005). Mentoring in a post-affirmative action world. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61(3), 449–479.
- Grant-Vallone, E., & Ensher, E. A. (2000). Effects of peer mentoring on types of mentor support, program satisfaction and graduate student stress: A dyadic perspective. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(6), 637–642.
- Haber, P. (2011). Peer education in student leadership programs: Responding to co-curricular challenges. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2011(133), 65-76. doi: 10.1002/ss.385
- Hall, R., & Jaugietis, Z. (2011). Developing peer mentoring through evaluation. *Innovative Higher Education*, 36(1). 41–52. doi: 10.1007/s10755-010-9156-6

- Harmon, B. V. (2006). A qualitative study of the learning processes and outcomes associated with students who serve as peer mentors. *Journal of the First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 18(2), 53–82.
- Hastings, L. J., Griesen, J. V., Hoover, R. E., Creswell, J. W., & Dlugosh, L. L. (2015). Generativity in college students: Comparing and explaining the impact of mentoring. *Journal of College Student Development*, 56(7), 651–669. doi: 1.01353.csd.2016.0070
- Hastings, L. J., & Sunderman, H. M. (2019). Generativity and socially responsible leadership among college student leaders who mentor. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 18(3), 1–19. doi: 10.12806/V18/I3/R1
- Hirsch, Kelsey Helen (2016). The impact of peer mentoring on development of the five practices of exemplary L\leaders. Master's thesis, Texas A & M University. Available electronically from <http://hdl.handle.net/1969.1/158646>.
- Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities. (2009). *Hispanic-serving institution definitions*. Retrieved from the HACU Membership website: https://www.hacu.net/hacu/HSI_Definition.asp
- Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288. doi: 10.1177/1049732305276687
- Ho, S. P., & Odom, S. F. (2015). Mindsets of leadership education undergraduates: An approach to program assessment. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 14(1), 92–106. doi: 1012806/V14/I1/R6

- Inzer, L. D., & Crawford, C. B. (2005). A review of formal and informal mentoring: Processes, problems and designs. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 4(1), 31–50.
- Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and undergraduate academic success: A literature review. *Review of Educational Research*, 61(4), 505–535.
- Komives, S. R., Longerbeam, S. D., Owen, J. E., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2006). A leadership identify development model: Applications from a grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(4), 401–418. doi: 10.1353/csd.2006.0048
- Komives, S. R., Dugan, J. P., Owen, J. E., Slack, C., Wagner, W., & Associates. (2011). *The handbook for student leadership development* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. (2013). *Exploring leadership: For college students who want to make a difference* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2012). *The leadership challenge: How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations* (5th ed.). San Francisco, CA: The Leadership Challenge.
- Kouzes, J. M. & Posner, B. Z. (2014). *The student leadership challenge: Five practices for becoming an exemplary leader* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: The Leadership Challenge.
- Kram, K. E. (1983). Phases of the mentor relationship. *Academic of Management Journal*, 26(4), 608–625.

- Kram, K. E., & Isabella, L. A. (1985). Mentoring alternatives: The role of peer relationships in career development. *Academy of Management Journal*, 28(1), 110–132.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- McKenzie, B. L. (2018). Am I a leader? Female students leadership identity development. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 17(2), 1–18. doi: 10.12806/V17/I2/R1
- McKinney, N. S., & Waite, R. (2016). Leadership development among a cohort of undergraduate interdisciplinary students in the health professions. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 15(3), 11–22. doi: 10.12806/V15/I3/A2
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Muldoon, R. (2008). Recognising and rewarding the contribution and personal development of peer supporters at university. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 32(3), 207–219. doi: 10.1080/03098770802220405
- National Association of Colleges and Employers (2018). *Job outlook 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.odu.edu/content/dam/odu/offices/cmc/docs/nace/2019-nace-job-outlook-survey.pdf>
- Newton, F. B., & Ender, S. C. (2010). *Students helping students: A guide for peer educators on college campuses* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Nora, A., & Crisp, G. (2007). Mentoring students: Conceptualizing and validating the multi-dimensions of a support system. *Journal of College Student Retention*,

9(3), 337–356. doi:10.2190/CS.9.3.e

Northouse, P. G. (2013). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Odom, S. F., Boyd, B. L., & Williams, J. (2012). Impact of personal growth projects on leadership identity development. *Journal of Leadership Education, 11*(1), 49–63.

