

A STUDY OF THE LEADERSHIP STYLES AND BELIEFS
OF STUDENTS AT
ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

by

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A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The future employment market will require college graduates to possess strong and effective leadership skills. It is crucial that higher education provide numerous and practical opportunities for students to develop these skills. Research confirms that preparing students for leadership roles is one of the founding tenets of American higher education. However, studies regarding leadership and the nontraditional student have not been well documented. The conceptual framework for this research was based on the ecology theory of leadership that proposes a departure from the traditional hierarchical style of leadership towards a more systemic style through an open process that involves all members of the organization. Athens State University serves a population comprised mostly of nontraditional students, many of whom are already employed. This study used the Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (LABS-III) instrument developed by Dr. Richard Wielkiewicz to examine the preferred leadership styles of students at Athens State University and determine if there was a significant difference in those styles based upon a set of demographic variables that included gender, age group, employment status, and college of record. Results revealed that an overwhelming number of students still preferred the traditional hierarchical style of leadership, while a much smaller group preferred the systemic style of leadership. Statistical results revealed no significant differences in preferred leadership styles based upon any of the demographic variables. However, research did show that the older the study participant, the more likely they were to prefer the hierarchical style of leadership. Based upon the results of this study, it is apparent that institutions of higher

education may want to consider redesigning the leadership development curriculum with an emphasis on building systemic leadership skills, specifically through the ecology of leadership theory. In addition, specific and meaningful learning opportunities in leadership should be incorporated into all curricula, not just business programs. As the population of nontraditional students continues to outnumber traditional college students, institutions may want to consider establishing an official point of contact for this student, such as an Office of Student Support Services for Returning Adult Students.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

| | |
|----------|--|
| α | Cronbach's index of internal consistency |
| M | Mean: the sum of a series of observations divided by the number of observations in a series. |
| SD | Standard Deviation: a measure of dispersion that is calculated based on the values of the data |
| t | Computed value of t test |
| p | Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value. |
| = | Equal to |
| n | Sample Population |
| SS | Sum of Squares |
| df | Degrees of Freedom: number of values free to vary after certain restrictions have been placed on the data |
| F | Fisher's F ratio: A ratio of two variances |
| MS | Mean Square: an estimate of the variance between groups |
| Sig | Level of Significance |
| χ^2 | Chi-square |

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CHAPTER I:
INTRODUCTION

The old Chinese proverb “May you live in interesting times . . .” describes today’s society well. Astin and Astin (2000) noted that the United States is suffering both a crisis in leadership and a crisis in individual civic engagement. In their report for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation entitled *Leadership Reconsidered: Engaging Higher Education in Social Change*, Astin and Astin (2000) focused on higher education’s role and responsibility in remedying this crisis. They stated,

Even though the United States is generally regarded as having the finest postsecondary education system in the world; there is mounting evidence that the quality of leadership in this country has been eroding in recent years. (p. 2)

American higher education was founded for the purpose of preparing future teachers and leaders (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997). However, as Astin and Astin stated in their 2000 report “the concept of leadership and the educational goals of leadership development have been given very little attention” (p. 3). McIntire (1989) noted that the problem may be because the development of leaders does not fall neatly into any one curriculum and that “no one academic discipline may feel it can own the topic” (p. 75). Greenleaf (2003) noted that “the university . . . is currently the most troubled, the most fragile, and the least certain of its goals” and stated that “the university must become the institution-building model because . . . the influence of the university, through its students, on the shape of society is enormous” (p. 63).

Because of the tremendous demand for leadership skills in today's employee, it is crucial that higher education provide numerous and practical opportunities for students to develop these skills. It is incumbent upon the education community to produce graduates who can take up the mantle of leadership as they enter the workforce. Greenleaf (2003) noted "there is nowhere any greater need for dependable servants to emerge as great leaders and say it like it is than among those who guide the destinies of contemporary American universities" (p. 63). This will require special skills sets and abilities.

Studies regarding leadership and the nontraditional student have not been well documented. The nontraditional student population continues to increase in today's college environment. As we witness this growth in enrollment in higher education, we also see a decline in civic participation and a deteriorating view of leadership figures. This trend does not bode well for our future. Dr. William Richardson, president of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, makes a strong case for the urgent need for higher education to strengthen its approach to leadership education. He stated,

Of all the questions about the future of leadership that we can raise for ourselves, we can be certain in our answer to only one: "Who will lead us?" The answer, of course, is that we will be led by those we have taught, and they will lead us as we have shown them they should. (Astin & Astin, 2000, p. vi)

Athens State University serves a unique population in that many are nontraditional students, many of whom are already employed. This study focused on determining the styles and beliefs of these students as well as their preferred leadership patterns in order to assist the institution in strengthening the leadership skills sets of these students to meet the growing demands of employers.

Statement of the Problem

In 2007, Athens State University's College of Business received national accreditation through the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP). The College of Business consists of four departments: Accounting, Management, Human Resource Management, and Management of Technology and offers seven different degree programs. It utilizes traditional instructional approaches integrated with technology, including Blackboard®, and other distance learning tools. The *2009 ASU Fact Book* reports that there are 25 full-time faculty employed in the College of Business and 15 (60%) of those hold terminal degrees. The *2009 ASU Fact Book* also reports that there were 1,127 students enrolled in the College of Business in the Fall 2008 semester. As part of the self-study for ACBSP re-accreditation, data were collected from employers that revealed the need for stronger leadership development throughout the curriculum in the College of Business (COB). This information was used to redesign course curriculum for two courses in the College of Business for the purpose of improving the leadership skills of ASU graduates. The data gathered from this particular research can provide a more informed profile of the current leadership styles of ASU students. With this information, ASU could better address any weaknesses and structure course and program curriculum to strengthen those weaknesses.

Jacob (2006) stated that "colleges need to prepare graduates to deal with major economic, societal, and environmental issues by developing their leadership ethos" (para. 2). This study provided information regarding current students' leadership styles and beliefs that can be used by the institution's leaders to improve the leadership skills sets of future graduates.

Little research has been done regarding the nontraditional student and leadership skills. Kouzes and Posner (1998) and Posner and Brodsky (1992) developed an instrument known as

the *Student Leadership Practices Inventory* to assess the leadership behaviors of students in leadership positions. However, this instrument was inappropriate for those students who did not consider themselves leaders. Wielkiewicz (2000) developed an instrument, the *Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (LABS)*, to gather information on any student's perceptions of leadership processes and how they expect leaders to act. Research is needed using a revised LABS instrument, the LABS-III, to inform educators regarding the preferred leadership patterns of students thus providing data that will assist in strengthening the leadership component of educational programs at the postsecondary level.

Purpose of the Study

There were two purposes of this study. One was to gather information specific to the Athens State University student and their leadership styles, beliefs, and preferred leadership patterns. Using the LABS-III instrument and the demographic survey developed for this study, data was gathered that provides pertinent information to ASU's Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Dean for the College of Business. This information can be used to assess current course and program outcomes regarding the leadership styles, beliefs, and preferred leadership patterns of students. Armed with this information, more effective instructional methods can be developed to strengthen any weaknesses revealed. The LABS-III instrument focuses on two modes of leadership styles: systemic and hierarchical. Although one style has not been proven to be superior to the other, identification of dominant styles can provide faculty and instructional designers with data allowing specific improvements in course and program curriculum.

Another purpose of this study was to determine if there was a significant difference in leadership patterns among students within this institution based on a set of demographic variables including gender, age group, employment status, and college of record. These results

can be useful to the leadership of Athens State University in strengthening the leadership of students through curriculum development.

Research Questions

This study explored the following questions:

1. What are the preferred leadership patterns of the students at Athens State University;
2. What differences exist in the number of students who prefer one leadership pattern (systemic or hierarchical) more than another based upon gender, age group, employment status, and college of record;
3. Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon gender;
4. Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon age group;
5. Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon employment status; and
6. Are there differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon college of record (i.e., Arts & Sciences, Business, or Education)?

Methodology

This study used the *Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale III* (LABS-III) to determine the preferred leadership patterns of students at Athens State University. In addition to the LABS-III instrument, this study used a demographic questionnaire to gather information regarding the age, gender, employment status, and college of record of the participants.

Wielkiewicz (2000) developed an instrument that would measure thinking consistent with the Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) ecology theory of leadership. After some revision, the LABS-III instrument was produced that provides a method to determine an individual's preferred leadership pattern. As Allen et al. (1998) reported, an organization or community that includes more systemic thinkers will be more adaptive and successful. These individuals view leadership as a cooperative effort and realize the importance of keeping up with a constantly changing environment. In contrast, those who value hierarchical thinking will be less likely to invite the free-flow of information and will be less aware of the complex and diverse nature of today's organization. Wielkiewicz (2000) stated that these individuals "have the potential to do considerable damage to organizations" (p. 345). He concluded that although it was evident that organizations that operate in a systemic thinking manner can be more adaptive and successful in today's changing environment, an individual who places more value on hierarchical thinking can likely be unhappy in this environment. A systemic thinker can experience frustration in a hierarchical environment. Thompson (2006) stated that systemic thinkers and systemic organizations alike will likely find more success in the future and "will yield greater levels of overall adaptability, success, and sustainability" (p. 344). Thus, the LABS-III instrument may provide a valid method for determining both an individual and an organization's orientation for future success. Thompson (2006) also noted that the LABS-III instrument could provide valuable information to student affairs practitioners regarding the leadership behavioral preferences of college students as well as the "impact of college resources and activities on leadership-related objectives" (p. 348).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was based on Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz's (1998) ecology theory of leadership. This theory stated that leadership involves different social and biological systems that are "interdependent and mutually influencing" (Allen et al., 1998, p. 69) and because of this interdependence leadership must be viewed as relational. This theory proposes that leadership is not position-based but is a process. The ecology theory proposes a new approach to leadership through an open process that involves all members of the organization instead of relying on the traditional hierarchy system.

Ecology refers to the study of habitats in which organisms live. Kelly, Ryan, Altman, and Stelzner (2000) first applied ecological principles to social settings. Allen, Stelzner and Wielkiewicz (1998) applied the ecology theory to leadership. Their research focused on four ecological principles that have been critical to understanding leadership and organizations. These included interdependence, open systems and feedback, the cycling of resources, and adaptation. Wielkiewicz and Stelzner (2005) completed further research and revised to include six premises to the theory. The first premise asserts that leadership is an emergent process and "it emerges from the interactions and actions of individuals within an ecological system" (p. 330). The second premise recognizes the tension between the "old school/industrial perspective and the new school/ecological perspective" (p. 331) and states that an adaptive organization must find a healthy balance between these two perspectives. The third premise notes that leadership is part of a network of social and biological systems that are interdependent upon each other. The fourth premise asserts that the "richness and variability of feedback loops" (p. 332) determines the level of adaptability as well as the level of influence on leadership processes. Premise five encourages diversity and states that the more diversity within an organization the more adaptable

it will be. Finally, premise six proposes that leadership processes be evaluated against how adaptively they respond to long-term challenges.

Significance of the Study

Research confirms that preparing students for leadership roles is one of the founding tenets of American higher education (Chambers, 1992; McIntire, 1989; Roberts & Ullom, 1989). Astin and Astin (2000) stated that tomorrow's leaders will need a "high level of emotional and spiritual wisdom and maturity" (p. 1) in addition to the skills to navigate the new business trends. Jacobs (2006) noted that today's college student must not only be able to survive in the new knowledge economy but to thrive. "Students and employers need new skills and expertise to compete in today's rapidly changing economy" (Jacobs, 2006, para. 14). Jacobs asserted "since leadership potential exists in every student, colleges need to provide, promote and involve students in leadership training" (para. 22). Further, "students having experienced effective leadership as part of their education are likely to commit to making changes in society" (Jacobs, 2006, para. 23). Clark (2001) explained that there is "a gap between expectations for skilled leaders and comprehensive programs to train and develop leadership skills among students at the college level" (para. 2). According to Posner and Brodsky (1992) and Astin and Astin (2000) today's institutions of higher education are crucial to the development of future leaders.

