

Original Paper

In Search of Authentic Peer Leaders: Finding, Nurturing, and Affirming

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Abstract

Luthans and Avolio (2003) have posited that we need methods to develop authentic leaders. One method is to form learning communities on college campuses. Within these communities, peer leaders influence the development of newly admitted peers. The question is: why do some students become peer leaders and others do not? We believe that the answer lies somewhere in their core values. By the time people enter college, they are predisposed to value certain end-states and modes of conduct. Therefore, it is important to determine these predispositions so that leadership development opportunities such as peer leadership can be made available to those who are ready for this type of development. However, at this point we do not know which core values make a difference. This gap in the knowledge is what led to this study. The findings identify the core values of both peer leaders and non-peer leaders. In most cases, these values are the same for both groups. However, the core value of a sense of accomplishment stands out as being significant in determining who will select this type of leadership development opportunity. The paper expands on how to find, nurture, and affirm these select students.

Keywords

learning communities, authentic peer leader, peer mentor, values

1. Introduction

In times of crisis, people such as Mother Teresa, Abraham Lincoln, Rudy Guiliani, and Martin Luther King, Jr. have stepped forward to provide positive leadership to confront the challenge facing the community. Yet, Luthans and Avolio (2003) point out that naturally occurring events do not provide a

sufficient number of authentic leaders. Therefore, we need other methods to develop authentic leaders. One method of developing these authentic leaders is to form learning communities on college campuses that create a peer leadership relationship between experienced students and newly admitted students. Many universities and colleges are creating peer leadership or sometimes called peer mentoring programs to assist first year students navigate the currents of higher education (Jacobi, 1991). We are seeing these mentoring programs showing up in business education (Fox, Stevenson, Connelly, Duff, & Dunlop, 2010; D'Abate & Eddy, 2008; Sanchez, Bauer, & Paronto, 2006) in an effort to increase academic success, increase student satisfaction, and retain students. However, how we select and develop these mentors is critical to the success of the learning communities and the outcomes. Terrion and Leonard (2007) point out that while much research points out the usefulness of peer leaders in improving academic performance and reducing student attrition, there is little research that helps us identify the type of student who would make a great peer leader.

In order to begin coming to some understanding of the characteristics of student peer mentors, Terrion and Leonard (2007) did an extensive literature review. They found 54 articles and from those articles identified ten peer mentor characteristics. Peer leaders serve two primary functions according to Terrion and Leonard (2007), task-related functions in this case academic issues and psychosocial functions such as providing acceptance, emotional support, personal feedback, and being a role model. Their literature review specifically identified two task-related functions and eight psychosocial functions. They also identified some prerequisites such as ability and willingness to commit time, university experience, and academic achievement (Terrion & Leonard, 2007). While these findings are important, they still fail to identify what type of student would make a great peer leader. We thought the key might be in their values.

We define peer leadership as the ability to mobilize an equal to want to struggle for shared aspirations and to live by a set of shared values and guiding principles. To be able to influence in this situation would require the leader to be a role model. One way they do this is by modeling and encouraging internalization of the collectivistic moral values that transcend self-interest (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). Part of being a role model to another individual requires the peer leader to be authentic in his or her own beliefs and actions. London (2003) argues that peer leaders who are respected and influential are more likely to be vocal and forthcoming in sharing information about themselves and their beliefs. Burns (1978) argued that people who wanted to become leaders related leadership behaviors to "a set of reasoned, relatively explicit, conscious values" (p. 46). One important measure of these beliefs are the core values held by the peer leader. Lencioni (2002) defines core values as deeply ingrained guides to action. Core values have *intrinsic* value to the individual. Further, people, teams, and organizations generally only have a few core values, usually between three and five (Collins & Porras, 1996). In the book *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*, Bill George, former Chairman and CEO of Medtronic, argues that core values define the moral compass of

the leader (George, 2003). They provide the leader with a deep sense of what is the right thing to do. Kouzes and Posner (2012) argue that these values represent our personal bottom line and influence our every action.

