An Assessment of the Leadership Development Needs of Urban Agriculture Students

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Abstract

Urban agriculture students were surveyed to determine their leadership development needs. An online instrument was adapted from the National FFA Leadership Continuum Assessment Student Questionnaire which was created for a national leadership development assessment of agriculture students. Responses were received from 60 agriculture students representing 2 schools in the Chicagoland area. The results were compared to that of a national study consisting of 1,036 agriculture students representing 28 schools from across the country. The average urban student respondent was a freshmen involved in one or two school organizations, and involved in limited out-of-school activities. Respondents indicated that leadership was important to very important. They reported that outside of school activities were where they frequently or often learned and practiced leadership. Respondents also reported agriculture classes and workshops as the places they highly preferred or very preferred to learn leadership skills. In addition, it was important to very important that leadership activities provided real-world application, were interactive and fun. Statistically significant differences and practical differences were found between the groups in terms of leadership interaction. However, although statistically significant differences existed in terms of leadership awareness and desired leadership development activities, practical differences did not exist between the two groups.

Introduction/Theoretical Framework

Over the past several years, the educational field has seen a decline in the academic motivation and achievement of students in urban public schools. This decrease has had social implications for the United States of America. It has been noted that adolescents today are less respectful of authority and have a low attention span (Modell & Elder, 2002; Finn & Rock, 1997). Scholars have suggested that high school students become disengaged from school and post-school planning because they do not view their current academic situation as related to their future or as a conduit for obtaining their career aspirations (Blustein, Phillip, Jobin-Davis, Finkelberg, & Roarke, 1997; Ogbu, 1989; Worthington & Juntunen, 1997). Consequently, those students with the most extreme cases of disengagement are more likely to have poor grades and a higher propensity to drop out of school (Modell & Elder, 2002; Finn & Rock, 1997). Although the national dropout rate has decreased, those dropping out in urban public schools are disproportional to that of other school systems. Furthermore, part of the decline in the national dropout rate is attributed to the increase in the incarceration of urban high school aged males, who are not counted in the school population (Childtrends, 2006).

Researchers believe that a possible solution to this problem in public school systems is increasing school engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfield, Friedel, & Paris, 2004). According to Webster's dictionary, engagement means emotional involvement or commitment (Merriam-

Webster Online, 2005). The Oxford dictionary states it as 1) the act of attracting or involving; 2) participation or involved in (Oxford Online, 2005). This means that engagement as a construct can be describe as an emotion and a behavior. Therefore the phrase "school engagement" means students have an emotional involvement or commitment to their school and thus to their education which is observed through the behavior of participation. Consequently, it is observed that in urban areas, a disproportionate amount of students are not demonstrating an emotional involvement or commitment to their school or community. It is believed that one way to increase school engagement and civic accountability is through leadership development. Researchers have concluded that positive associations exist between leadership development and academic achievement (Pope, 1983) and extra curricular school activities (Holland & Andre, 1987).

Therefore, an increase in opportunities to participate in leadership development activities would allow students the chance to gain a sense of responsibility and ownership. This may be a way to improve these low levels of academic achievement, high levels of student boredom and disaffection, and disproportional dropout rates in urban areas (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2004). In research conducted on the effects of student involvement, Mckinley, Birkenholz, & Stewart (1993) found a significant relationship between four factors (i.e., interpersonal relations, administration, self management, and communications) and participation in athletics, Greek organizations, career oriented clubs, athletics, church groups, and agricultural organizations with students enrolled in the College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Other investigators found that participation in such organizations as FFA, DECA, FHA, VICA, and FBLA increased students' leadership ability in communications, decision making, getting along with others, self management, understanding of self, and working with groups (Wingenbach & Kahler, 1997).