In 2006, Athens State University administered an employer survey regarding the skills of the institution's graduates to approximately 30 employers who had COB graduates as employees. Survey results revealed that "employers rated our students low in leading others" (Institutional Report for Reaffirmation of ACBSP Accreditation, 2006, p. 33). As a result, the faculty of the College of Business began redesigning curriculum to address these findings. The course *MG320 Organizational Communication and Leadership* was divided into two separate courses. The

leadership aspect of the course was expanded and incorporated into an existing course, *MG346 Principles of Management*, and the title modified to reflect this change to *MG346 Principles of Management and Leadership*.

The findings from this study can be potentially significant in three ways. First, the results of this research could be used specifically by Athens State University to monitor existing curriculum and develop new and more effective instructional methods for strengthening the leadership skills of students. Second, study results could be used to compare the difference, if any, between the preferred leadership patterns of students at ASU based on a set of demographic variables including gender, age group, employment status, and College of record. Finally, because there is limited research available regarding leadership and the nontraditional student, this proposed study could contribute to the small body of research that exists for use by higher education professionals.

Definition of Terms

Hierarchical Thinking – a belief that control and authority extend downward in the hierarchy and that organizational members should seek guidance from the level above them (Wielkiewicz, 2000).

Systemic Thinking – the ability to relate a variety of ideas and concepts to organizational success, such as ethics and the need for cooperation and long-term thinking of all individuals to help the organization accomplish goals (Wielkiewicz, 2000).

Assumptions

For the purposes of this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. This study assumed that the majority of participants were nontraditional students given that Athens State University serves this population.

2. This study assumed that the LABS-III was a valid and reliable instrument for assessing students' preferred patterns of leadership.
3. The study assumed that students would respond to the LABS-III instrument in a manner consistent with their actual behavior.
4. The study assumed that one pattern of leadership (hierarchical or systemic) is not superior to the other.

Delimitations of the Study

The major delimitation of this study was that it would be conducted at a single, unique institution which offers only junior/senior level courses serving transfer students who, for the most part, completed their freshman/sophomore coursework at a community college. The unique background and culture of these students limited the ability to generalize the results to other institutions.

Limitations of the Study

There were some limitations that should be noted in this study. First, there were some participants who did not consider themselves leaders or as having leadership skills and this belief undoubtedly affected their responses to the LABS-III instrument. In addition, the findings indicated that an individual preferring one leadership pattern may not actually exhibit leadership behaviors consistent with their responses to the LABS-III instrument.

Organization of the Study

This research was organized in five chapters with accompanying references and appendices. Chapter One includes an introduction to the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions, methodology and a conceptual framework for the study. In addition, Chapter One outlines the significance of the study, a definition of the terms, the assumptions,

delimitations, limitations, and the organization of how the study was presented. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature regarding leadership and nontraditional students. Chapter Three provides the methodology for the study including the design and conceptual framework, a description of the research setting, and a description of the study population. In addition, Chapter Three includes a description of the instrumentation as well as the procedures used for data collection and data analysis. Chapter Four presents the study results and Chapter Five includes conclusions, discussions and recommendations for future research, policy, and practice.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chapter Two provides a review of literature regarding leadership and the nontraditional student. The first topic to be addressed is leadership. Because the topic of leadership includes an enormous amount of history and conjecture, the literature review addresses the topics as they relate to this specific study. The reader should be aware that an exhaustive review of literature regarding the topic of leadership would be an infinite project. This review begins with some definitions of leadership, an outline of some leadership theories and processes, the ecology of leadership, leaders and followers, and finally, leadership and today's student. The second topic addressed was the nontraditional student. The review begins with a historical perspective and moves on to some definitions and characteristics of the nontraditional student. This portion of the review concludes with a discussion of the barriers and challenges that nontraditional students face and a section devoted to student services for these students.

Leadership

Defining Leadership

Fairholm (1998) stated that “understanding the role and function of leadership is the single most important intellectual task of this generation, and leading is the most needed skill” (p. xiv). Bradford and Cohen (1984) stated that a leader is one who shares responsibility, believes in continuous personal improvement for each individual, and works to create a common vision. Chemers (1993) defined leadership as “a process of social influence” (p. 293). He

characterized effective leadership as the ability to reach goals through the cooperation of people. Astin and Astin (2000) reported that “leadership is a process that is ultimately concerned with fostering change” (p. 8) and that it is “no longer the province of the few, the privileged, or even the merely ambitious” (p. 31). Levin (2002) reported that colleges have been slow to respond to society’s need for leadership skills and civic engagement and have focused more on the operational needs of business and industry. McDermott (1987) stated that collaboration and a shared vision for the future best describe the role of leadership. Fairholm (1998) added that understanding leadership, including the role and function of a leader, has never been more important. Leaders determine direction and define success. Fairholm (1998) stated that because of “an exploding information base, global markets, rapidly changing product demands, a diverse and demanding population and a labor pool composed of knowledge workers” a new kind of leader is needed (p. xiv). Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) stated that leadership in today’s global society will demand an increase in personal responsibility and a decrease in dependence on positional leadership.

The long-held view of traditional leadership paints the picture of a single leader who is a male Caucasian from the upper-middle class of society (Amey & Tombley, 1992; Bensimon, 1989; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Bennis and Nanus (1985) reported research that revealed common attributes among leaders who are considered to be effective. These attributes include trustworthiness, self-confidence, and the ability to effectively communicate their vision to followers. Fairholm (1998) noted that the task of leadership is the oldest organizational profession and that management is the second oldest. He was careful to note the differences between leadership and management and stated that each of these has different agendas, thought processes, and motivations. He stated that leaders value cooperation, foster ideas of unity,

equality, and justice. Leaders related to individuals differently than managers whereas managers are more concerned with issues of productivity, performance, control and measurement. Posner (2008) stated, “the present is the domain of managers. The future is the domain of leaders” (p. 27).

Goleman (1998) explained that leadership must be a balanced combination of technical skill, IQ, and emotional intelligence. Without all three, leadership is not effective and organizational capabilities are not maximized. He added that the most effective leaders all share a high degree of emotional intelligence in addition to technical skills. He conducted research to uncover common capabilities shared by the most effective leaders. These capabilities were then divided into three different categories that included technical abilities, cognitive abilities and emotional intelligence. Upon the conclusion of his research, Goleman (1998) discovered that emotional intelligence was much more important than the other two categories and was directly linked to those considered to be outstanding leaders. According to Goleman (1998) emotional intelligence involves five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Goleman (2000) pointed to research by David McClelland (1996) from Harvard University who reported that leaders who embody aspects of emotional intelligence were more effective than those who did not. McClelland’s research found that the executive with no emotional intelligence skills rarely reached the highest levels of performance. In addition, McClelland’s colleagues at Hay/McBer (2006) found six key factors that had an influence on an organization’s climate involved flexibility, responsibility, standards, rewards, clarity, and commitment.

Leadership Theories

There are as many theories regarding leadership as there are definitions. Rubenstein (2005) provided a review of some modern leadership theories. He noted that eight of them are from a work by Peter Northouse (2004) and one, leader of leaders, is his own theory.

Rubenstein briefly discussed each one beginning with the Trait Theory, which is characterized by the notion that individuals with certain traits are more likely to be leaders. Northouse (2004) asserted that effective leaders possess certain traits. These traits include certain physical characteristics, personality traits, and general aptitudes. Yukl (2002) found that successful leaders all possessed drive, motivation, honesty and integrity, self-confidence, conceptual ability, and business knowledge. Conversely, non-leaders did not possess all of these traits. Yukl stated that great leaders do not have to be geniuses but do need to possess the aforementioned qualities and the ability to use these skills.

The *Situational Approach* states that a leader will adapt to a situation and may employ any number of approaches that include delegating, supporting, coaching, and directing. A leader employing the situational approach will recognize the readiness level of each employee and use the most appropriate leadership style in order to maximize that employee's performance. This theory focuses on the different behaviors that a leader should use.

The *Contingency Theory* is different from the situational approach in that the success of the leader is a function of different factors such as the employee, the task, and group variables. The effectiveness of a given pattern of leader behavior is contingent upon the demands imposed by the situation. Northouse (2004) stated that the situation will affect a leader's style and notes that certain leadership styles are contingent on the circumstances in which they are employed.

Fiedler (1967) asserts that leadership effectiveness is the result of interaction between the style of the leader and the characteristics of the environment in which the leader works.

Rubenstein (2005) reported that the *Path-Goal Theory* is also known as the *Motivational Theory* of leadership because this type of leadership seeks to positively impact performance and worker satisfaction. House (1971) believed that a leader can affect the performance, satisfaction, and motivation of a group by offering rewards, clarifying paths, and removing obstacles that stand in the way of goal achievement. Success of the Path-Goal Theory, according to House, depends on situation factors including the employee's personality traits (locus of control and self-perceived ability) and characteristics of the work environment (highly structured or team environment).

The Leader-Member Exchange Theory asserts that the leader-follower relationship is more of a partnership. Northouse (2004) explained that followers bestow leadership status to a leader. The leader accepts this role and acts accordingly. Meanwhile the followers support the leader and each faction shares a portion of control. Graen (1975) described two levels of followers in this theory and noted the varied relationships between the leader and follower. The followers who enjoy a close relationship with the leader report higher performance and loyalty expectations from that leader.

Transformational leadership is more of a dynamic process that involves constant communication between the leader and followers. The leader solicits input from followers and uses this input to implement change and improvements. Burns (1978) characterized this type of leadership as a form of leadership that can alter a follower's behavior or outlook. Northouse (2004) stated that transformational leaders have the ability to influence employees to achieve more than was originally expected. He added that these leaders are able to create feelings of

trust, admiration, and loyalty. Schmit (1996) explained that a transformational leader does not accept the status quo but rather they transform things from what could be to what is by generating excitement.

Team Leadership does not mean that leadership is the function of the entire team. On the contrary, Northouse (2004) stated that team leadership assumes that every leader is leading a team with several distinct goals and functions. The leader in this theory helps the team set goals and create a process to reach those goals. In addition, the team leader ensures that the team has all the necessary resources to reach their goals and sets ground rules for acceptable behavior. Finally, the team leader looks ahead with the goal of navigating future challenges for the team.

Another leadership theory, the *Psychodynamic Approach*, assumes that every leader is aware of his or her psychological makeup and the makeup of each person they lead. According to Northouse (2004), this awareness provides the leader with individual characteristics such as attitude, potential, and level of maturity. In addition, the leader must know what motivates each individual and how each one will react to certain leadership actions. This leader must have a full grasp of the unique language and culture of the organization and its members and must be able to strike a balance between dependence and independence of each individual.

The *Leader of Leaders* approach, as outlined by Rubenstein (2005), stated that the leader of leaders will act and perform differently than leaders of followers. Leaders of leaders will simply create an atmosphere conducive to visionary actions where individuals are empowered to problem solve on their own and develop skills that allow them to constantly hone their diagnostic skills. Rubenstein states that the key to this leadership style is a hands-off approach that encourages the personal development of each leader.

Fairholm (1998) reported that *Value-Based Leadership* involves all members of the organization and not just the chief executive officer. This type of leadership seeks to achieve a common set of values through the joint venture of both the leader and follower. Hollander (1993) described *Transactional Leadership* as a reciprocal arrangement between leader and follower where the leader provides typical leader benefits “such as direction, vision, recognition, and other esteem needs” and the follower reciprocates by providing a “heightened responsiveness to that leader” (p. 32).

Goleman (2000) described six leadership styles but notes that research revealed that only four of them led to positive results in the working environment. These four styles include *Authoritative, Affiliative, Democratic, and Coaching*. The other two styles, *Coercive* and *Pacesetting*, both have important components and can be used effectively in the appropriate setting. A brief description of each of the six styles follows according to Goleman.

The *authoritative* leader is a visionary who empowers employees to be innovative and take risks. These leaders are visionary and have the ability to ensure that all employees understand how they fit into the vision. This in turn strengthens commitment to the organization. Goleman (2000) reflected that this is the most effective leadership style. The *affiliative* style revolves around people and values their emotions more than the task at hand. An affiliative leader provides feedback and allows employees the flexibility to do their jobs in the way they think is most effective. This leadership style promotes team harmony and improves communication and trust among all stakeholders. Likewise, the *democratic* style of leadership builds trust by listening to stakeholders and seeking their buy-in. This buy-in, in turn, affects employees’ goals and work ethic by allowing them input in decision-making that affects their tasks. This style of leadership has a very positive effect on morale.