Rokeach (1973) defines a *values system* as “an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance” (p. 5). Institutions have found that shared *values systems* between the organization and members of the organization can improve commitment and feelings of success and reduce stress (Posner & Schmidt, 1993). Despite the fact that Rokeach published his works on values over forty years ago, he is still revered today and continues to be cited in the most current publications. Forty-eight percent of the papers in the book *Emerging Perspectives on Values in Organizations* (2003) reference the works of Rokeach; specifically his 1973 publication of the same values survey we have utilized for this empirical evaluation.

A value system consists of a set of values. Rokeach (1973) defines a *value* as “an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence” (pp. 7-8). He went on to distinguish between what he called terminal values and instrumental values. Terminal values are those values that describe a desired end-state of existence. For example, one of the terminal values Rokeach recognizes is *a sense of accomplishment*. Figure 1 shows the eighteen values Rokeach identified as terminal values.

COMFORTABLE LIFE (a prosperous life)
AN EXCITING LIFE (a stimulating, active life)
A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT (lasting contribution)
A WORLD AT PEACE (free of war and conflict)
A WORLD OF BEAUTY (beauty of nature and the arts)
EQUALITY (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)
FAMILY SECURITY (taking care of loved ones)
FREEDOM (independence, free choice)
HAPPINESS (contentedness)
INNER HARMONY (freedom from inner conflict)
MATURE LOVE (sexual and spiritual intimacy)
NATIONAL SECURITY (protection from attack)
PLEASURE (an enjoyable, leisurely life)
SALVATION (saved, eternal life)
SELF-RESPECT (self-esteem)
SOCIAL RECOGNITION (respect, admiration)
TRUE FRIENDSHIP (close companionship)
WISDOM (a mature understanding of life)

Figure 1. Rokeach's Terminal Values

On the other hand, instrumental values describe the desired mode of conduct to reach those end-state goals. Rokeach (1973) identifies *honest* as an instrumental value. Figure 2 displays the eighteen instrumental values identified by Rokeach.

AMBITIOUS (hard-working, aspiring)
 BROADMINDED (open-minded)
 CAPABLE (competent, effective)
 CHEERFUL (lighthearted, joyful)
 CLEAN (neat, tidy)
 COURAGEOUS (standing up for your beliefs)
 FORGIVING (willing to pardon others)
 HELPFUL (working for the welfare of others)
 HONEST (sincere, truthful)
 IMAGINATIVE (daring, creative)
 INDEPENDENT (self-reliant, self-sufficient)
 INTELLECTUAL (intelligent, reflective)
 LOGICAL (consistent, rational)
 LOVING (affectionate, tender)
 OBEDIENT (dutiful, respectful)
 POLITE (courteous, well-mannered)
 RESPONSIBLE (dependable, reliable)
 SELF-CONTROLLED (restrained,
 self-disciplined)

Figure 2. Rokeach's Instrumental Values

Within these terminal and instrumental values are found the core values of peer leaders. There are also espoused values and situational values found within both sets of values. In this study, we are interested in determining the core terminal values and core instrumental values of peer leaders. Therefore, the research question that guided this study was: What are the core terminal and core instrumental values of peer leaders and do these core values differ from non-peer leaders?

As we examine the core values of peer leaders, it is logical to ask how this will manifest in peer leaders. Clare and Sanford (1979) analyzed data reflecting managerial values patterns. In their research, managers were more likely to value things that enhanced personal growth and competency over those items that created social growth and character building. For example, the number one terminal value for managers was a *sense of accomplishment*, with *a world at peace* ranking near the bottom. Managers ranked *ambition* number one and *helpfulness* near the bottom. These findings do not agree with the general data generated by Rokeach (1973), so it is important to repeat the empirical study with each target group.

More recent studies have utilized the Rokeach values framework in work settings. Weber (2015) used the Rokeach Value Survey (RVS) to determine how managers assigned importance to various values.