Although the benefits to leadership development in youth have been identified, substantial evidence has not been generated due to the limited number of empirical studies conducted on the topic. van Linden and Fertman (1998) addressed the need for more studies in youth leadership development when they stated, "understanding and appreciating the complexity of leadership is a prerequisite to supporting and challenging teenagers to be the best leaders they can be" (p. 8). Even though youth differ in many ways such as social economic status, ethnicity, personality types, experience, and education (van Linden & Fertman, 1998; Snow & Yallow, 1982; Rudd, Hoover, & Yermal, 1998) which may lead to barriers when creating leadership interventions, there are some commonalities that one should keep in mind. These commonalities include their desire for autonomy from parents, the need for a time for self discovery and definition, the way they learn and develop skills gradually, the need for exploration, and their unpredictable nature (Basic Behavioral Science Task Force of the National Mental Health Council, 1996; van Linden & Fertman, 1998). Using these commonalities and the following elements indicated by DesMaria, Yang, and Farzenhkia (2000) as important to the development of youth leadership may eliminate some of the barriers to creating youth leadership interventions. These elements are: 1) Youth/adult partnerships; 2) Granting young people decision making power and responsibility for consequences; 3) A broad context for learning and service; and 4) Recognition of young people's experience, knowledge and skills (p. 3).

Until more focus is placed on understanding students' perception of leadership

development and the desired format for delivery, the potential benefits to our society will not be realized. Therefore, if the US is to continue to maintain or improve its position in the world market, future workers (current adolescents) are going to have to participate in activities that promote the development of civic investment and competencies by getting involved in their school and community. However, in order to get these disenfranchised students involved, they must be introduced to interventions that are new and perceived relevant to their vocational aspirations. Interventions that allow them to explore, develop autonomy, discover self, and do it in a gradual non-threatening environment are in need.

A good arena for these non-threatening leadership interventions is in the area of agriculture. Agricultural educators have focused on careers and career preparation as a major component of secondary agricultural education programs for many years (Esters & Bowen, 2005). This focus has been in the pursuit of well-rounded programs that create academic excellence and civic responsibility. The mission to prepare and support individuals for agricultural careers (Case & Whitaker, 1998) has not only affected students in rural America, but has also been far reaching into many of the inner cities across the country. Agricultural education in urban public schools has a successful record of aiding students in goal setting and career and academic achievement (Bajema, Miller, & Williams, 2002). This is possible because the goal of the urban program is to effectively build a relationship between students, the school, and the community (Ellibee, 1990). The desire is to have students enroll in agricultural education programs so that they can have access and exposure to numerous learning experiences that are relevant to their agricultural occupational goals such as a small animal technician, landscaper, or agricultural instructor (Ellibee). Due to the hands-on nature of the curriculum, students become active learners, and as a result of their participatory education, develop career and educational goals that aid them in becoming productive contributors to the community and business sector (Ellibee).

van Linden and Fertman (1998) described three stages of youth leadership development. These three stages represent how students learn about leadership and can be used to develop leadership interventions (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002). The first stage of *Awareness* describes when leadership is not a part of the student's life. The focus in this stage is to orientate the student to leadership concepts and skills and assist them in understanding how leadership fits into ones life. Once a student is aware of leadership, the individual will progress into the second stage which is *Interaction*. Interaction describes the student's desire to explore how leadership skills affect various outcomes within ones life. Students who think about leadership and have committed to exploring the effects of leadership will progress to the final stage which is *Integration*. Students who are in the integration stage of leadership development will focus on improving their leadership skills and abilities through mastery.

Using two of the three stages of youth leadership development described by van Linden and Fertman (1998) as the theoretical framework, this study will assess the leadership awareness and interaction of urban agriculture students. More specifically, do students know the importance of leadership in their lives and are they receiving opportunities to explore leadership development? As a result, this study provides the much needed insight into what leadership development experiences are currently available, as perceived by the urban agriculture students

who participated in this study, as well as what methods and activities are most desirable to these students. Furthermore, a comparison of these results with that of a previous leadership needs assessment (Ulmer, Anderson, Torres & Ulmer, 2006) will help to identify if there are differences between the two samples in terms of leadership activities available to the students and the desired method of delivery.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to describe the leadership needs of urban agriculture students in the Chicagoland area. The study further sought to compare the perceived needs of the urban agriculture students with that of agriculture students surveyed in a similar national study.

1. Identify selected demographic characteristics (year in school, SAE, FFA involvement, etc.) of the urban agriculture students in the Chicagoland area.
2. Describe students' attitudes toward the importance of leadership in various areas of their life.
3. Identify current opportunities for leadership development by urban agriculture students.
4. Identify leadership activities desired by urban agriculture students.
5. Compare the findings from objectives two through four with that of the national study conducted on agriculture students.