The *coaching* style requires a continuous dialogue between leader and followers. Because of the time and effort involved, Goleman (2000) reported that this was the style used least often. The coaching style involves an abundance of instruction and feedback that assists the employee in identifying their individual strengths and weaknesses. This style of leadership is most effective when both the leader and the follower are receptive to both organizational and individual development.

The *coercive* style is considered by Goleman (2000) to be the “least effective in most situations” (p. 82). He noted that this style squelches flexibility and innovation. Leaders who employ the coercive style use a strong top-down decision making method that discourages input and feedback. In turn, employees may abandon ownership and lose pride for both their employer and their individual job. The *pacesetting* style of leadership is also considered to have a negative effect on the work environment. The leader sets very high and rigid performance standards. As a result, tasks become routine and focused eliminating flexibility and morale. Goleman noted that both of these styles should be used sparingly.

The four positive styles (authoritative, affiliative, democratic, and coaching) work best during crisis or turnaround situations, to gain buy-in among team members, to motivate in stressful times, or to assist an individual employee improve performance. Goleman (2000) noted that emotional intelligent competencies are involved in all four of these styles. These competencies include self-confidence, empathy, communication, team leadership, and self-awareness. In addition, Goleman noted that the two leadership styles that produce a negative climate (coercive and pacesetting) also involve emotional intelligence competencies. The *coercive* leadership style involves self-control and the *pacesetting* style involves conscientiousness and a drive to achieve.

Finally, there is the *servant-leader* theory espoused by Robert Greenleaf in his 1970 essay *The Servant as Leader*. Greenleaf wrote at a tumultuous time in our nation's history. He began his work on the essay in late 1968 on a college campus and states that "the students consider the building of trust as the central issue for leadership by means of service" (Greenleaf, 2003, p. 36). As his essay (originally written for a student audience) evolved so too did his prescription for success for a nation at a crossroads. He cautiously noted that the youth of the day would not only require but would provide a new form of leadership that included serving others. Greenleaf (2003) stated "the servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 13).

Greenleaf (2003) explained that the American university has failed to provide the necessary support that growth in leadership skills require and noted that "those young people who choose to grow as leaders are largely on their own" (p. 41). In his 1970 essay Greenleaf reports that the hierarchical principle of organizational leadership began with Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. Jethro visited Moses and found a weary man on the edge of leadership disaster. Jethro offered advice to Moses that included setting up a hierarchical system of judges to deal with the daily, routine matters for the Israelites. This, in turn, would free Moses' time and abilities and allow him to lead more effectively. Greenleaf noted that this hierarchical system "still dominates everything that is organized – armies, churches, governments, universities, businesses" (p. 43). He noted that this is still the environment that today's college students will find themselves in as they move from student to citizen.

Greenleaf's essay to students in 1970 outlines a unique framework for success as a servant-leader that begins with individual initiative and goal setting. A leader must be able to see where they are going and inspire others to go with them – to follow. An essential ingredient,

however, for this leader is trust. The leader must have and exude confidence in the direction they have chosen. Next, the leader must aspire to become a better listener. “Listening is a discipline that improves face-to-face relations, it saves time in the process of communicating, and it lifts both the listener and the one listened to” (Greenleaf, 2003, p. 46). Are we speaking the same language? Are we seeking to understand or just hear? The servant-leader will constantly monitor these issues.

Greenleaf (2003) also stressed the importance of the servant-leader’s ability to withdraw when necessary. He noted that leadership can be very stressful and, as a result, a good leader will know when to withdraw and regroup, allowing them to reorder priorities and set a new pace. In addition, a servant-leader will have acceptance and empathy for their followers. This acceptance is unconditional as Greenleaf noted because “anybody can lead perfect people – if there were any” (p. 49). He asserted that any imperfect person is capable of heroism if they are wisely led and that many a leader has failed because of their inability to work with imperfection. He stated “the secret . . . is to be able to weld a team of such people by lifting them up to grow taller than they would otherwise be” (Greenleaf, 2003, p.50).

Another important facet of servant-leadership is the art of intuition – knowing the unknowable. A servant-leader must be able to move forward and make decisions without all of the information. They must have the ability to bridge the gap between what is known and what is needed. This is followed with foresight or the ability to predict future patterns. Servant-leaders must also possess awareness and perception that allows them to “arm one to meet the stress of life by helping build serenity in the face of stress and uncertainty” (Greenleaf, 2003, p. 56). In addition, they must be persuasive and able to get things done – sometimes “one action at a time” but done nonetheless. Healing and serving are mentioned next by Greenleaf as he noted

that “the need for a person to heal himself or herself may be an adequate motive to serve, and that an unpaid amateur with dedication to service may excel the most gifted (and expensive) professional” (p. 61). Finally, Greenleaf described the aspects of power and authority for the servant-leader. He noted that while coercive power is effective in the short-term it eventually erodes autonomy and fuels resistance. He encouraged persuasion and voluntary acceptance. Greenleaf stated that the “servant-leader is functionally superior because he or she is closer to the ground and so hears things, sees things, knows things. Because of this a servant-leader is dependable and trusted” (p. 66).

Leadership Processes

Because leadership is interdependent, it must be viewed as relational and must include all of the individuals and relationships that are affected, rather than a single individual (Allen, Stelzner, & Wielkiewicz, 1998). Allen et al. (1998) stated that leadership is not a position but a process. To be successful in meeting today’s challenges, this process must be open and include as much feedback as possible in order to maximize input and encourage active participation. This process must also recognize the diverse talent within the organization and ensure that these resources are “cycled and recycled” (Allen, Stelzner, & Wielkiewicz, 1998, p. 71). Constant building and maintaining of both human and physical resources will ensure the ability of the organization to respond effectively to challenges.

Helgesen (1995) stated that the growing diversity of today’s society will require leadership processes that create a culture of inclusiveness and diversity in decision making and ensure that organizations and communities believe that their diversity is an asset and not a liability. This diversity will create tensions “between individual rights and the common good of a larger community” (Allen, Stelzner, & Wielkiewicz, 1998, p. 65) that must be addressed

through leadership practices that consider the ethical, community, and global consequences of decision-making. In addition, responding to these adaptive challenges will necessitate a culture of continuous learning and personal development.

Allen (1990) stated that, in order to develop our ability to live with each other and the environment, leadership will need to focus on developing human capacity. Successful organizations and communities that meet adaptive challenges will consist of individuals who never stop evolving. Leadership processes must also establish and encourage relationships that develop groups and coalitions instead of relying on a single leader to create the change necessary to respond to adaptive challenges (Rost, 1997). These adaptive challenges will also require strategic and long-term vision from leadership processes and the ability to see how implications unfold over time (Allen, Stelzner, & Wielkiewicz, 1998). In addition, leadership processes must include broad-based and inclusive input in problem solving to meet the complexity of perspectives that these challenges present. Allen et al. (1998) explained the benefits of an open leadership process and how this kind of leadership facilitates a myriad of activities instead of controlling them. This open system encourages the flow of information in all directions and allows the organization to respond and adapt quickly.

Previous leadership theories have included the function of long-term planning. Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) proposed that the ecological theory of leadership should include accountability for the “long-term sustainability of the social and environmental ecology” (p. 74). This long-term perspective allows the organization to project beyond an individual’s lifetime. Allen et al. (1998) stated “leadership processes and individual actions should create a community of reciprocal care and shared responsibility and promote harmony with nature thereby providing sustainability for future generations” (p. 76).

Leaders and Followers

Hollander (1993) supported the important relationship between leader and follower and states, “without followers, there plainly are no leaders or leadership” (p. 29). He noted that followers can legitimize a leader and have great influence over the leader’s style, behavior, and performance. In spite of this influence, the role of the follower has received little attention. Mary Parker Follett (1949) asserted that the ability of the leader to dominate their followers is not nearly as crucial to team success as the dynamic between the two parties. Hollander (1993) noted that both the leader and the follower can participate actively in the leadership process. He noted that active followers have the potential to be leaders. Kouzes and Posner (1987) stated that good leaders possess the ability to be good followers and good followers, in turn, possess the positive skills of dependability, competence, and honesty. These traits are also important in a successful leader. Hollander (1993) noted that, ultimately, truly effective leadership is a dynamic and fluid process of give and take and “two-way influence and power-sharing” between the leader and follower (p. 31).

Hollander (1993) further stated that, “the involvement of followers has to be recognized as a key component of effective leadership” (p. 42). He added that leaders and followers do not exist in mutually exclusively categories. Weber (1921) used the word “charisma,” from the Greek word meaning “divine gift,” to describe a leadership style that has emotional appeal for followers, especially during a crisis situation. Fairholm (1998) stated, “the leader-follower relationship is essentially voluntary” (p. 73). He added that creativity cannot be forced and that leadership begins with a culture of trust between leader and follower. Fairholm noted that without trust there is no leadership and states that “trust can only be given; it cannot be commanded” (p. 93).

Rubenstein (2005) noted that today's workplace has evolved in such a way that the previous model of leader/follower will no longer be effective. He asserted that a "distributed leadership" method will emerge that will transcend all levels of the organization. He described leadership as making a significant contribution to the organization. However, he noted that, somewhere along the way leadership became reserved for the elite few. Rubenstein asserted that the key to future success will require involving all members of an organization in 'leadership perogatives'. He provided a new leadership vision that states,

All things being equal, the more people who participate in the leadership of an organization and make worthwhile contributions to that organization, the greater the output of the organization will be, the more efficient the organization will be and the better the organization will perform. (p. 48)

Rubenstein (2005) cautioned that there will be some reluctance by those in key leadership roles, but offered that leadership development programs will open up a new and prosperous chapter for organizations. He warned that the evolution of leadership will frighten some who perceive successful leadership to be from the top down and reserved for the elite. This new inclusive leadership approach will require a shift in the culture of organizations, and this shift may threaten some. However, Rubenstein (2005) noted, much like biological evolution, those who survive are the ones who "recognize the next wave of evolution and get ahead of the curve" (p. 48). He added that human capital has come too far to expect individual members to accept the previous leadership approach of waiting to be led. Today's organization is comprised of individuals who possess the skills, knowledge, and abilities to lead along with the capacity to contribute to an organization's success through continuous personal development. Rubenstein stated that the "challenge of management, employees and unions today is to make this movement from leadership by the few to leadership by the many pervasive and well supported in organizations" (p. 49).

Ecology of Leadership

Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) provided a new approach to the leadership arena by proposing an open process that involves all members of the organization instead of relying on the traditional hierarchy system. They asserted that the modern world presents numerous adaptive challenges to leadership and propose taking an ecology approach that focuses on the leadership issues that result from systemic processes. Allen et al. (1998) pointed to recent publicized failures in leadership involving breaches in ethical behavior and financial stewardship and assert that the traditional practice of “one individual in an appointed, elected, or paid position making decisions that direct an organization toward success” (p. 63) have contributed to these failures. They boldly stated that “leadership based on position and authority is inadequate for the challenges we face today” and warn that we can no longer wait for “great individual leaders . . . to guarantee our safety and security” (p. 63).

Heifetz (1994) stated that today’s society is facing adaptive challenges that are global and constantly changing. All of these challenges require a transition in leadership perception and behavior in order to successfully navigate the future. These adaptive challenges include living and working with a global perspective, living within environmental limits, transforming information into knowledge and wisdom, developing the wisdom and ethics to respond to scientific discoveries, and developing the capacity to adapt to changes in our social ecology. Furthermore, Heifetz (1994) cautioned that each of these challenges is interdependent of the others and must be addressed in relationship to the whole. When addressed as part of a whole these challenges present some emergent patterns that could have an impact on leadership practices. First, because these challenges are constant and are interdependent with/on each other, the ability to successfully respond will require that organizational leadership processes create an

environment that is flexible and durable (Waldrop, 1996) and an empowered entity that can see the whole and not just their portion (Chaleff, 1995).

Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) asserted that viewing leadership through an ecological perspective allows us to see the magnitude and complexity of this phenomenon and how far-reaching and interdependent each leadership process is on other systems and individuals. Kelly, Ryan, Altmann, and Stelzner (2000) stated that the ecological perspective revealed the interconnection of life forces. This perspective reminds us that leadership involves different social and biological systems that are “interdependent and mutually influencing” (Allen et al., 1998, p. 69). Instead of the previous notion of leadership that involves a single figure with total responsibility, Allen et al. (1998) proposed a new metaphor is needed to represent the “living systems in which leadership processes operate” (p. 69). Wheatley (1992) explained that successful organizations are open, living systems that do not strive for equilibrium. These organizations’ values change and they realize that their viability comes from a state of non-equilibrium that allows them to adapt and grow. Wheatley (1992) used the example of an ecosystem to explain how stability and disequilibrium work together to “allow for many levels of autonomy within itself, and for small fluctuations, and changes” that enable the system to “preserve its global stability and integrity in the environment” (p. 95). As he compared a successful organization to an ecosystem, he provided a clear mandate – change is not only inevitable; it is desired.

Senge (2006) discussed the systems thinking model and noted that businesses are systems and as such must be viewed as a whole and not a stand-alone entity. He described systems thinking as a “conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that have been developed over the past fifty years to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them

effectively” (p. 7). In his book, *The Fifth Discipline: the Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (2006) Senge stated that systems thinking helps us better understand a learning organization and the way individuals see themselves and their surroundings. Senge (2006) cited a statement by Confucius who said “to become a leader, you must first become a human being” (p. 318). Senge believed that the title of leader has come to signify a position of authority or an individual at the top of the organizational chart. He added that this practice infers a level of power to individuals in the position of leader that is not shared by those lower on the same organizational chart. Senge believed that this minimizes the effect of all organizational members and their ability to affect change. He stated that this mindset “represents a profound and tragic confusion” (p. 319). He added that there are leaders at every level of the organization and notes that the ecology of leadership way of thinking was developed to recognize the vital role that each played in the building of a learning organization. Senge stated that the older, more traditional view of leadership places the power of change only in the hands of the leader and gives little or no power to followers. He added that the type of leadership necessary for systemic change is being found in today’s younger generation. Senge (2006) stated that “often ignored as leaders, teenagers and young adults have a strong stake in the future, perhaps the strongest” (p. 370).

Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) offered some practical guidelines for facilitating a change from the traditional hierarchical model of leadership to an open leadership process. Relationships must be built and nurtured to provide an open highway for the flow of information. Opportunities for continuing education and personal growth for all members must be part of the fabric of the organization and must include specific feedback thus creating an atmosphere of trust. Diverse perspectives will create tensions that, when nurtured correctly, can provide opportunities for collaboration instead of negative conflict-induced standoffs. As communities

and organizations continue to grow in diversity, new perspectives have the potential to create a tense environment. An open leadership process will seize these diverse perspectives and provide safe and positive opportunities for collaboration that will, in turn, increase the organizations' cohesiveness. Honest evaluation and reflection will also be required by all members to ensure a constant awareness of threats and opportunities. Each member must know and understand the mission or purpose of the organization or community and value that mission. As open leadership processes provide opportunities for decision-making and actions, members can move forward confidently when they are aware of the mission. Finally, rewards must be in place for those who dare to step outside the traditional leader/follower method and learn to operate and succeed by implementing the open processes mentioned above. Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) concluded that leadership in today's global society will demand an increase in personal responsibility and a decrease in dependence on positional leadership.

Leadership and Today's Student

Dempster and Lizzio (2007) reported a lack of research into how young people perceive leadership and its importance. They noted the disturbing fact that it appears that the number of students willing to assume leadership roles is in decline. Michaels, Kartford-Jones, & Axelrod (2001) suggested that there is strong competition for a shrinking pool of leadership talent. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) added that this decline in leadership has been accompanied by a decline in civic participation. Gannon (2001) reported a 25% decline in voter turnout between 1960 and 1990 along with a 33% decline in attendance at public, town or school meetings between 1973 and 1993. In addition, Gannon reported a drastic decline in participation of parent-teacher organizations between 1964 and 1982. Gannon (2001) stated that “. . . American social capital in the form of civic associations has significantly eroded over the last generation”

(p. 116). Astin and Astin (2000) reported that, because today's students are so busy, they are less likely "to become deeply engaged in the kinds of leadership activities that we believe are central to responsible citizenship" (p. 23). Dempster and Lizzio (2007) further noted the abundance of literature regarding adult leadership issues and the mirroring lack of research on student leadership issues. They pointed to a noticeable gap between what we know about students' understanding of leadership and how they see and experience leadership. There is very little research available that provides a view of leadership from the students' vantage point. Posner (2004) pointed out that further research is needed on how student leadership development occurs. Fielding (2004) stated that civic renewal will be directly related to student leadership development. Roach (1999) reported that students tend to focus more on groups and situations of the moment, using what Roach called "wisdom in spontaneity" versus the "wisdom through experience" reported by adults. Students are more interested in how leadership happens than in who is leading. The student perspective appears to be shifting away from previous positional leadership styles to more relational leadership styles.

Astin (1985) stated that the more students are involved in student activities, including leadership activities, the greater their success in learning and personal development will be. Astin (1993) also cited research that links student educational attainment to involvement in leadership activities, and stresses the importance of developing the leadership ability of students during their college years. Boatman (1999) stated that student leadership development would be more effective if it were approached from a relational viewpoint instead of through formal courses or degrees. Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt (2001) stated that leadership development activities and goals take second chair in the college and university setting. They conducted a study to see if leadership education programs directly affected students' educational

development. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided funding to twenty-one institutions for the purpose of studying the effects of leadership development on college students. Over time, this research revealed that students who participated in leadership development programs espoused more ethical views of leadership and displayed more cooperative and less authoritarian behavior. In addition, these students reported that their conflict resolution skills were improved as well as their commitment to civic responsibility. Students in the study also reported more confidence in their leadership skills and abilities and were more willing to take on the role of leader. Posner (2008) noted that “learning about leadership is not the same as learning to *be* a leader. We should be teaching our students to *be* leaders” (p. 26). Cress et al. (2001) concluded that all students have leadership potential and that institutions of higher education can uncover and develop this potential with targeted programs that will also increase the student’s educational success. They also asserted that educational institutions will be successful in developing tomorrow’s leaders when they provide connections between academic programs and community activities and express a strong desire, through their stated mission, to create a “legacy of leaders in businesses, organizations, governments, schools, and neighborhoods” (p. 23). Astin and Astin (2000) added that it will be important for students to see themselves as positive social change agents. They added that “producing more effective leaders is essential to building a better society and better world . . . and that leadership development should be a critical part of the college experience” (Astin & Astin, 2000, p. 17).

The Nontraditional Student

Historical Background

The term “non-traditional student” has been the focus of much attention in recent years. However, Ogren (2003) reminded us that although today’s educators may consider these students

a fairly new phenomenon, the nontraditional student has been a part of higher education from the very beginning. Ogren implied that the very term ‘nontraditional’ signifies that this population of students is new to higher education. On the contrary, Ogren provided research that shows “students from unsophisticated, lower-social-class backgrounds have a long tradition of attending American colleges and universities” (p. 641). In a following section, research is reviewed that describes the non-traditional student in great detail. For historical purposes, this section relies mostly on research by Ogren who argued that the characteristics that describe today’s nontraditional student could also be used to describe the students who attended many of the early normal schools. These schools were designed to prepare students, mostly female, to be teachers for America’s secondary schools. Ogren called these students ‘normalites’ and noted that the first state normal school was established in Massachusetts in 1839. By 1920, these institutions had increased in number to about 180 across the growing nation. Ogren explained that these institutions experienced several different name changes over the years as they attempted to reflect society’s expectations and desires. These institutions began as normal schools and then became known as teachers’ colleges. With the end of World War II and the return of military veterans to higher education, these institutions recognized a new market and again changed their focus to state colleges and later to regional universities.

Ogren’s (2003) research revealed similarities between the ‘normalites’ of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and today’s nontraditional student. The early normal schools enrolled a majority of female students that reflected the mission of these institutions to prepare women for the teaching profession. In addition, Ogren (2003) stated that the normal schools provided higher education opportunities for minority and ethnic students. At the time, there were segregated normal schools for African-American and Native American students.

Some normal schools enrolled residents from Puerto Rico and South America. Southwest Texas State Normal School enrolled some Hispanic students. These institutions shared a common denominator of serving students from working class families near the low end of the socioeconomic continuum. Many of the students came from families who farmed or worked in agriculture and school attendance was heavily affected by the planting and harvesting seasons. The early use of the term “normal” to describe an individual reflected negative perceptions and “was a disparaging name for a poor person” (Ogren, 2003, p. 645).

In addition to race, gender, and socioeconomic status, nontraditional students in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were similar to today’s nontraditional students in that they were older, commuted back and forth to school, and either worked part-time or had previous work experience. Ogren (2003) cited historical data concerning one student who commuted to school on horseback and had significant farming duties to attend to in addition to pursuing an education. The early nontraditional students also faced many of the same financial challenges that today’s students experience and many worked either while they were in school or dropped out temporarily to earn enough money to continue their education. In 1882, the president of Illinois State University reported that “many of our students . . . are dependent upon their exertions for means” (Ogren, 2003, p. 647) and the principal of the State Normal School in Ypsilanti, Michigan, said, “Our students are working young men and women who earn their little money by the hardest toil” (Ogren, 2003, p. 647). History shows that the nontraditional student has existed almost from the advent of American higher education, and that accessibility and affordability are certainly not new issues for the college student.

As we will see in later sections, socialization and student involvement have been proven to play significant roles in college student success for a long time. This was true for the early

nontraditional student as well. Ogren (2003) noted that as early as the 1870s students began participating in extracurricular activities with the most popular being the literary societies. These societies provided opportunities for different social activities and students learned to present themselves, to successfully participate in debates, and to improve their writing skills.

Defining the Non-Traditional Student

Research reflects numerous definitions of the nontraditional student. Gilley and Hawkes (1989), Lutes (2004), Kasworm (1990), Compton, Cox and Laanan (2006), and Luzzo (1999) all defined the nontraditional student as any student over the age of twenty-five. Other research defined the nontraditional student as any student over the age of thirty (Rawlins, 1979), and still others categorize the nontraditional student as any student over the age of twenty-one (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2006). Boyer (1974) eloquently described the adult students as “misfits in a strange and foreign land” (p. 6). Kasworm (1990) reported that the majority of past research involving the adult learner has been “highly divergent” (p. 363) and asserted that researchers assumed that “the relationship between the student and higher education must be one of either accommodation or assimilation” (Kasworm, 1990, p. 365) and that “either the institution modifies its environment . . . or the student modifies his/her sense of involvement” (p. 365). Luzzo (1999) asserted that the growing population of nontraditional students in colleges across the country will require a new approach to serving these same students’ career development needs. Haviland and Mahaffy (1985) estimated that more than 20 million nontraditional students would be enrolled in college-level studies by the turn of the twenty-first century. Because of this tremendous growth and change in the demographic face of the new college student, Luzzo (1999) argued that the higher education community must respond by developing more appropriate programs to assist the nontraditional student with their career plans. Luzzo also emphasized that this will require

more understanding of the career-making differences between the traditional and the nontraditional student. Research by Crites (1971) used a model of career maturity which states that emotions and attitudes play an important role in career decisions. Further research supports this idea and links age and maturity with less anxiety and fear towards the career decision-making process.

The growth in nontraditional students has been both steady and impressive. The National Center for Education Statistics (2002) revealed that over six million adult undergraduate and graduate students were enrolled in some form of postsecondary education in 2000. Data from the NCES (2008) also revealed that enrollment of students over the age of twenty-five grew by 18% between 1990 and 2005. NCES has projected an additional enrollment increase of 21% for students age twenty-five and older by the year 2016. Levine and Cureton (1998) stated that, between 1980 and 1994, the largest sector of growth in education was among nontraditional students. Compton, Cox and Laanan (2006) explained that this growth may be because the number of high school graduates continues to decrease along with the number of blue-collar jobs and that these changes provide an impetus for adults to return to school to gain employability skills.