After comparing the RVS scores of mid-to upper-level managers at two different time periods (T1: 1980's; T2: 2010's), the results showed that the value orientation of managers at T2 are different than at T1. Murphy, Mujtaba, Manyak, Sungkhawan and Greenwood (2010) used the Rokeach Value Survey to examine value differences across generations. Conducted in a work setting in the country of Thailand, it compared the value differences of baby boomers against Generation Y and Generation X and found differences.

A review of the literature indicates that the Rokeach Values framework has been utilized often in research within higher education settings. The focus of the studies ranged from examining the values of college instructors in India (Triveni, 2014) and value differences as it relates to the gender of students in Hungary (Bosci, 2012). Additional studies have been conducted with business students within the disciplines of management (Ng & Burke, 2010), accounting, and finance (Giacomino, Brown, & Akers, 2011; Giacomino, Li, & Michael, 2013; McCarthy, 1997).

The peer educator literature argues that one issue new students face upon entering college is a range of new and controversial viewpoints that challenge their personal values. Ender and Newton (2000) point out that peer leaders can assist in the new students' maturation process by displaying appropriate values. Given the importance of this process, it is our belief that it is important to determine both the terminal core values and the instrumental core values of potential peer leaders. Therefore, our first two hypotheses are:

Hypothesis 1: Peer leaders will identify a small set (three to five) of core terminal values.

Hypothesis 2: Peer leaders will identify a small set (three to five) of core instrumental terminal values.

Assuming that we find that peer leaders do have a small set of core terminal and core instrumental values, the next question would be whether these core values differ from those of non-peer leaders.

This reasoning led us to our next two hypotheses, which are:

Hypothesis 3: Peer leaders' terminal core values will differ from non-peer leaders.

Hypothesis 4: Peer leaders' instrumental core values will differ from non-peer leaders.

2. Method

2.1 Subjects

The subjects were 46 peer leaders and 64 non-peer leaders enrolled at a large southwest university. All peer leaders were 19 to 20 years old and held the academic rank of sophomore. The non-peer leaders were chosen because they mirrored these demographics but were not peer leaders. Each subject was asked to complete a multiple page questionnaire that included the Rokeach Values Survey. No extra credit was extended to these subjects for their involvement in the study.

2.2 Measure

We used the Form E version of the Rokeach Value Survey. This instrument consists of two pages. The first page has eighteen terminal values listed on it. Figure 1 is an example of the terminal values part of

the survey. The second page has eighteen more values on it, but all of these values are instrumental values. Figure 2 is an example of the instrumental values part of the survey.

2.3 Procedure

The questionnaire was handed out to the subjects and they were asked to return the surveys to one of the researchers' offices. The subjects were assured of anonymity and that only aggregate data would be reported. Each subject was asked to rank order the eighteen terminal values using 1 as the most important value and 18 as the least important value. Once the subjects completed the terminal values, they were asked to rank the instrumental values using the same process where 1 represented the most important value and 18 represented the least important value.

2.4 Analysis

The statistical analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). After the data set was created, it was checked for errors. Next, consistent with Tukey's (1977) advice to get to know your data, we produced a series of descriptive and exploratory data analyses to examine the data. We used the *explore* function of SPSS to determine outliers, unusual values, and peculiarities in the data set. Each of these occurrences was traced back to the original questionnaire and corrections were made if necessary before any further analysis was done. We next reverse coded both the terminal values and instrumental values for all subjects so the value that is ranked highest received a score of 18 and the value that is ranked lowest received a score of 1. Next we analyzed the data to answer our hypotheses.

3. Results

To test both hypotheses 1 and 2, we performed t-tests on each of the terminal values and instrumental values for the peer leaders. To qualify as a core value, the specific value in question had to meet two criteria. First, its mean score had to be greater than the average mean score of 9.5, which is the average score that would be received for each value if they were all equal. Second, because we are only looking for the small set of core values, we only accepted those values that exceeded the .001 level of significance. Table 1 shows the means and t-test results for the terminal values. Five terminal values meet the two criteria. These are: *a sense of accomplishment*, *family security*, *happiness*, *salvation*, and *true friendship*. These values are in bold print in Table 1.