Methods and Procedures

This comparison study's population consisted of agriculture students enrolled in secondary programs in the Chicagoland area. The frame was instructors with current membership in the Illinois State Association for Vocational Agriculture Teachers (IAVAT). Additionally, the school had to participate in at least one FFA career development event, one FFA leadership conference, and attends the state or national convention. Of those qualifying programs, three were identified as being located in or surrounding the targeted city. Within the three selected schools, five agriculture instructors were contacted using information obtained from the IAVAT Directory. The instructors were directed to select one intact class to complete the questionnaire. Consent was received from the school administration, the agriculture instructor, and the participants' parents. Student participants also signed an assent form before they were given the link to the online questionnaire. A total of 60 students enrolled in four agriculture classes completed the questionnaire.

An online version of the National FFA Leadership Continuum Assessment Student Questionnaire (NFLCASQ; Ulmer et al., 2006) was used to collect data. The original NFLCASQ consisted of six major sections with 81 questions. One section included six summated questions to determine students' attitudes towards leadership development. Two sections used a 5-point Likert scale and an additional option for not applicable to identify current opportunities for leadership development. Two sections used a 5-point Likert scale to identify leadership activities desired by the students. The final section included ten demographic questions to measure activeness in school and community activities.

Face validity was established by a panel of three graduate students. The instrument is

identical to the NFLCASQ and therefore reliability and validity have been established. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient on Q1 – Q6 summated scale was .85. The percent agreement on the test/retest was 30 questions scored 94% or better, 20 questions scored 88%, 11 questions scored 81%, and 4 questions scored 75% (Ulmer et al., 2006).

Dillman's (2000) *Mail and Internet Surveys Tailored Design Method* was utilized to maximize the response rate using four points of contact (i.e., pre-instrument email, cover letter & instrument link email, and 2 email reminders). Although a teacher questionnaire was received by the instructors of all three programs, only two programs return useable student data.

Data for the urban study was sent by participating programs to the University of Missouri-Columbia for analysis. Raw data from the national study was received by the original primary investigator for comparison with the urban sample. It must be noted that the sample group from the national sample was deemed not representative of the national agriculture student population due to non-response error. Upon analyzing the national data, it was also determined that the sample did not contain urban agriculture programs and therefore lacks representation of that population. It is for that reason that the study compared the two groups. Furthermore, it must be noted that the results of this study will be used to provide insight into the two target populations in order to encourage further research and not for inference purposes. To that end, the urban sample data was first analyzed in SPSS using descriptive statistics to answer research objectives one through four. Research objective five was addressed using an independent sample *t*-test. The alpha level was set at a .05 a priori.

Findings

This sample represents one-tenth of the target population in this area. The students were 38% male and 62% female. Grade level was 55% freshmen, 17% juniors, and 28% seniors. Sophomores were not purposefully excluded from the study, however, the four instructors used in this study did not teach sophomores the semester in which the questionnaire was administered. When asked about involvement in school, 30% of the students reported no involvement, whereas 23% reported being involved in one organization, 25% in two, 12% in three, and 10% in four or more. Although both programs offer FFA membership and meet the required FFA participation as stated in the above section, only 48% of the students reported being a member of the FFA, which is the largest leadership organization for secondary agriculture students. Conversely, official records from one of the programs report 100% membership. That program requires all incoming freshmen to take an introductory leadership course where the students learn about the opportunities available to them as FFA members. This means that 70% of the respondents were currently enrolled in or had taken this class and were FFA members. When asked about out-of school involvement, 34% of the students reported no community involvement, whereas 36% reported involvement in one community organization, 14% in two, 7% in three, and 10% in four or more. In terms of official leadership positions, 28% reported holding a current office in either a school or community organization.

When asked about their attitude toward the importance of leadership in six areas of their life, students indicated that leadership was important ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.70$). Looking at the areas

individually, approximately 88% indicated that leadership skills were important or very important in their future career (see Table 1). Of that 88%, over half of the students (60%) indicated that in their career was very important. Students rated school as the second highest area with approximately 82% of the respondents indicating it as important or very important. The top three were rounded out with in organizations, which was rated as important or very important by 78% of the students. With friends and in their community received the lowest ratings of not important or of little importance with approximately 17% and 12% respectively.