Characteristics of the Nontraditional Student

The nontraditional student is characterized by a myriad of descriptors by numerous researchers. Choy (2002) and Compton, Cox, and Laanan (2006) described the nontraditional student as anyone who waits at least one year after high school graduation to enroll in college and only attends on a part-time basis. In addition, they provided research that shows these particular students are usually financially independent and support dependents of their own while going to college. Choy (2002) reported that the most common characteristic among

nontraditional students is financial among this group including the student who has delayed enrollment after high school, the student who is enrolled in college on a part-time basis, the student who is also a full-time employee, the student who has dependents and/or is a single parent, or the student who did not receive a high school diploma. She noted that the more of these characteristics a student has the more “nontraditional” they are. Choy reported that the more nontraditional a student is the more likely they are to attend a two-year institution. The National Center for Education Statistics (1995) reported that 69% of adult students are enrolled part-time in college. Another characteristic reported by NCES (1997) is that a large majority of nontraditional students, 64%, choose a two-year institution to begin their postsecondary journey. Compton, Cox and Laanan (2006) reported that the nontraditional student is more likely to choose a community college and pursue a program leading to a vocational certificate or degree. Richardson and King (1998) stated that adult students face numerous commitments that affect their ability to pursue an education at the more prestigious institutions.

Other characteristics common among nontraditional students include issues regarding time management and study skills. Trueman and Hartley (1996) reported that adult students are more likely to use effective time management strategies than the younger student and Harper and Kember (1986) revealed that the adult student is more likely to exhibit the kind of learning characteristics most prized by higher education. Harper and Kember (1986) reasoned that adult students are more driven by intrinsic goals and have experiential learning skills that younger students do not possess. Further research on adult learners revealed that they learn differently than the traditional student. Knowles (1984) stated that the adult learner or nontraditional student is more likely to apply a life experience to their learning process. Choy (2002) reported that nontraditional students are also more likely to enroll in distance learning courses.

Another characteristic common among nontraditional students is motivation. Pintrich, Smith, Garcia and McKeachie (1999) described an intrinsically motivated student as one who participates in the learning process for the challenge and the satisfaction of mastering the subject matter. Eppler and Harju (1997) and Bye, Pushkar, and Conway (2007) reported that nontraditional students were much more likely to be intrinsically motivated than traditional students. Bye et al. asserted that the nontraditional student may need the persistence and internal fortitude that accompanies strong intrinsic motivation in order to be successful in their educational goals. Shields (1993) provided research that reports different motivations for returning to college among nontraditional students with the most prevalent being personal satisfaction. Werring (1987) and Wolfgang and Dowling (1981) reported that nontraditional students reported intrinsic motivation for returning to college and were very interested in developing skills competence while traditional students were more driven by external goals and social relationships. Choy (2002) reported that 73% of nontraditional students were motivated to return to college for personal enrichment reasons, to acquire employability skills, or to advance in their job. Aslanian (2001) reported that 85% of adult students cite career reasons as their motivation to return to college. Luzzo (1999) stated that career enhancement provides the motivation to return to college for the nontraditional student. Rawlins' (1979) research found that the older student revealed several reasons for returning to college that included career-related reasons, self-fulfillment reasons, and the fact that previous obstacles had now been removed. Rawlins noted that these same respondents report numerous reasons for postponing their education that included financial, family, confusing enrollment processes, commuting, unreadiness for college work, and lack of confidence. However, once the respondents made the

decision to return to college they reported strong support from their families, friends and employers.

Barriers and Challenges for the Nontraditional Student

In addition to sharing many different descriptors, nontraditional students also experience many of the same challenges. Keith (2007) reported three types of barriers for the nontraditional student— situational, dispositional, and institutional—and noted that students who attend college while working and those who are older did not utilize the student services available to them. Keith noted that the three variables of age, employment status, and stress from increased tuition negatively affect the nontraditional students' use of both academic and social services. Choy (2002) reported that two-thirds of nontraditional students who work consider themselves employees first, compared to traditional students who consider themselves primarily students. Rendon (1998) provided research that shows that the nontraditional student did not view their entrance into college as a normal rite of passage but characterized it as “an event that changed their lives” (p. 2). Rendon noted that nontraditional students must divide their time and attention between their jobs, their families, and their college work. This constant role shifting was also recognized by Chickering and Havighurst (1981) and Luzzo (1999) who supported the idea that the nontraditional student was less interested in university-sponsored events and other social activities because they face multiple role conflicts that are foreign to most traditional students. Graham and Donaldson (1999) reported that the nontraditional student was more likely to spend any extra time caring for their families instead of participating in campus activities. Kasworm (2003) stated that while work and career issues may be the impetus for returning to college they can also be the reason the adult student does not participate in campus activities. Family commitments have a major impact on the adult student. Many of them are single parents

and this places special demands on both their time and financial resources. Kasworm (1990) pointed out the importance of understanding the relationship between the nontraditional student and the traditional college campus and emphasizes that the adult student is much different from the traditional student. Kasworm (1990) reported that the adult student does not participate in the college environment at the same level as the traditional student because of their “limited physical presence on campus” (p. 366).

Many nontraditional students cited the challenge of dealing with negative perceptions among faculty and other classmates. Githens (2007) reported that the older student faced some negative perceptions by faculty when it comes to e-learning. However, Githens also reported that research does not support the notion that older students were less flexible and unwilling to learn new things. To the contrary, research has shown that “older employees had a greater willingness to learn new technology” (Githens, 2007, p. 331) and, although they may not learn as quickly as the younger employees, they support and adopt new technology better than the younger employees. Groves and Groves (1980) found that faculty lacked experience in dealing with the nontraditional student. Research by Schlossberg, Lynch and Chickering (1989) reported that faculty might be uncomfortable teaching courses directed to the nontraditional student. Lindsay (1983) asserted that nontraditional or adult learners are viewed by faculty with negative disdain. Miller (1989) believed that the nontraditional student did not have the necessary skills to be a successful college learner and as a result would force faculty to lower their academic standards. To the contrary, Lynch and Bishop-Clark (1998) provided more recent research that dispelled most of these fears and revealed that the nontraditional student expressed “significantly favorable opinions regarding their interactions with professors and the college community” (p. 219). Additionally, research by Carney-Crompton and Tan (2002) revealed that, in spite of their

complex and numerous roles as nontraditional learners, the adult learner outperformed their traditional classmates when it came to academics. Academics are not the only challenge that confronts the nontraditional student. They also face social issues that require unique approaches.

Levine and Cureton (1998) reported that today's nontraditional student faces a variety of social issues that require counseling services. They also cited that these students were less likely to engage in relationships because of a diversity of time commitments. In addition, because they reside off campus and have jobs, they view the college campus strictly as a learning environment and perceive that their social lives only occur off campus. Astin (1999) supported this perception in explaining his student involvement theory. Some of the factors involved in this theory that have affected student success and persistence include living on campus, joining social clubs, participating in athletics, and holding a part-time job on campus. Astin has purported that all of these factors positively affect student retention and persistence. Conversely, working a full-time job off campus and/or living off campus has a negative effect on persistence. Astin (1999) further reported that students enrolled at a community college are more likely to drop out than those enrolled at a four-year institution and, as mentioned earlier, research by Compton, Cox, and Laanan (2006) showed that the nontraditional student has been more likely to begin their postsecondary journey at a community college. Choy (2002) stated that nontraditional status negatively affects persistence and attainment as compared with traditional students and emphasizes the urgent need for postsecondary administrators to understand the reasons for the nontraditional students' early departure. Choy also noted that the risk of leaving is greater during the nontraditional student's first year of enrollment. Levine and Cureton (1998) cited research that revealed that today's students are very concerned about the cost of higher education and that students talked about the "need to drop out, stop out, and attend college part-time

because of tuition costs” (p. 9). National Center for Educational Statistics (2002) data reports that nontraditional students had a completion rate of 31% within four years while their traditional counterparts had a completion rate of 54%. Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) cited three factors that may affect the persistence rates of nontraditional students that include age, cognitive ability, and occupational background. Their research confirmed that the younger student is more likely to graduate, while the older student may not be convinced that they have enough years of employment left to realize any monetary benefits from furthering their education. In addition, students with lower cognitive abilities are more likely to experience academic difficulties that often result in frustration and eventual withdrawal from their program of study. Students from high-status occupational backgrounds who had more access and exposure to “college-educated colleagues” (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2005, p. 925) exhibited higher completion rates than those from low-status occupational backgrounds. In addition, Tinto (1987) stated that part-time students are at a disadvantage regarding college completion because students, usually traditional students, who are more integrated into a college’s social and academic structure are more likely to graduate.

When it comes to academics, more of today’s students are taking remedial courses than ever before and, thus, it takes them longer to graduate. Levine and Cureton (1998) reported that 32% of all undergraduates will need a remedial course in reading, writing or math. Astin, Tsui, and Avalos (1996) cited research conducted at the Higher Education Research Institute that revealed that less than two out of five students will graduate within four years of beginning their higher education, and one of the reasons was because of the number of students attending part-time due to work commitments.

Student Services and the Nontraditional Student

Chao and Good (2004) explained that in spite of the evident growth of the number of nontraditional students in postsecondary education very little research has been done regarding their counseling and support needs. They purported that focused research on this population would provide educational professionals with information that would help meet the unique needs of the students who are simultaneously working, attending college and supporting a family. Gilley and Hawkes (1989) stated that the nontraditional student who attends part-time often feels discriminated against because most college services and programs predominately target the traditional college students. Examples include athletic activities, fraternities and sororities, student union and library operating hours, course scheduling that favors the traditional day student, and programs paid for with student activities fees that benefit only the traditional student. Gilley and Hawkes also asserted that some institutions falsely assume that only full-time students are committed to their educational goals. However, they reported that nontraditional students seek access to the same services that traditional students need including financial aid, bursar, registrar, faculty and advising services. In addition, they seek flexible child-care and class scheduling to meet their unique needs. Gilley and Hawkes (1989) further reported that some institutions have created satellite campuses to meet these unique needs but suggest that a more successful solution would be to include these students and their unique needs in the campus culture and use them to “strengthen the academic community” (p. 34). They suggested several ways that higher education can create this environment including more flexible curricula, technology, and a greater variety of scheduling options.

Chao and Good (2004) suggested that college counselors would do well to understand the unique needs, challenges, and capabilities of the nontraditional student and that this

understanding is “critical for counselors to facilitate student success” (p. 10). Their research revealed that nontraditional students return to college for many different reasons but, when they did decide to pursue more education, they relied on support systems that were critical and included family, friends and college faculty. Senter and Senter (1998) conducted research concerning student services and found that the traditional student expressed a greater need for academic counseling or advising services. Traditional students also expressed a greater need than nontraditional students for support services including campus housing, career planning, part-time work on campus, and orientation services. When it came to social integration, nontraditional students were not as interested in these services as traditional students. Nontraditional students did, however, express a greater need than traditional students for evening classes and other program delivery services. They also expressed a greater need for nontraditional services like child-care, family recreation opportunities, and an office dedicated to nontraditional students. Not surprisingly, female nontraditional students expressed a higher need for these services than men. Rawlins (1979) noted that adult students are concerned about the difference in their age and that of their younger classmates, and explains that these students see themselves with a different set of needs in the areas of work, family, social needs, and limited study time. In addition, these same students expressed concern regarding “professors lack of awareness of the unique position of the adult as a student” (Rawlins, 1979, p. 140). Rawlins’ research also revealed that the nontraditional student expressed a desire for a less complicated enrollment process, an on-campus orientation program that included the student’s spouse, an office or a person to provide an informational outlet specific to the adult student, a conduit that provided social opportunities with other adult students, and an advocate for traditional counseling services for the nontraditional student. Additionally, Rawlins stated that a recurrent

theme in the adult student responses was the incorrect perception that, because they were older, they already understood the enrollment and registration policies and procedures.

Compton, Cox, and Laanan (2006) provided recommendations for nontraditional student services that include simplifying the enrollment and matriculation process, ensuring that courses are available in a variety of delivery formats, including practical applications in coursework, and investigating ways to involve and engage the nontraditional student in the cultural fabric of the institution. Luzzo (1999) encouraged college counselors to expand their services to address the specific and unique needs of the nontraditional student and asserts that providing evening and weekend opportunities for career counseling and orientation sessions is an important step in meeting this population's needs. Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) recommended that higher education institutions seek to improve the persistence and completion rates of nontraditional students and that "flexible, open admission policies apparently make college entry relatively easy for those who want second chances in higher education" (p. 925).