Table 2 shows the means and t-test values for the instrumental values. The peer leaders identified three instrumental core values. The three values are: *honest*, *loving*, and *responsible*. These values are in bold print in Table 2. These results confirm both hypothesis one and two.

Table 1. T-Test for All Terminal Values for Peer Leaders (N = 46; Test Value = 9.5; df = 45)

Behaviors	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value
Comfortable Life	9.15	5.16	-.35	-.46
An Exciting Life	9.00	4.33	-.50	-.78
A Sense of Accomplishment	12.52	4.26	3.02	4.81***
A World at Peace	4.24	3.47	-5.26	-10.30***
A World of Beauty	4.15	3.37	-5.35	-10.78***
Equality	6.39	3.96	-3.11	-5.33***
Family Security	12.43	4.08	2.93	4.88***
Freedom	9.98	3.71	.48	.88
Happiness	13.48	3.39	3.98	7.96***
Inner Harmony	8.74	4.86	-.76	-1.06
Mature Love	10.89	4.85	1.39	-1.94
National Security	4.57	3.34	-4.93	-10.03***
Pleasure	8.63	4.08	-.87	-1.44
Salvation	14.98	5.26	5.48	7.06***
Self-Respect	10.52	3.59	1.02	1.93
Social Recognition	7.02	4.49	-2.48	-3.74**
True Friendship	12.78	3.39	3.28	6.56***
Wisdom	11.72	4.20	2.22	3.58**

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 2. T-Test for All Instrumental Values for Peer Leaders (N = 46; Test Value = 9.5; df = 45)

Behaviors	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t-value
Ambitious	11.09	5.61	1.59	1.92
Broadminded	6.98	5.48	-2.52	-3.12**
Capable	10.52	4.36	1.02	1.59
Cheerful	8.87	5.00	-.63	-.86
Clean	4.72	3.93	-4.78	-8.26***
Courageous	9.26	5.36	-.24	-.30
Forgiving	7.61	4.39	-1.89	-2.9**
Helpful	10.46	4.17	.96	1.56
Honest	14.37	4.05	4.87	8.16***
Imaginative	7.96	5.19	-1.54	-2.02
Independent	9.98	5.12	.48	.63
Intellectual	10.07	5.03	.57	.76
Logical	8.26	4.92	-1.24	-1.71
Loving	13.30	4.46	3.80	5.78***
Obedient	7.26	4.91	-2.24	-3.090**
Polite	8.83	3.94	-.67	-1.16
Responsible	13.22	3.17	3.72	7.96***
Self-Controlled	8.48	4.29	-1.02	1.61

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

From this point we are only interested in the five core terminal values and the three core instrumental values. To test hypothesis 3 and 4, we calculated the means and standard deviations for the values in question for the non-peer leaders. We then performed t-tests on these eight values comparing the two groups. The results are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. T-Test Values for the Core Value Hypotheses by Peer Leaders and Non-Peer Leaders

Hypothesis	N	Mean	SD	Difference	df	t-value
H3 – A Sense of Accomplishment						
Peer Leaders	46	12.52	4.26	3.52	108	4.04***
Non-peer Leaders	64	9.00	4.69			
H3 – Family Security						
Peer Leaders	46	12.43	4.08	-.30	108	-.35
Non-peer Leaders	64	12.73	4.64			
H3 - Happiness						
Peer Leaders	46	13.48	3.39	.00	108	-.01
Non-peer Leaders	64	13.48	3.39			
H3 - Salvation						
Peer Leaders	46	14.97	5.26	.49	108	.47
Non-peer Leaders	64	14.48	5.55			
H3 – True Friendship						
Peer Leaders	46	12.78	3.39	-.31	108	.03
Non-peer Leaders	64	13.09	3.61			
H4 - Honest						
Peer Leaders	46	14.37	4.65	.87	108	1.02
Non-peer Leaders	64	13.50	4.46			
H4- Loving						
Peer Leaders	46	13.30	4.46	.34	108	.41
Non-peer Leaders	64	12.97	4.06			
H4 - Responsible						
Peer Leaders	46	13.22	3.17	.87	108	1.23
Non-peer Leaders	64	12.34	4.00			

*p< .05; **p< .01; p< .001

Hypothesis 3 was partially supported. One of the terminal core values was found to be significantly different between the peer leaders and non-peer leaders. However, the other four core terminal values were found not to be significantly different between the two groups. These findings will be discussed more in the discussion session. Hypothesis 4 was not supported. The three instrumental core values identified by the peer leaders were not significantly different from those identified by the non-peer leaders.