Pagan, R., & Edwards-Wilson, R., (2002). A mentoring program for remedial students. *Journal of College Student Retention, 4*(3), 207–226.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Posner, B. Z. (2004). A leadership development instrument for students: Updated. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(4), 443-456. doi: 10.1353.csd.2004.0051

Posner, B. Z. (2012). Effectively measuring student leadership. *Administrative Sciences, 2*(4), 221–234. doi: 10.3390/admsci2040221

Posner, B. Z., & Brodsky, B. (1992). A leadership development instrument for college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 33*, 231–237.

Priest, K. L., & de Campos Paula, A. L. (2016). Peer-led learning communities: Exploring integrative high-impact educational practices for leadership education. *Journal of Leadership Education, 15*(1), 86–95. doi: 1012806/V15/I1/A1

Priest, K. L., & Donley, S. (2014). Developing leadership for life: Outcomes from a collegiate student-alumni mentoring program. *Journal of Leadership Education, 13*(3), 107–117. doi:1012806/V13/I3/A2

- Renn, K. A., & Bilodeau, B. L. (2005). Leadership identity development among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender student leaders. *NASPA Journal*, 42(3), 342–367.
- Sanft, M., Jensen, M., & McMurray, E. (2008). *Peer mentor companion*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Seemiller, C. & Murray, T. (2013) The common language of leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7(1), 33–45. doi: 10.1002/jls.21277
- Shehane, M. R., Sturtevant, K. A., Moore, L. L., & Dooley, K. E., (2012). First-year student perceptions related to leadership awareness and influences. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 11(1), 140–156.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63–75.
- Shook, J. L., & Keup, J. R. (2012). The benefits of peer leader programs: An overview from the literature. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2012(157), 5–16. doi: 10.1002/he.20002
- Terrion, J. L., & Leonard, D. (2007). A taxonomy of the characteristics of student peer mentors in higher education: Finding from a literature review. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 15(2), 149–164. doi: 10.1080/13611260601086311
- [UHSI]. (2016). *Revised strategic plan: 2015-2020*. Retrieved from [UHSI], Office of the President website: [https://www.\[UHSI\].edu](https://www.[UHSI].edu)
- [UHSI]. (2018a). *Retention & Graduation Standing Committee*. Retrieved from [UHSI], Administration website: [https://www.\[UHSI\].edu](https://www.[UHSI].edu)

[UHSI]. (2018b). 2018-2019 *undergraduate catalog*. Retrieved from [UHSI], Catalog website: [https://www.\[UHSI\].edu](https://www.[UHSI].edu)

[UHSI]. (2019a). *UHSI fact book*. Retrieved from [UHSI], Administration website: [https://www.\[UHSI\].edu](https://www.[UHSI].edu)

[UHSI]. (2019b). *About UHSI*. Retrieved from [UHSI], Mission and values website: [https://www.\[UHSI\].edu](https://www.[UHSI].edu)

Ward, E. G., Thomas, E. E., & Disch, W. B. (2014). Mentor service themes emergent in a holistic, undergraduate peer-mentoring experience. *Journal of College Student Development, 55*(6), 563–579. doi: 10.1353/csd.2014.0058

Washburn, M. H. (2008). One mentor or two: An instrumental case study of strategic collaboration and peer mentoring. *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, 20*(2), 91–110.

Wielkiewicz, R. M., Fischer, D. V., Overland, M., & Sinner, A. M. (2012). Leadership attitudes and beliefs of incoming first year college students: A multi-institutional study of gender differences. *Journal of Leadership Education, 11*(2), 1–25.

APPENDIX A
CONSENT FORM

CPHS #62-19R

LETTER OF CONSENT

[Date]

Dear [Name of Participant]:

My name is Sarah Pena Ho, and I work in the [redacted] at the [redacted]. To further the center's purpose in assisting students, I am conducting a research study examining the leadership development of peer mentors at [redacted]. The purpose of this study is to describe peer mentor motivations to mentor, to quantify the leadership behaviors of mentors, and to understand the impact of mentoring on leadership development from the perspective of the mentor.

You were purposefully selected to participate in this study because you are a current Peer Mentor working with [redacted]'s first-year students. Your unique perspective will highlight the leadership skills you have developed, used, and can transfer from your mentoring experience to your future career settings. The study will also identify future training needs and specific leadership learning outcomes for the [redacted] Peer Mentor Program.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to engage in a 30 minute survey regarding your leadership behaviors and perceptions. You will also be asked to participate in an audio-taped focus group for approximately 1 ½ hours with your fellow peer mentors. To ensure your confidentiality, there will be no identifying factors used in this study. All records relating to this study will be safely secured on an external hard drive under password protection and will be destroyed three years after the study is completed. Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time during the study. Your decision to not participate will not impact your relationship with [redacted] or as a peer mentor.