Research by Lynch and Bishop-Clark (1998) involving a main campus and two branch campuses revealed that female students outnumbered male students on all of the campuses, and that most of the students enrolled at branch campuses were enrolled part-time. They also found that classes were smaller at branch campuses and this allowed the faculty to develop relationships with students. In addition, most of the nontraditional students agreed that they had a different learning style than their younger classmates and were more serious about their academic work. The nontraditional student enrolled on the main campus expressed that both their younger classmates and faculty treated them differently. In addition, these students believed that their experiences at the branch campuses, where they were the majority instead of the minority, were much more positive and felt that the faculty located there were better attuned

to the multiple roles that the nontraditional student fulfilled. Lynch and Bishop-Clark (1998) concluded that higher education must provide more attention to the nontraditional population of students when they are in the minority.

Conclusion

Leadership and the nontraditional student present both unique challenges and opportunities for today's educational leaders. A review of the literature has established the need for greater and more effective leadership skills among today's citizens. These skills can be learned; a fact acknowledged by many. Higher education administrators have the opportunity to create not only appropriate and timely curricula to address the leadership needs of the twenty-first century. They also have the opportunity to provide a learning environment that produces tangible opportunities for students to develop and refine their leadership skills. Astin and Astin (2000) stated that "students will find it difficult to lead until they have experienced effective leadership as part of their education" (p. 2).

This review of literature covered material regarding leadership and the nontraditional student. It should be noted that the research on both of these issues continues to evolve. Therefore, this review should not be considered to be entirely comprehensive or complete. There are an infinite number of definitions regarding the issue of leadership. This review of literature on the nontraditional student begins with a historical perspective and explains that this type of student is not new to higher education. Additionally, this review provided a description of the characteristics, barriers, and challenges of today's nontraditional student as well as how student services affect this population. Finally, the literature provided compelling evidence that the nontraditional student requires a nontraditional approach to education. In order to strengthen the leadership skills of this population, educators must first determine the attitudes and beliefs that

these students have regarding leadership. In addition, data reflecting the preferred leadership pattern of the nontraditional student can assist in providing a benchmark position for the development of future curricula. The following chapter will present the methodology used in the conduct of the proposed study.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study had two purposes. One was to gather information specific to Athens State University students regarding their leadership styles, beliefs, and their preferred leadership patterns. The other was to determine if there was a significant difference in leadership patterns among students within this institution based on a set of demographic variables including gender, age group, employment status, and college of record. This study focused on determining the attitudes and beliefs of these students as well as their preferred leadership patterns in order to assist the institution in strengthening the leadership skills sets of these students to meet the growing demands of employers. This study employed sample survey methods. Barnett (1991) defined this form of research as the “principles and methods of collecting and analyzing data from finite populations” (p. 3). He noted that the goal of this method is to draw a sample that reflects an “honest representation of the population and leads to estimates of population characteristics with as great a precision or accuracy as we can reasonably expect for the cost or effort we are able to expend” (p. 12).

This chapter will review the research questions central to this study. In addition, it will outline the research design and conceptual framework proposed for this study. Chapter Three will also provide a description of the setting and the population proposed for this study as well as

an overview of the instrumentation and procedures for data collection. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a description of the data analysis methods and a proposed work plan for the study.

Research Questions

This study explored the following questions:

1. What are the preferred leadership patterns of the students at Athens State University;
2. What differences exist in the number of students who prefer one leadership pattern (systemic or hierarchical) more than another based upon gender, age group, employment status, and college of record;
3. Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon gender;
4. Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon age group;
5. Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon employment status; and
6. Are there differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon college of record (i.e., arts & sciences, business, or education)?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was based on Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz's (1998) ecology theory of leadership. This theory stated that leadership involves different social and biological systems that are "interdependent and mutually influencing" (p. 69) and because of this interdependence leadership must be viewed as relational. This theory

proposes that leadership is not position-based but is a process. The ecology theory proposes a new approach to leadership through an open process that involves all members of the organization instead of relying on the traditional hierarchy system.

Research Setting

The setting for this study was Athens State University (ASU) located in Athens, Alabama. The institution serves approximately 3,000 non-residential undergraduate students through three colleges: arts and sciences, business, and education. Athens State is both the oldest and youngest institution of higher education in Alabama. It was founded in 1822 and began as Athens Female Academy. Ownership of the school was transferred in 1842 to the Tennessee Conference of the Methodist Church. On May 10, 1974, the Board of Trustees granted permission for the transfer of the institution to the State of Alabama. In 1998, a bill was passed by the Alabama legislature that granted the institution university status. Athens State University is a baccalaureate-degree granting institution that operates under the control of the Alabama State Board of Education and offers three baccalaureate degree options; the Bachelor of Arts, the Bachelor of Science and the Bachelor of Science in Education.

The Alabama State Board of Education (ASBE) was created by the Alabama Legislature in 1919 and governs the state's twenty-two community and four technical colleges as part of the Alabama Community College System. In addition, the ASBE governs the Alabama Industrial Development Training Institute, and the Alabama Technology Network, and Athens State University. This broad system of educational entities serves approximately 300,000 citizens across the state annually.

Athens State University (ASU) is committed to serving primarily transfer students from the two-year colleges in the Alabama Community College System as well as students from other

accredited institutions of higher education. The mission of ASU is to provide coursework at the junior and senior level as well as prepare students for professional careers and/or graduate school (ASU College Catalog, 2007-08).

Athens State University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award the baccalaureate degree. In addition, the College of Business is nationally accredited by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs to offer the following business degree: the Bachelor of Science (B.S.) with majors in accounting, human resource management, management, and management of technology. The College of Education is accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education and is approved by the Alabama State Department of Education for the training of elementary and secondary school teachers. Athens State University has established three university centers. The centers were created to bring baccalaureate degree offerings to Alabama Community College System institutions through the use of on-site classes, telecommunication classes, and internet classes (ASU College Catalog, 2007-08). ASU graduates approximately 1,000 students each year. The institution is classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a small baccalaureate, public, nonresidential institution.

Athens State University is unique among Alabama's public institutions of higher education in that it only offers junior- and senior-level course work and primarily serves students who completed their freshman and sophomore courses at an Alabama community college. The *2009 ASU Fact Book* reports that 22% of students enrolled in the Fall 2008 were transfer students from within the Alabama Community College System. Admission standards require that students must have completed at least 64 semester hours of college course work or hold a two-year associate's degree to enroll (ASU College Catalog, 2008-09). The *2009 ASU Fact*

Book revealed that 67% of students enrolled in the fall semester of 2008 were female and 33% were male. Table 1 depicts a detailed summary of enrollment by age group and gender.

Table 1

ASU Enrollment by Age and Gender, Fall 2008

| Age Group | Female | Male | Total | Percent of Total |
|-------------------|--------|-------|-------|------------------|
| 20 – 21 years old | 225 | 93 | 318 | 10% |
| 22 – 24 years old | 483 | 226 | 709 | 21% |
| 25 – 29 years old | 453 | 253 | 705 | 21% |
| 30 – 34 years old | 315 | 153 | 468 | 14% |
| 35 – 39 years old | 298 | 125 | 423 | 13% |
| 40 – 49 years old | 342 | 188 | 530 | 16% |
| 50 – 64 years old | 108 | 65 | 173 | 5% |
| Total | 2,227 | 1,103 | 3,330 | 100.00% |

Source: 2009 Athens State University Fact Book

The majority of students enrolled in the fall 2008 were between the ages of 22 and 29 years old (42%). The next largest population was between the ages of 40 and 49 (16%).

More females were enrolled on a full-time basis (69%) while more males were enrolled as part-time students (35%). The average student course load for fall 2008 was 9.5 credit hours (ASU Fact Book, 2009). Table 2 details these statistics.

Table 2

ASU Enrollment by Full-Time/Part-Time Status and Gender, Fall 2008

| Gender | Full-Time | Part-Time | Total Enrolled |
|--------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| Female | 1,016 | 1,211 | 2,227 |
| Male | 446 | 657 | 1,103 |
| Total | 1,462 | 1,868 | 3,330 |

Source: 2009 Athens State University Fact Book

The mean GPA of students enrolled in 2008 was 3.259. ASU awarded 816 baccalaureate degrees during the 2008 academic year. The majority of students who graduated in 2008 were between the ages of 22 and 34 (64%) and 33% graduated with honors. Female students accounted for 68% of 2008 graduates. The top five feeder colleges for ASU in 2008 were, in descending order, Calhoun Community College, Wallace State Community College - Hanceville, Northeast State Community College, Northwest Shoals Community College, and Snead State Community College (ASU Fact Book, 2009). Table 3 provides a breakdown of this data.

Table 3

Top Five Feeder Colleges, Fall 2008

| Alabama Community College | Percent of ASU Enrollment |
|---|---------------------------|
| Calhoun Community College | 27% |
| Wallace Community College – Hanceville | 11% |
| Northeast Alabama State Community College | 7% |
| Northwest Shoals Community College | 5% |
| Snead State Community College | 4% |

Source: 2009 Athens State University Fact Book

Fall 2008 graduates were spread evenly throughout all three colleges with 36% graduating from the College of Business, 34% graduating from the College of Arts and Sciences, and 30% graduating from the College of Education. Table 4 depicts specific information regarding graduates by College.

Table 4

ASU Graduates by College of Record, 2008

| College of Record | Number of Graduates |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Business | 285 |
| Arts & Sciences | 270 |
| Education | 261 |
| Total | 816 |

Source: 2009 Athens State University Fact Book

Study Population and Participant Sample

This study administered the LABS-III instrument along with a brief demographic survey to students of the three colleges during the spring and summer semesters of 2009. The sample size for this study was 300 students, or approximately 9% of the total semester enrollment as reported by the *2009 ASU Fact Book*, and included morning, afternoon, and evening classes. No distance learning classes were included in this study. Final enrollment data from the Office of the Registrar was used to select classes from each of the three colleges. Surveys were administered to a convenience sample of students in both junior and senior level classes. Classes were selected that meet general education requirements for most degree programs from each of the three colleges.

Instrumentation

This study used the *Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale III* (LABS-III) to determine the preferred leadership patterns of students at Athens State University. The LABS-III is copyrighted by Wielkiewicz (2000) and is available for use for research purposes without permission of the author. However, the principal investigator in this study requested and received written approval to use the instrument for the purpose of this study (Appendix C). In addition to the LABS-III instrument, this employed a demographic questionnaire to gather information regarding the gender, age group, employment status, and college of record of the participants. The entire survey instrument is included as Appendix B.

Wielkiewicz (2000) developed an instrument that would measure thinking consistent with the ecology theory of leadership. Wielkiewicz's instrument gathered information on any student's perceptions of leadership processes and how they expect leaders to act. His original research with the early LABS instrument was conducted at two educational institutions and

included 676 individuals. Both institutions were recipients of grants for the purpose of exploring alternatives to the hierarchical model of leadership. The initial instrument included eighty-six statements related to leadership and organizational adaptability. After some empirical testing by Wielkiewicz, eight dimensions related to Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz's (1998) ecological theory of leadership emerged. These dimensions included authority, relationship orientation, ethics, learning orientation, change-centered, systems thinking, positional leadership dependence and cooperative leadership processes. Each of these dimensions was subjected to reliability analysis to ensure that each one did indeed relate to the conceptual model. The results showed that these eight scales could be realigned into two independent dimensions: systemic and hierarchical. Each dimension was created by selecting items representing each of the eight original scales. Fourteen items were selected to represent the two new dimensions for a total of twenty-eight items on the new instrument. Once the new instrument was developed it was subjected to a principal components analysis to ensure that the two new components of systemic and hierarchical did indeed emerge. The result was the LABS-III instrument. The original instrument was pared down to twenty-eight statements divided into two dimensions entitled Hierarchical Thinking and Systemic Thinking. The revised LABS-III instrument includes fourteen Hierarchical Thinking statements that lean in the traditional direction of leadership that consists of top-down authority and decision-making. In addition, there are fourteen Systemic Thinking statements that present a collaborative environment with a long-term focus on and culture of continuous learning. Both portions of the LABS-III instrument were found to be extremely reliable based on Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The Hierarchical Thinking measure had a coefficient alpha of .84 while the Systemic Thinking portion of the instrument had a

coefficient alpha of .88. In addition, repetitive studies have reported consistent means and standard deviations of both the systemic and hierarchical scales.