4. Discussion

4.1 Core Terminal Values

Four of the core terminal values were the same for both the peer leaders and the non-peer leaders. Those four values describe quite clearly what students of this generation are seeking as an end-state for their lives. They want to find spiritual fulfillment. They want to have close friendships and to take care of their families. Overall, they want to be happy. A few years ago, the first author was the director of an undergraduate leadership program at this same southwest university. When the first author surveyed the members of this program on the core values of the group, the number one core value expressed by the group was happiness. Not only did both the peer leaders and non-peer leaders select these four values as core values, there was no significant difference between these four values between the two groups. However, these values do not help us understand why some students choose to become peer leaders.

Burns (1978) believed that end-values (i.e., terminal values) would help explain why some people would sacrifice for the common good in their organizations. One core terminal value that was significantly different between the peer leaders and non-peer leaders was *a sense of accomplishment*. The peer leaders want to make a lasting contribution to the organization and the future members of the organization. It is important to point out that the learning community to which these peer leaders belonged was initiated by the students who now serve as peer leaders because as they said, “We want to make a difference”. This speaks directly to the exemplary leadership that Burns had in mind. It is also consistent with Luthans and Avolio (2003) assertion that “the leader’s authentic values, beliefs, and behaviors serve to model the development of associates” (p. 243).

The non-peer leaders did identify one additional terminal value that was core for them. It was *self-respect* (Mean = 11.69; SD = 3.76; $t_{df=64} = 4.66$; $p < .001$). A post hoc analysis showed that while this was a significant core value for the non-peer leader group, it was not a significant core value for the peer leaders (Mean = 10.52; SD = 3.59; $t_{df=45} = 1.93$; $p = .06$). However, there was not a significant difference between the two groups mean scores (Mean Difference = -1.17; $t_{df=108}$; $p = .11$). So, while *self-respect* is not a core value for the peer leaders, it is an important value having a mean score of 10.52. This mean score is slightly greater than the target mean of 9.5 but not significantly different from the target mean. As a result, it is not a core value for peer leaders.

4.2 Core Instrumental Values

Both groups defined the same three core instrumental values. Collectively these three values speak to how both the peer leaders and non-peer leaders choose to behave. They want to be caring, dependable, and trustworthy people. George (2004) says, “While the development of fundamental values is crucial, integrity is the one value that is required in every authentic leader” (p. 32). The integrity that George talks about seems to be similar to what positive psychologists call authenticity (Harter, 2002). Being honest, sincere, trustworthy are all factors in becoming an authentic leader.

4.3 Implications for Management Education

The results from our findings do provide some insights as to how the core value of a *sense of accomplishment* can be translated into action. In other words, how do we align a student's *sense of accomplishment* to the goals and objectives of a learning community? We posit three general strategies that can be used in business learning communities utilizing student peer leaders: 1) Finding (involves the selection process of identifying student peer leaders), 2) Nurturing (involves training and development of student peer leaders), and 3) Affirming (involves establishing credibility, recognition, and reinforcement of successful initiatives conducted by the peer leaders).

4.3.1 Finding

The first and most important strategy involves finding the right type of students for the peer leader program. Research indicates the importance of using the right criteria to select students for mentoring roles (Fox, Stevenson, Connelly, Duff, & Dunlop, 2010; Hall & Jaugietis, 2011; Terrion & Leonard, 2007). As it pertains to the findings of this study, it would be important to find those students who exhibit the core value of a *sense of accomplishment*. The results of this study clearly highlight values that distinguishes between students who choose to be peer leaders versus those who choose not to be peer leaders. Therefore, the first implication is to be careful in the selection process. We have included some tips as it relates to the selection process for potential candidates.