Table 1
Level of Importance Leadership Skills Have in Selected Areas (n=60)

Area	Not Important %	Of Little Importance %	Somewhat Important %	Important %	Very Important %
In your school	-	3.3	15.0	41.7	40.0
In your community	-	11.7	25.0	41.7	21.7
In your future career	-	1.7	10.0	28.3	60.0
With friends	1.7	15.0	26.7	30.0	26.7
In organizations	1.7	1.7	18.3	33.3	45.0
With family	1.7	5.0	33.3	25.0	35.0
Total Importance of Leadership	0.60	3.8	19.6	53.1	23.0

When asked about their opportunity to learn leadership skills in selected youth activities, approximately 61% of the students indicated that they frequently or often learned at work. That was closely followed by activities with parent(s)/guardian(s) and with peers with 60% and 58% respectively. Only 43% of the respondents indicated elective classes (e.g. agricultural classes) as offering an opportunity to frequently or often learn leadership skills whereas core classes (e.g., math and English) received one of the top two ratings by 47% of the respondents. In addition, FBLA, FCCLA, 4H, and FCA were indicated as not applicable by at least one-third of the students (see Table 2).

Table 2
Opportunity to Learn Leadership Skills during Youth Activities (n=60)

Activity	Never %	Rarely %	Occasionally %	Frequently %	Often %	Not Applicable %
Work	15.0	6.7	13.3	23.3	38.3	3.3
With Parent(s)/Guardian(s)	10.0	15.0	13.3	31.7	28.3	1.7
With Peers	10.0	11.7	15.0	23.3	35.0	5.0
With Siblings	11.7	11.7	15.0	26.7	30.0	5.0
Sports	20.0	6.7	6.7	18.3	38.3	10.0
Church	13.3	8.3	16.7	28.3	26.7	6.7
Core Classes	13.3	13.3	25.0	20.0	26.7	1.7
Literature/Books	16.7	13.3	20.0	26.7	20.0	21.7
Elective Classes	21.7	6.7	20.0	23.3	23.3	5.0
Workshops/Conferences	20.0	10.0	18.3	11.7	31.7	8.3
Student Council	33.3	11.7	15.0	11.7	20.0	8.3
FFA	26.7	11.7	13.3	13.3	18.3	16.7
National Honors Society	35.0	11.7	11.7	13.3	11.7	16.7
Band/Chorus	33.3	15.0	15.0	11.7	11.7	13.3
Boy/Girl Scouts	40.0	6.7	11.7	11.7	11.7	18.3
FBLA	38.3	6.7	5.0	3.3	5.0	41.7
FCA	41.7	5.0	10.0	5.0	-	38.3
4-H	31.7	10.0	13.3	3.3	1.7	40.0
FCCLA	40.0	8.3	6.7	3.3	1.7	40.0

When asked about their opportunity to practice leadership skills, approximately 62% of the respondents indicated that activities with parent(s)/guardian(s) were where they frequently or often practiced leadership skills. Approximately 60% and 57% of the students indicated that work and church respectively were places to frequently or often practice leadership skills. Elective classes and sports tied for fourth with approximately 53% of the students indicating they frequently or often practice leadership skills with those activities. On the other hand, 40% of the students indicated that they received an opportunity to practice leadership skills rarely or never with the FFA. Workshops, student council, band, scouts, and the National Honors Society were also activities that received the lowest two ratings of rarely or never by at least one-third of the respondents (see Table 3).

The majority of the respondents did not report an over whelming preference for where they would like leadership training to be located (see Table 4). However, looking at the top two ratings of highly preferred and very preferred, the top location was in ag classes with 47% of the respondents indicating a preference. The next three locations were indicated by approximately 37% of the students. The highly preferred or very preferred locations were national workshops, chapter meetings, and international experiences. These locations were followed by officer meetings and district/area/region workshops with 35% and 33% respectively. Conversely, officer meetings also received the highest indication of not preferred by 33% of the students.