The LABS-III instrument uses a five-point Likert Scale (ranging from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree). Items 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 25, 27 and 28 of the instrument make up the hierarchical thinking portion. The remaining fourteen items make up the systemic thinking scale. The lower scores on the systemic thinking items are associated with stronger beliefs in the systemic nature of leadership. The lower scores on the hierarchical thinking items are associated with stronger beliefs in the hierarchical nature of leadership.

According to the ecological theory of leadership developed by Allen, Stelzner and Wielkiewicz (1998), an organization or community that includes more systemic thinkers will be more adaptive and successful. These individuals view leadership as a cooperative effort and realize the importance of keeping up with a constantly changing environment. In contrast, those who value hierarchical thinking will be less likely to invite the free-flow of information and will be less aware of the complex and diverse nature of today's organization. Wielkiewicz (2000) stated that these individuals "have the potential to do considerable damage to organizations" (p. 345). He concluded that although it was evident that organizations that operate in a systemic thinking manner will be more adaptive and successful in today's changing environment, an individual who places more value on hierarchical thinking will likely be unhappy in this environment. A systemic thinker will experience frustration in a hierarchical environment. Thus, the LABS-III instrument may provide a valid method for determining an individual's orientation for future success.

Thompson (2006) used the LABS-III instrument in a study regarding student leadership process development at a small liberal private arts institution located in the Midwest. The

sample size was 453 students and the study only involved junior and senior level students because they had been at the institution longer and had more exposure to institutional resources. In addition to the LABS-III instrument, Thompson's study used eight dependent variable categories including arts and entertainment, coursework experiences, faculty and administrative interactions, athletics, internships or off-campus study, political/social organizations, peer experiences, and volunteer experiences. The study also collected information regarding American College Test (ACT) Scores and college grade point averages (GPA). Research results revealed that college GPA affected students' leadership behaviors much more than ACT scores did. In addition, results showed significant positive differences in five of the eight categories including coursework, internships, faculty and administrative interactions, peer experiences, and athletics. Thompson suggests further research using the LABS-III to help educators understand the leadership preferences of their students as well as to develop programs that strengthen the development of student leadership potential.

Procedures for Data Collection

The LABS-III instrument, along with the demographic survey, was administered to the sample population (approximately 30 classes) by the primary investigator during live classes using a paper and pencil method. The approximate time to complete both instruments was 10-12 minutes. The data collection process consisted of the following steps. A brief statement of explanation regarding this study was provided to introduce the two instruments. Additionally, an Explanatory Protocol Statement (see Appendix A) was provided to each participant explaining their rights as participants in the research project. All forms and data collection documents were stapled together to form one packet of material. Students were invited to participate on a voluntary basis only and were assured, both in writing in the introduction statement and orally by

the primary investigator, that all data collection forms would be coded for anonymity and confidentiality. The primary investigator monitored the return rate of surveys to ensure that an appropriate number were collected for equal representation among colleges.

Data Analysis Methods

The study employed quantitative research using an existing instrument, the LABS-III, developed and validated by Wielkiewicz (2000) and a demographic survey prepared by the investigator. The results of both portions of the instrument were summarized using descriptive statistics.

Data from the surveys was collected in a structured response form. Barnett (1991) explained that structured responses are those “in which the respondent has to answer within a set of permitted categories” (p. 73). Further, he noted that the most convenient way to code structured responses is through the use of numeric codes (0 and 1). Barnett stated that coding provides convenience in processing data using a computer and also allows “interpretability of the numerically coded responses from the point of view of analysis” (p. 74).

This study addressed six research questions. The survey instrument (see Appendix B) was designed to address these questions. Research Question One asked, “What are the preferred leadership patterns of the students at Athens State University?” This question was addressed through a summative score on the LABS-III instrument. Respondents who score lower on the systemic items on the instrument (items, 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26) will have a stronger affinity for the systemic nature of leadership. Respondents who score lower on the hierarchical items (3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28) will favor a hierarchical form of leadership. In addition to descriptive statistics related to the two summative scores

(hierarchical and systemic), frequency and percentage distributions for each survey item were calculated, analyzed and presented.

Research Question Two asked, “What differences exist in the number of students who prefer one leadership pattern (systemic or hierarchical) more than another based upon gender, age group, employment status, and college of record?” This question was addressed by producing cross-tabulations of the indicator of the preferred leadership style for each student as determined by the responses to the LABS-III portion of the instrument by the categories in each of these demographic groupings, analyzing and presenting the results.

Research Question Three asked, “Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon gender?” was analyzed through the calculation, analysis and presentation of the results of chi-square testing. Research Questions Four, Five, and Six regarding differences based upon age group, employment status, and college of record were also analyzed through the calculation, analysis and presentation of the results of chi-square testing.

Finally, the LABS-III instrument was subjected to reliability analysis through the calculation of Cronbach’s coefficient alpha scores for each of the two measured scales – hierarchical and systemic – to ensure that, for this sample, the scales were as reliable as previously were reported by Wielkiewicz (2000).

Gibilisco (2004) defined an independent variable as a variable that “changes but its value is not influenced by anything else in the scenario” and a dependent variable as a variable that “changes but its value is affected by at least one other factor in the situation” (p. 8). The dependent variables in this study are the systemic and hierarchical styles of leadership. The

independent variables in this study are the participants' gender, age group, employment status, and college of record.

Summary

This chapter presented the research questions that form the framework for this study. It also described the conceptual framework for the study. In addition, this chapter provided descriptive data regarding the research setting and the study population. Also included in the chapter was an in depth discussion of the research instrument and procedures for the collection of study data. Finally, this chapter provided information regarding the data analysis methods to be used in this study.

CHAPTER IV:

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This study gathered information specific to the Athens State University student and their leadership styles, beliefs, and preferred leadership patterns and to determine if there was a significant difference in leadership patterns among students based on a set of demographic variables. Data will present the results of data analysis using descriptive statistics as well as provide a setting for further discussion and conclusions.

A variety of statistical methods were utilized in the analysis of survey data including descriptive statistics to determine frequency and percentage distributions; cross-tabulations of preferred leadership patterns with demographic variables including gender, employment status, age group, and college of record; and chi-square testing to determine any significant differences based on gender, age group, employment status or college of record. Finally, the researcher tested the reliability of the LABS-III instrument and compared those results with previous research results as reported by the LABS-III author.

Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of 300 participants, with many more females ($n = 172$) or 57% than males ($n = 128$) or 43%. Table 5 provides descriptive data regarding the gender of the study participants.

Table 5

Study Participants by Gender

| Gender | Number of Participants | Percent of Study Sample |
|--------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Female | 172 | 57% |
| Male | 128 | 43% |
| Total | 300 | 100% |

Student age was grouped by category on the survey. Data analysis illustrates that the largest group of respondents were between the ages of 19 and 22 years old followed closely by those aged 23 to 25. The smallest group of students who participated in this study was between the ages of 51 and 60 years old. One age group had no responses (those 61 years and older). Table 6 provides statistical data regarding the age of study participants.

Table 6

Study Participants by Age Group

| Age Group | Number of Participants | Percent of Study Sample |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 19 – 22 years old | 83 | 28% |
| 23 – 25 years old | 76 | 25% |
| 26 – 30 years old | 52 | 17% |
| 31 – 40 years old | 48 | 16% |
| 41 – 50 years old | 35 | 12% |
| 51 – 60 years old | 5 | 1% |
| 61 years or older | 0 | 0% |
| *Missing Data | 2 | 1% |
| Total Sample | 300 | 100% |

**Two respondents did not indicate an age group and therefore represent missing data.*

In addition, research data showed that most of the study participants (77%) were employed either part-time or full-time with almost equal distribution (39% part-time and 38% full-time). Sixty-nine of the survey participants (23%) were not employed at the time the survey instrument was administered. Table 7 depicts the breakdown of respondents based on employment status.

Table 7

Study Participants by Employment Status

| Employment Status | Number of Participants | Percent of Study Sample |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Employed Part-Time | 116 | 39% |
| Employed Full-Time | 115 | 38% |
| Not Employed | 69 | 23% |
| Total | 300 | 100% |

The last demographic variable gathered was the college of record for each respondent. Final data reveal that each of the three colleges was equally represented in the study with 34% from the College of Education, 33% from the College of Business, and 33% from the College of Arts and Sciences. Table 8 provides statistics regarding study participants by college of record.

Table 8

Study Participants by College of Record

| College of Record | Number of Participants | Percent of Study Sample |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| College of Education | 102 | 34% |
| College of Arts & Sciences | 100 | 33% |
| College of Business | 98 | 33% |
| Total | 300 | 100% |

Although data regarding course times was not included in any of the research questions, the researcher ensured that a mixture of classes was included in the study. Frequency data revealed that 63% of the respondents participated through a daytime (between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.) course while 37% of the respondents participated through an evening class (between 4:00

and 10:00 pm). Table 9 reports data regarding the distribution of participants across course times.

Table 9

Study Participants Across Course Times

| Course Time | Number of Participants | Percent of Study Sample |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Between 8:00 am & 4:00 pm | 188 | 67% |
| Between 4:00 pm & 10:00 pm | 112 | 37% |
| Total | 300 | 100% |

Comparative Statistics

Comparisons between the sample population and the overall population of the institution were made in terms of gender, age group, and college of record. Currently, ASU does not collect data regarding the employment status of students. Therefore, a comparison between the sample population and the overall population of the institution was not conducted. Regarding gender, according to the *2009 ASU Fact Book*, 67% of the students enrolled in the fall 2008 semester were female while 33% were male. Data analysis for this study shows a small variance in that 57% of the study participants were female and 43% were male. A chi-square test was conducted to determine if the study population accurately reflects the overall student population of institution as reported by the *2009 ASU Fact Book*. These results reveal a statistical significance in the gender composition of study participants and the overall student population ($\chi^2=6.453$, $df=1$, $p=.01$). Table 10 provides this data.

Comparisons regarding study participants' college of record with data reported in the *2009 ASU Fact Book* were also completed. Results revealed that the largest percentage of study

participants were enrolled in the College of Business at 36% while *2009 ASU Fact Book* data show an enrollment rate in the College of Business at 33%. The percentage of survey participants enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences was 33% which matched the number reported by the *2009 ASU Fact Book*. The percentage of survey participants enrolled in the College of Education was 31% while the *2009 ASU Fact Book* reported an enrollment percentage of 34%. A chi-square test reveals no statistical significance in the college of record of study participants versus the college of record of students as reported through institutional data in the *2009 ASU Fact Book* ($\chi^2=0.08$, $df=2$, $p=.961$). This data is available in Table 10.

Additionally, the *2009 ASU Fact Book* stated that the largest group of students enrolled in the fall of 2008 were between the ages of 22 and 29 (42%) years old while the largest group of students who participated in this study were between the ages of 19 and 25 (53%). A chi-square test reveals a statistical significance in the age of study participants and the age of students based on institutional data provided in the *Fact Book* ($\chi^2=82.819$, $df=5$, $p<.001$). Table 10 portrays these results.

Table 10

Comparative Analysis for Demographic Variables

| Variable | Chi-square | df | Sig. |
|----------|------------|----|-------|
| Gender | 6.453 | 1 | .011 |
| Age | 82.819 | 5 | <.001 |
| College | 14.420 | 2 | .961 |

Source: 2009 Athens State University Fact Book

Preferred Leadership Style Statistics

Research Question One

Research Question One asked, “What are the preferred leadership patterns of the students at Athens State University?” Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS®), a frequency distribution analysis was conducted to determine summative scores. Results revealed that the number of respondents who preferred the hierarchical style of leadership was 265 while the scores for those who preferred the systemic style of leadership was 35. Table 11 reflects the frequency and percentage distributions and the overwhelming number of respondents who preferred the hierarchical style of leadership over the systemic style.

Table 11

Preferred Leadership Styles of Study Participants – Summative

| Preferred Style | Number of Participants | Percent of Study Sample |
|-----------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Hierarchical | 265 | 88.3% |
| Systemic | 35 | 11.7% |
| Total Sample | 300 | 100.0% |

(Median = .00)

The LABS-III instrument designed by Dr. Richard Wielkiewicz contains twenty-eight statements regarding leadership. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement by circling the response that best represents their opinion. The response choices were (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, or (5) strongly disagree. Results of a descriptive frequency analysis indicate the following data regarding the mean, standard deviation, and percentage of responses for each statement. Table 12 indicates the results of the survey. Each statement is followed by a descriptor indicating whether it was a hierarchical (H) or systemic (S) item.