Written application. All students interested in serving as a peer leader would be required to submit a written application as part of the selection process. Applying our findings to this aspect, the application should require the candidate to respond to one of the following questions: "*Tell us about a time when you had a sense of accomplishment or when you have been proud of something you accomplished*". These questions are designed to be intentionally broad enough to allow the candidate to elaborate in sufficient breadth and depth with an example. In addition, it could be required that the candidate submits a letter from a reference. In the letter, the reference would be prompted to specifically address an example of accomplishment that they have witnessed for the candidate. After reviewing the candidate's response to the application question and the comments from the reference, it would be safe to assume that the application reviewer would have some indication that the candidate has the core value of *sense of accomplishment*.

Interviews. Once the potential peer leaders' applications are screened, the next phase would be the face to face interview process. While it is important for a person to exhibit in writing a *sense of accomplishment*, it is important to ascertain the root of that core value, whether it is centered on a personal sense of accomplishment or centered on a sense of accomplishment involving others. We believe these are two separate entities. Students *say* they want to be leaders. However, some don't have the *disposition* or don't want to do it for the right reason. It will be important to identify potential peer leaders who exhibit a sense of accomplishment centered on involving others to be successful. One way to distinguish between a *sense of accomplishment* for personal reasons or the involvement of others is through behavioral interviewing questions. Two sets of questions would be posed.

The first set of behavioral interview questions might be centered on personal accomplishments. Below are a few examples of interview questions:

- *Question 1: We read about the accomplishment you listed in your application. Please tell us about another example.*
- *Question 2: Tell us about a time when you wanted to accomplish something out of reach. How did you go about achieving it?*

In addition to gathering additional examples of the *sense of accomplishment* from the candidate, these questions could be asked when the written response was not sufficient in details (i.e., lacking in breadth or depth).

The second set of behavioral interview questions to ask would be centered on the sense of accomplishment as it involves other people. Below are a few examples of suggested interview questions:

- *Question 3: Could you give us an example of an accomplishment in your life that involved other people.*
- *Question 4: Assuming you become a peer leader, what would a sense of accomplishment look like for you?*
- *Question 5: What would be the greatest accomplishment while you were a peer leader?*

Unlike the personal accomplishment questions, these questions are disguised for the purpose of identifying any potential red flags based on prior answers in the interview. For example, Question 3 is specific in its scope to include other people. If in their response to Question 3, the candidate can only give examples that are personally related, that might be an indicator that the root of their *sense of accomplishment* is more personal. Given that the function of a mentor is to be influential in helping other people reach major life goals (Gibbons, 2000), this would suggest why the involvement of others in regard to *sense of accomplishment* is so vital given the nature of the peer leader role. Thus, a candidate should be able to provide examples in this area as well. Questions 4 and 5 are designed to get the applicant to project or to create a vision of how a *sense of accomplishment* would look like when involving others. Plus, by asking these questions in a moderately stressful situation such as an interview, the candidate's response would be another indicator to use in determining if the candidate would make a good peer leader.

4.3.2 Nurturing

After students have been successfully identified, the second strategy involves training and developing students. A review of the literature indicates the presence of some type of orientations or training for those selected to serve in student peer leader positions (D'Abate & Eddy, 2008; Rodger & Tremblay, 2003; Sanchez, Bauer, & Paronto, 2006). As part of training and development, the first aspect is to discuss in detail the core value of *sense of accomplishment*. During the peer leader training, it would be explained that they were selected, because they were identified to possess a strong need for a *sense of*

accomplishment. In nurturing their understanding and helping them to claim this, one could start with a technique called “a circle talk” during the training section. In a circle talk, each peer leader expresses to the other peer leaders a personal sense of accomplishment that they have had in the past. Sharing examples is done to help students become more aware of this core value and to have them personally affirm this core value. Then, the facilitator would be responsible for introducing the peer leaders to the fact that while a personal sense of accomplishment is important, in the context of the peer leader role, they would need to get a sense of accomplishment from other people’s successes as well. A sense of accomplishment as a peer leader has to be greater about the successes of other people. At this point, the peer leaders should be introduced to the concept of Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 2008). Greenleaf asks the question, “Who is the Servant-Leader?” He answers:

The servant-leader is servant first—as Leo portrayed (In The Journey to the East, 1956). It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead (p. 15).