The expected risks to participants in this study are minimal. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation is intrinsic—providing data that can inform future and current administrators, college faculty and staff, assisting them in modifying the [redacted] Peer Mentor Program for future [redacted].

If you have any questions related to this study, please contact me by email at [hosa@\[redacted\].edu](mailto:hosa@[redacted].edu) or by phone 713-226-5209.

Sincerely,

Sarah Peña Ho

I give consent to participate in the above study. I also give consent to be audiotaped and understand audio data will be erased after completion of the study.

Subject: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

Any questions regarding your rights as a research subject may be addressed to the [redacted] Committee on Standards for Research Involving Human Subjects through its current chair, Dr. Katrina Rufino at 713-221-5094 or email at [humansubjects@\[redacted\].edu](mailto:humansubjects@[redacted].edu). All research projects that are carried out at the [redacted] are governed by requirements of the University and the Federal Government.

APPENDIX B

PEER MENTOR APPLICATION



Name: _____ ID #: _____

Phone #: () _____ Email Address: _____

Academic Major(s)/Minor(s): _____

Grade Point Average: _____

Peer Mentor Application Questions

Please type and attach your responses to your application

1. Why are you interested in serving as a Peer Mentor?
2. What qualities to you possess that will help you to be a Peer Mentor, and what qualities would you like to develop through the Peer Mentor position?
3. What are your career plans and how would being a Peer Mentor contribute to those plans?

Campus Involvement

List your current campus and community involvement (organizations, volunteer, etc.).

Activity	Position/ Responsibilities	Hours/ Week

APPENDIX C
INSTRUMENT

Student LPI

As a Peer Mentor, I...		Rarely or Seldom 1	Once in a While 2	Sometimes 3	Often 4	Very Frequently 5
1.	set a personal example of what I expect from other people.					
2.	look ahead and communicate about what I believe will affect us in the future.					
3.	look for ways to develop and challenge my skills and abilities.					
4.	foster cooperative rather than competitive relationships among people I work with.					
5.	praise people for a job well done.					
6.	spend time making sure that people behave consistently with the principles and standards we have agreed upon.					
7.	describe to others in our organization what we should be capable of accomplishing.					
8.	look for ways that others can try out new ideas and methods.					
9.	actively listen to diverse points of view.					
10.	encourage others as they work on activities and programs.					
11.	follow through on the promises and commitments I make.					

12. talk with others about a vision of how we could be even better in the future.					
13. search for innovative ways to improve what we are doing.					
14. treat others with dignity and respect.					
15. express appreciation for the contributions that people make.					
16. seek to understand how my actions affect other people's performance.					
17. talk with others about how their own interests can be set by working toward a common goal.					
18. ask, "What can we learn from this experience?" when things do not go as we expected.					
19. support the decisions that other people make on their own.					
20. make it a point to publicly recognize people who show commitment to shared values.					
21. make sure that people support the values we have agreed upon.					
22. am/be upbeat and positive when talking about what we can accomplish.					
23. make sure that big projects we undertake are broken down into smaller and do-able parts.					
24. give others a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.					
25. find ways for us to celebrate accomplishments.					

26.	talk about my values and the principles that guide my actions.					
27.	speak with passion about the higher purpose and meaning of what we are doing.					
28.	take initiative in experimenting with the way things can be done.					
29.	provide opportunities for others to take on leadership responsibilities.					
30.	make sure that people are creatively recognized for their contributions.					

Demographic Items

31.	How would you rate your mentorship ability?	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Very Weak
31.	How would you describe your gender?					
32.	How would you describe your race/ethnicity?					
33.	Which student type best describes you?	First Time in College	First Generation	Transfer	Veteran	Non-Traditional
34.	Which grade classification best describes you?	Freshmen	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	
35.	Have you had mentors in your life?	Yes	No			

Additional Questions

If subject answered yes to item 35, subject will proceed with the following open-ended items.

36. Of the mentors in your life, who has been the most significant mentor to influence you? Please identify the individual by role/position and organization.					
37. Please describe the traits/characteristics/behaviors of this significant mentor in your life.					
38. Do you believe mentors are leaders?	Yes	No			
39. In your role as a Peer Mentor, do you believe you are a leader?	Yes	No			
40. How would you rate your leadership ability?	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Very Weak

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Describe your experience as a peer mentor.
2. What leadership lessons did you learn serving as a peer mentor?
3. How did you learn these lessons?
4. Why are these lessons important for leadership?
5. How did these lessons impact your peer mentorship behavior?
6. How will these lessons apply in your future career/profession?
7. How will you act differently based on this experience in your future job?
8. How do you see yourself and/or leadership differently based on this experience?