Table 3
Opportunity to Practice Leadership Skills during Youth Activities (n=60)

Activity	Never %	Rarely %	Occasionally %	Frequently %	Often %	Not Applicable %
Work	11.7	11.7	10.0	23.3	36.7	6.7
With Parent(s)/Guardian(s)	11.7	11.7	10.0	31.7	30.0	5.0
With Peers	8.3	13.3	20.0	15.0	36.7	6.7
With Siblings	16.7	6.7	18.3	21.7	30.0	6.7
Sports	20.0	10.0	10.0	28.3	25.0	6.7
Church	16.7	8.3	13.3	33.3	23.3	5.0
Core Classes	13.3	16.7	21.7	18.3	28.3	1.7
Literature/Books	21.7	20.0	13.3	18.3	21.7	5.0
Elective Classes	20.0	10.0	13.3	25.0	28.3	3.3
Workshops/Conferences	31.7	5.0	18.3	13.3	26.7	5.0
Student Council	36.7	8.3	15.0	18.3	13.0	8.3
FFA	30.0	10.0	8.3	15.0	23.3	13.3
National Honors Society	35.0	13.3	6.7	18.3	13.3	13.3
Band/Chorus	30.0	8.3	23.3	11.7	15.0	11.7
Boy/Girl Scouts	36.7	8.3	13.3	15.0	13.3	13.3
FBLA	41.7	6.7	1.7	8.3	5.0	36.7
FCA	43.3	6.7	1.7	10.0	5.0	33.3
4-H	36.7	11.7	3.3	11.7	5.0	31.7
FCCLA	43.3	6.7	3.3	6.7	5.0	35.0

The top preferences for location change slightly when reviewing students' responses for the top three ratings of preferred, highly preferred, and very preferred. Statewide workshop ties with ag classes with approximately 67% of the students indicating preference. These preferences are followed by national workshops and district/area/region workshops with approximately 62% of the students indicating preference. Committee chair training and with 2-5 surrounding states remained at the bottom of the most preferred locations (see Table 4).

Table 4
Level of Preference for Leadership Training Location (n=60)

Location	Not Preferred %	Slightly Preferred %	Preferred %	Highly Preferred %	Very Preferred %
Ag classes	21.7	11.7	20	35	11.7
National workshop	26.7	11.7	23.3	21.7	16.7
Chapter meetings	31.7	13.3	18.3	26.7	10
International experience	26.7	13.3	23.3	18.3	18.3
Officer meetings	33.3	11.7	20	21.7	13.3
District/Area/Region workshop	21.7	16.7	28.3	18.3	15
Statewide workshop	25	8.3	35	16.7	15

Committee chair training	30	16.7	21.7	16.7	15
With 2-5 surrounding states	26.7	15	28.3	20	10
With 2-5 surrounding chapters	25	20	28.3	13.3	13.3

Approximately 77% of respondents indicated that it was important or very important for quality leadership training experiences to have real-world application and be interactive. Also, approximately 73% of the students thought it was important or very important that the experiences be fun and involve group work. Students indicated that national officers, lectures and workbooks were the least important factors to a quality leadership training experience; with national officers receiving ratings by 43% of the students as not important or of little importance (see Table 5).

Table 5
Factors in Developing Quality Leadership Training Experiences (n=60)

Factor	Not Important %	Of Little Importance %	Somewhat Important %	Important %	Very Important %
Real-world application	10.0	1.7	11.7	41.7	35.0
Interactive activities	5.0	3.3	15.0	36.7	40.0
Fun	8.3	3.3	15.0	43.3	30.0
Group work	6.7	-	20.0	35.0	38.3
Individual work	8.3	5.0	21.7	31.7	33.3
New information	8.3	8.3	23.3	38.3	21.7
Well known presenter	10.0	13.3	23.3	28.3	25.0
Organization	11.7	10.0	26.7	31.7	20.0
Prizes	15.0	11.7	21.7	36.7	15.0
Specific topic	10.0	6.7	33.3	33.3	16.7
Materials to take home	13.3	10.0	31.7	23.3	21.7
State officer	16.7	18.3	21.7	25.0	18.3
Far from home	8.3	31.7	18.3	28.3	13.3
Near home	15.0	10.0	33.3	33.3	8.3
National officer	25.0	18.3	25.0	11.7	20.0
Lectures	10.0	20.0	45.0	13.3	11.7
A workbook	15.0	21.7	38.3	16.7	8.3

There were several items found to have a statistically significant ($p < .5$) deference between the mean ratings of the urban sample and the national sample (see Tables 6 & 7). Most of the differences in mean rating were due to higher ratings by the urban sample. However, there were five items that received higher ratings by the national sample. The items were about the FFA, 4-H, and elective classes. The most statistically significant differences were found between the two samples' perception of the FFA providing an opportunity to learn and practice leadership skills (see Table 6). The largest significant differences where the urban sample rated the items higher was with literature/books providing an opportunity to learn leadership skills and the Boy/Girl Scouts providing an opportunity to practice leadership skills. However, the means in

both of these instances for both sample groups were below a 3.1. In terms of desired leadership activities, although there were statistical differences, there were no practical differences in the location or in the factors that make up a quality leadership development activity (see Table 7).