Greenleaf (2003) goes on to posit that what distinguishes the servant-leader of others versus self-serving person is:

Do those being served grow as persons; do they become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous while be served? (p. 41)

What is critical for the new peer leaders to understand is that a sense of accomplishment comes from serving their peers and that part of that service is to prepare their peers to not need them after the mentoring period. It is to make the peer wiser, freer and independent.

The second aspect is to help students come up with an individual plan of action to utilize their *sense of accomplishment* in their peer leader position. One way this could be accomplished is through the identification of a master list of goals and objectives for the students in the program based on commonly held success markers for first year students. Helping students understand how to link activities to program goals is a key aspect for training (Hall & Jaugietis, 2011). For example, in academic learning communities, academic performance (i.e., GPA) and student retention, campus engagement, and civic involvement are the common measures of assessment for student progress and program assessment (Evenbeck & Borden, 2001; Hegler, 2004; Hotchkiss, Moore, & Pitts, 2006; Robbins, Oh, Le, & Button, 2009). During the peer leader training, the peer leaders can develop a list of key activities based on these markers as well as other goals they deem to be important. One indication from the literature when it comes to goals in mentoring programs is that the goal areas can vary a great deal (D’Abate & Eddy, 2008). As a way to ensure consistency from a programmatic standpoint, a common core of goals can be identified through the use of a multi-voting exercise in which each peer leader can highlight the items that they think are the most important that should be accomplished by everyone (core goals). After tallying the results, at least 2-3 core goals would be identified by the group. The remaining items would be considered elective goals, and each peer leader

would have to select at least one of these goals. Figure 3 provides an example of a master list containing core goals and electives centered around common 1st year success markers for 1st year students.

Core Goals

All peer leaders should develop an individual plan of action to have their students reach these goals

- 70% of the students in my group will achieve a 2.5 or higher GPA at midterms.
- 80% of the students in my group will achieve a 2.5 or higher GPA at the end of the semester.
- 85% of the students in my group will get involved in at least 1 extracurricular activity by the end of the semester.
- 80% of the students in my group will not drop a class during the first semester.
- 70% of the students in my group will attend at least 3 outside school small group social events by the end of the semester.

Elective Goals

Choose 1 goal from the list below (or create a new goal) and include it on the individual plan of action

- Hold 1 on 1 meetings with each student in my group at or before midterm.
- Hold 1 on 1 meetings with each student in my group at or before 2 weeks before the start of finals.
- Send a weekly encouraging email to students in my group.
- Have individual “coffee dates” with each of the students in my group before the end of the semester.

Organize and plan a weekly study group session for the students in my group.

Figure 3. Core and Elective Goals

4.3.3 Affirming

The third strategy is affirming, which involves a) establishing credibility and b) recognition and reinforcement. While peer leader training and development helps to affirm a peer leader’s *sense of accomplishment* within the circle of their peers, it is also critical to establish credibility in the eyes of the students they are leading. The most obvious and direct manner to establish credibility would occur during the first large group meeting of students. During this meeting, the director of the program would introduce the peer leaders to the first year students and would tell them that due to their core value of *sense of accomplishment*, they are unique and have been selected for the peer leader role.

The second method is to recognize and reinforce behaviors indicative of the peer leader’s *sense of accomplishment*. While one method of recognition can occur at the conclusion of the program in the form of a dinner or banquet (Hall & Jaugietis, 2011), we recommend recognition to occur during the

learning cycle. Those who hold positions of authority in the program (i.e., the director, instructors) should look for specific examples of accomplishments based on the individual plans created by the peer leaders. For example, if students within a peer leader's group have perfect attendance to classes, sessions, or meetings, this should be acknowledged to all participants in the program. Or, if a peer leader is going above and beyond to implement one of their goals, the director of the program could provide that student with a handwritten note. What is important is that this occurs frequently throughout the learning cycle as a way to reinforce ideal behaviors and goal achievement.

4.4 Limitations

While using students as subjects is often a limitation of a study, that is not the case in this study. These students are equals with the incoming students and have no position authority over the entering students. They represent true peer leaders. On the other hand, there are limitations to this study, and they need to be acknowledged. The data was collected at a single southwest university. Generalizing to other learning communities and to peer leaders in general is questionable. The use of only the Rokeach instrument needs to be expanded to include other values instruments with those results correlated with those of the Rokeach instrument. At the same time, these findings do shed light on the core values held by peer leaders and the significance peer leaders place on making a lasting contribution.

4.5 Future research

So what can we learn from these findings that could spur additional research? Those students who have a desire to make a lasting contribution will be more inclined to seek out opportunities to be peer leaders. This desire to leave a legacy is consistent with being future-oriented, or as Kouzes and Posner (1993, 2012) label it being forward-looking. It seems that a logical next step in this research stream is to look at the relationship between the core value of *a sense of accomplishment* and future-orientation. It might also be worth an investigation to examine the relationship between *a sense of accomplishment* and visioning ability. It seems that those individuals who have a stronger need to make a lasting contribution would also score higher on the ability to vision. However, this is an empirical question for another day.

Several directions for future research are noted. First, expanding this research at other campuses that have learning communities with peer leaders is a logical next step. Since this learning community is part of a business school, it would be useful to survey peer leaders in other disciplines. Second, using other value instruments would help triangulate on the issue of core values. In the limitations section, we acknowledge the use of only one instrument in this study (Rokeach) and the need to include other value instruments. Several options exist. The most logical choice would be to utilize the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987) since it is based on the Rokeach Value Survey. The SVS is now the most dominant approach to examine values in the social sciences (Tsirogianni & Sammut, 2014). Another option would be to utilize the Musser and Orke (1992) typology. Also based on the Rokeach instrument, the typology attempts to put these values into a matrix and to classify people by

value type. A third option is to utilize the Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVS) developed by Schwartz (2002). The PVS is an improved version of the SVS because it a) measures values indirectly without the respondent knowing that they are having their values investigated, b) reduces the risk of multiple interpretations, and c) simplifies the measurement of values (Tsirogianni & Gaskell, 2011). While all of these options now add a rich research stream, we initially wanted to return to the seminal instrument to establish a baseline with the original Rokeach instrument. Third, examining the relationship between Psychological Capital (efficacy, hope, optimism, resiliency) and core values could shed some light on how to continue to develop authentic peer leaders (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). Fourth, one could look at how to get individuals, particularly students, to act on values. As mentioned in our opening statement with the inclusion of notable historical figures, individuals confront challenges facing the community. In the context of behavioral ethics, this would suggest three components: 1) awareness of values, 2) ability to analyze a situation and justify a position, and 3) taking action. The findings from this study, specifically as it relates to the value of *a sense of accomplishment* implies action. In contrast to traditional instructional methods for ethics that focus on only the first two items (awareness and analysis), the Giving Voice to Values curriculum focuses on all three components (Gentile, 2017). While there is research that examines the effect of this approach to behavior ethics in accounting and legal education (Christensen, Cote, & Kamm Latham, 2016; Holmes, 2015), a future research stream could examine how the Giving Voice to Values curriculum can be incorporated in peer leader development.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the value that distinguishes peer leaders is an end-value just as Burns had advocated. It is a value that makes these students sacrifice their time, their talent, and their treasure for the betterment of unknown students, the university, and potentially the world. They do transcend their self-interests for a greater good of making a difference and a sense of accomplishment. It speaks to what Csikszentmihalyi (2003) calls having a soul. He says living organisms are thought to have a soul if they can use part of their energy, not for their own growth and survival but to care for, invest in, or help transform others. He says one manifestation of soul in leaders is “doing something of benefit to others” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003). Given these peer leaders are all business majors, there may be hope for the businesses of the future to also have soul through these authentic leaders.

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