Table 6
Summary of Statistically Significant Differences in the Mean Rating of Urban Ag Students versus National Ag Students for Current Leadership Development Activities

Topic	Item	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*t*
Importance of Leadership	In your school	60	4.18	.813	2.688
		1036	3.82	1.018	
Learning Leadership	4-H	60	1.13	1.268	-3.586
		1036	1.76	1.951	
	Band/Chorus	60	2.13	1.599	2.542
		1036	1.56	1.697	
	Boy/Girl Scouts	60	1.93	1.676	3.379
		1036	1.19	1.647	
	Elective Classes	60	3.05	1.610	-3.146
		1036	3.65	1.433	
	FFA	60	2.35	1.783	-5.839
		1036	3.68	1.707	
	Literature/Books	60	3.10	1.481	4.289
		1036	2.19	1.600	
	National Honors	60	2.05	1.661	2.208
	Society	1036	1.52	1.817	
	Student Council	60	2.48	1.702	3.371
		1036	1.64	1.894	
	Workshops/Conferences	60	3.00	1.756	2.584
		1036	2.39	1.966	
Practicing Leadership	Band/Chorus	60	2.38	1.648	3.692
		1036	1.54	1.726	
	Boy/Girl Scouts	60	2.20	1.685	4.256
		1036	1.24	1.706	
	FFA	60	2.52	1.846	-4.01
		1036	3.47	1.789	
	Literature/Books	60	2.83	1.607	2.966
		1036	2.18	1.648	
	National Honors	60	2.22	1.698	2.58
	Society	1036	1.59	1.837	
	Student Council	60	2.38	1.637	3.171
		1036	1.69	1.906	
	Workshops/Conferences	60	2.83	1.729	2.001
		1036	2.33	1.889	

Note. Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 7
Summary of Statistically Significant Differences in the Mean Rating of Urban Ag Students versus National Ag Students for Desired Leadership Development Activities

Topic	Item	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*t*
Training Location	Ag Classes	60	3.03	1.353	-2.164
		1036	3.40	1.272	
Quality Training	Group Work	60	3.98	1.097	2.389
		1036	3.64	1.093	
	Individual Work	60	3.77	1.212	2.989
		1036	3.28	1.226	
	Interactive Activities	60	4.03	1.073	3.431
		1036	3.54	1.149	
	Lectures	60	2.97	1.104	2.053
		1036	2.66	1.279	
	Real-World	60	3.90	1.203	2.326
	Application	1036	3.52	1.225	

Note. Statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Conclusions/Implications/Recommendations

Due to the fact that the urban sample was a purposive sample and the national sample was deemed to not represent the national agriculture student population, these conclusions are only intended for the subjects in this study. However, the conclusions bring up many questions about the similarities and differences between the two groups and should be used in support of conducting further research on the leadership development needs of agriculture students.

Research objective one was to identify selected characteristics of urban agriculture students. It is concluded that the average respondent was a freshmen, involved in one or two school organizations and no more than one community organization. In addition, approximately 28% of the students reported holding a current office in either a school or community organization. However, 48% of the students reported FFA membership while official records show that at least 70% were members; this demonstrates a limitation of self-reporting. This observation may be attributed to the students' perception that participation and membership are synonymous. In summary, excluding the male to female ratio and the absence of sophomore students in this survey, the characteristics of the two samples were similar.

Research objective two was to describe students' attitude toward the importance of leadership in various areas of their life. The majority of agriculture students reported leadership skills as important in their life. This implies that urban students do have leadership awareness. In addition, over half of the students (60%) reported leadership as being very important in their future careers. Also, two-thirds of the respondents rated school and organizations as the other two areas where leadership was important or very important. This demonstrates that the respondents understand the importance of leadership in their everyday lives but put more importance on the areas in which they receive the most leadership development training. For example, most leadership development experiences center around school, future careers, and

student organizations and therefore students perceive them as most important.

Areas where leadership awareness could be stronger are with friends, family and community. Although a majority of the students reported all six areas as important or very important, these areas received the highest ratings for of little importance or somewhat important. This implies that students understand that leadership is important but place less importance on things not associated with current leadership development interventions. In the 1988 report by the committee on agricultural education in secondary schools entitled *Understanding Agriculture: New Directions for Education*, a recommendation to advance agricultural education and prepare urban agriculture students to be future leaders was to establish new links with these underrepresented groups of students through community leaders; churches; and local organizations. These findings indicate that students may not be fully aware of the importance of being leaders in their community, home, and with friends because those recommended community links have not been fully realized. Therefore, it is important that more opportunities are created to focus on these home and community related areas.

Research objective three was to identify current opportunities for leadership development by urban agriculture students. Of the 19 opportunities identified as places or situations to learn leadership skills, work, with parent(s)/guardian(s), and with peers were rated the highest opportunities to frequently or often learn leadership skills. However, when asked to identify opportunities to practice leadership skills, parent(s)/guardian(s), work and church received the highest ratings of frequently or often. These findings are in opposition of the ratings of leadership importance. Students identified school-related activities as areas where leadership is most important, but identified family and community-based activities as the places where they learn and practice leadership skills most often. This implies that there is a disconnect between the students' leadership awareness and leadership interaction. Students are learning and practicing leadership skills in a variety of places, particularly non-formal educational settings, yet they are placing the most value on formal educational settings.

Research objective four was to identify leadership activities desired by urban agriculture students. When asked where leadership training should occur, the locations that received the most responses as preferred, highly preferred and very preferred were agriculture classes, and workshops on the national, state, and regional levels. Locations that were least preferred were with 2-5 surrounding states or chapters, and committee chair meetings. Factors that were most important to the quality of a leadership intervention were real-world application, interactive, fun, and possessing elements of group and individual work. Continuing to provide more diverse opportunities that possess the factors that are most important to the participants will increase awareness and interaction by the respondents.

Research objective five was to compare the findings from objectives two through four with that of the national study. There were several statistically significant differences in the items analyzed in objectives two through four between the urban and national group. The first was in the importance of leadership in school. Urban students reported leadership in school to be of higher importance than the national sample. In terms of opportunities to learn and practice leadership, urban students reported community-based activities such as interaction with family and friends, church, and work, whereas the national sample reported school-based activities such

as the FFA, elective classes, and sports. Finally in terms of desired leadership activities, although there were statistically significant differences, there were no practical differences. This is supported by the observation that both groups desired the same locations and factors when creating a quality leadership intervention. The statistical differences can be attributed to the level of importance. The urban students reported real-world application as the most important factor whereas the national group reported fun as the most important. Both groups reported the same top four factors which were real-world experience, fun, group work, and interactive activities.

These findings imply that the two groups are currently learning and practicing their leadership skills with different activities. The national group reported more engagement with leadership activities in school whereas the urban group reported more engagement with leadership activities outside of school. The fact that the urban students reported less involvement with community organizations but more leadership interaction outside of school may suggest that they have obligations at home that hinder them from getting involved in formal community organizations. Furthermore, the urban students reported less interaction with the FFA which may be an indication that these students are aware of the organization and are being provided opportunities to participate but do not perceive the organization is beneficial to them.

Therefore, this study supports the original national study recommendations that agriculture instructors incorporate leadership development activities into all areas of their local program and make students aware of its importance in both school and community activities. Leadership development experiences should be created to provide opportunities to practice real-world application that is relevant to the students' interest and background. Teachers should acknowledge and incorporate the lessons learned from participation in sports, work, and community activities when teaching leadership development. Also, students should be encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities if not already involved.

Furthermore, this study should be replicated so that both populations are represented by the sample. The fact that the National FFA Organization was not an influential organization to the urban sample has evoked questions to guide future inquiries. They include: 1) Is the lack of leadership influence from the FFA exclusive to this sample or can it be observed throughout urban agriculture programs nationwide? 2) Are urban agriculture students receiving quality leadership experiences through the agriculture curriculum, opportunities through the FFA, and other leadership interventions? More specifically, does the quality of the curriculum and enrichment opportunities available to rural students differ for urban students? and 3) How effective are recruitment and retention efforts for urban students into agriculture and the FFA?

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