Table 12

LABS-III Statements Results

| Median | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Missing Data | Total |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|--------------|-------|
| <i>Individuals need to take initiative to help their organization accomplish its goals. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1.00 | 55% | 40.7% | 3.7% | .7% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>Leadership should encourage innovation. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1.00 | 51% | 47.0% | 1.3% | .7% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>A leader must maintain tight control of the organization. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 26% | 41.3% | 20% | 10.3% | 1.3% | 1.0% | 100% |
| <i>Everyone in an organization needs to be responsible for accomplishing organizational goals.(S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1.50 | 49.7% | 43.3% | 3.7% | 2.7% | 0.0% | .7% | 100% |
| <i>Leadership processes involve the participation of all organization members.(S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 41.3% | 45.3% | 8% | 3.7% | .3% | 1.3% | 100% |
| <i>A leader must control the group or organization. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 21.3% | 43.0% | 19.3% | 15% | 1.3% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>A leader should maintain complete authority. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 3.00 | 12.7% | 37.0% | 21.0% | 24% | 5.0% | .3% | 100% |
| <i>A leader should take charge of the group. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 31.7% | 47.7% | 13.7% | 6% | .7% | .3% | 100% |
| <i>Organizational actions should improve life for future generations. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 41.3% | 45.3% | 12.0% | 1% | 0.0% | .3% | 100% |
| <i>The main task of a leader is to make the important decisions for an organization. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 19.3% | 49.7% | 19.3% | 10.3% | .7% | .7% | 100% |
| <i>Leadership activities should foster discussions about the future. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 35.0% | 54.0% | 9.0% | 1.3% | 0.0% | .7% | 100% |
| <i>Effective leadership seeks out resources needed to adapt to a changing world. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1.50 | 50.0% | 43.7% | 4.3% | 1.7% | .3% | 0.0% | 100% |

| Median | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Missing Data | Total |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|--------------|-------|
| <i>The main tasks of a leader are to make and then communicate decisions. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 25.7% | 47.3% | 13.7% | 11% | 2.0% | .3% | 100% |
| <i>An effective organization develops its human resources. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 34.3% | 52.5% | 12.3% | .7% | 0.0% | .3% | 100% |
| <i>It is important that a single leader emerges in a group. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 3.00 | 15.0% | 28.0% | 28.0% | 24.7% | 4.3% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>Members should be completely loyal to the designated leaders of an organization. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 19.7% | 38.7% | 27.3% | 12.3% | 1.7% | .3% | 100% |
| <i>The most important members of an organization are its leaders. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 4.00 | 7.0% | 16.3% | 22.7% | 37.3% | 16.7% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>Anticipating the future is one of the most important roles of leadership processes. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 22.7% | 52.0% | 20.3% | 3.7% | 1.3% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>Good leadership requires that ethical issues have high priority. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 43.3% | 42.0% | 11.0% | 3.3% | .3% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>Successful organizations make continuous learning their highest priority. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 38.0% | 48.7% | 10.7% | 2% | 0.0% | .7% | 100% |
| <i>Positional leaders deserve credit for the success of an organization. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 12.7% | 41.3% | 26.3% | 14.7% | 4.7% | .3% | 100% |
| <i>The responsibility for taking risks lies with the leaders of an organization. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 17.3% | 47.0% | 23.3% | 10% | 1.7% | .7% | 100% |
| <i>Environmental preservation should be a core value of every organization. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 19.7% | 39.0% | 32.3% | 7.3% | 1.3% | .3% | 100% |
| <i>Organizations must be ready to adapt to changes that occur outside the organization. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 46.7% | 45.3% | 6.3% | 1% | .7% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>When an organization is in danger of failure, new leaders are needed to fix its problems. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 3.00 | 12.0% | 25.0% | 40.0% | 20.7% | 2.3% | 0.0% | 100% |

| Median | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Missing Data | Total |
|---|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|--------------|-------|
| <i>An organization needs flexibility in order to adapt to a rapidly changing world. (S)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 47.3% | 48.0% | 2.7% | 1.3% | .7% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>Leaders are responsible for the security of organization members. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 21.3% | 53.0% | 19.7% | 5.3% | .7% | 0.0% | 100% |
| <i>An organization should try to remain as stable as possible. (H)</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2.00 | 44.7% | 46.7% | 7.0% | .7% | 1.0% | 0.0% | 100% |

Research Question Two

Research Question Two asked, “What differences exist in the number of students who prefer one leadership pattern (systemic or hierarchical) more than another based upon gender, age group, employment status, and college of record?” The researcher used a cross-tabulation method comparing preferred leadership patterns with each of the demographics listed in research question two as well as a chi-square test to determine any significance based on each of these variables. The first cross tabulation was completed specific to gender and revealed that 157 of the females preferred the hierarchical style of leadership while 108 of the males preferred this same style. Conversely, 15 of females indicated that they preferred the systemic leadership style while 20 of males preferred the systemic style. Table 13 depicts these results.

Table 13

Preferred Leadership Styles by Gender

| Gender | Hierarchical | Systemic | Total |
|--------|--------------|----------|-------|
| Female | 157 | 15 | 172 |
| Male | 108 | 20 | 128 |
| Total | 265 | 35 | 300 |

Age groups were analyzed through cross tabulation with their preferred leadership style. Data revealed that for the largest age group (19-22 years old) 88% preferred a hierarchical leadership style while only 12% preferred a systemic leadership style. Of those between the ages of 23 and 25 years old, 86% preferred hierarchical leadership while 14% preferred systemic leadership. Respondents who were between 26 and 30 years old preferred a hierarchical leadership style over systemic at a rate of 85% and 15% respectively. The next group featured respondents between the ages of 31 and 40 years old and this group reflected a 90% affinity towards the hierarchical style while only ten percent preferred the systemic style. Those between the ages of 41 and 50 years old held the highest percentage of preference for the hierarchical style at a rate of 97% and the lowest percentage of preference for the systemic style at a rate of 3%. The final age group, those between the ages of 51 and 60 years old, revealed a 100% affinity for the hierarchical style of leadership. Table 14 provides the results of the cross-tabulation analysis regarding the preferred leadership styles by age group.

Table 14

Preferred Leadership Style by Age Group

| Age Group | Hierarchical | % | Systemic | % | Total |
|-------------------|--------------|------|-----------|-----|------------|
| 19-22 years old | 73 | 88% | 10 | 12% | 83 |
| 23 – 25 years old | 65 | 86% | 11 | 14% | 76 |
| 26 – 30 years old | 44 | 85% | 8 | 15% | 52 |
| 31 – 40 years old | 43 | 90% | 5 | 10% | 48 |
| 41 – 50 years old | 34 | 97% | 1 | 3% | 35 |
| 51 – 60 years old | 4 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 4 |
| 61 years or older | 0 | -- | 0 | -- | 0 |
| *Missing Data | | | | | 2 |
| TOTAL | 263 | | 35 | | 300 |

**Two respondents did not indicate an age group and therefore represent missing data.*

The next demographic studied was employment status. Of those preferring the hierarchical style of leadership, the largest group of respondents, 90% (104), were those employed full-time, followed by those employed part-time at 84% (97), and finally those who were not employed at all, at 93% (64). Those who preferred the systemic style of leadership numbered much less and were led by those employed part-time. Sixteen percent (19) of those employed part-time preferred the systemic style while 9% (11) were employed full-time. Seven percent (5) of those who were not employed at all indicated that they preferred the systemic style of leadership. Table 15 provides data regarding the preferred leadership styles based on the employment status of study participants.

Table 15

Preferred Leadership Style by Employment Status

| Employment Status | Hierarchical | % | Systemic | % | Total | % |
|--------------------|--------------|-----|----------|-----|-------|------|
| Employed Full-Time | 104 | 90% | 11 | 10% | 115 | 100% |
| Employed Part-Time | 97 | 84% | 19 | 16% | 116 | 100% |
| Not Employed | 64 | 93% | 5 | 7% | 69 | 100% |
| Total | 265 | | 35 | | 300 | |

A cross tabulation method was also used specific to the respondents' college of record. The responses of those who preferred the hierarchical style of leadership were almost identical by college. Response numbers for those preferring this style of leadership were 89 from the College of Arts and Sciences, 88 from the College of Education, and 88 from the College of Business. The largest number who preferred the systemic style of leadership were from the College of Education with 14 respondents, followed by the College of Arts and Sciences with 11 respondents, and then the College of Business with 10 respondents. Table 16 provides statistics regarding preferred leadership style and participants' college of record.

Table 16

Preferred Leadership Style by College of Record

| College of Record | Hierarchical | % | Systemic | % | Total | % |
|----------------------------|--------------|-----|----------|-----|-------|------|
| College of Education | 88 | 86% | 14 | 14% | 102 | 100% |
| College of Arts & Sciences | 89 | 89% | 11 | 11% | 100 | 100% |
| College of Business | 88 | 90% | 10 | 10% | 98 | 100% |
| Total | 265 | | 35 | | 300 | |

Research Question Three

Research Question Three asked, “Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based on gender?” As noted earlier, 128 of the respondents were male and 172 respondents were female. Female respondents preferred the hierarchical style at a rate of 91% while male respondents preferred this same style at a rate of 84%. Regarding the systemic leadership style, males preferred this style of leadership more than females at a rate of 16% compared to 9%, respectively. Table 17 outlines this data.

Table 17

Percentages of Preferred Leadership Styles by Gender

| Gender | Total Participants | Preferred Hierarchical Style | Preferred Systemic Style |
|--------|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Female | 172 | 91% | 9% |
| Male | 128 | 84% | 16% |
| Total | 300 | -- | -- |

A chi-square test was conducted to determine the association of the demographic variable of gender to the preferred leadership style of study participants. Results of the chi-square data analysis revealed that there were no significant differences regarding preferred leadership styles between female and male respondents in this study, ($\chi^2=3.394$, $df=1$, $p=.065$). Results of the chi-square test can be reviewed in Table 18.

Research Questions Four, Five, and Six

Research Questions Four, Five, and Six focused on any significant differences in preferred leadership styles and the employment status of students, their age group, and their college of record, respectively. Chi-square tests of independence were conducted using the age group, the employment status, and the college of record as testing variables to test the association of each demographic variable to the preferred leadership style of study participants. First, data were analyzed concerning the age groups and results revealed no significant differences in preferred leadership styles based on age groups ($\chi^2=4.499$, $df=5$, $p=.480$). Next, data were analyzed regarding the employment status (full-time, part-time, or not employed) of the respondents. Results revealed that there were no significant differences regarding preferred leadership styles among the three employment status groups ($\chi^2=4.301$, $df=2$, $p=.116$). Finally, a chi-square test was computed regarding the college of record for respondents and the data showed no significant differences in preferred leadership styles by college of record ($\chi^2=0.666$, $df=2$, $p=.717$). Results of these analyses are presented in Table 18.

Table 18

Chi-Square Results for Participants by Demographic Variable

| Variable | Chi-square | <i>df</i> | <i>Sig</i> |
|-------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender | 3.394 | 1 | .066 |
| Age Group | 4.499 | 5 | .480 |
| Employment Status | 4.301 | 2 | .116 |
| College of Record | .666 | 2 | .717 |

$\alpha = .05;$

Reliability Statistics

Finally, the researcher conducted reliability analysis of both the hierarchical items and the systemic items that make up the LABS-III instrument. The Cronbach's coefficient Alpha score for both the hierarchical portion as well as the systemic portion of the LABS-III instrument was .86. Previous studies by Wielkiewicz (2000) reported a coefficient alpha of .84 for the hierarchical scale and a coefficient alpha of .88 for the systemic scale. Table 19 reports the results of reliability analysis.

Table 19

Reliability Analysis of LABS-III: Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha Scores

| | Current Study | Previous Studies |
|--------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Hierarchical Scale | .86 | .84 |
| Systemic Scale | .86 | .88 |

Summary

This chapter focused on the results of data analysis for both the LABS-III instrument as well as the demographic portion of the survey. Descriptive statistics were provided regarding the gender, the age group, the employment status, and the college of record for the students that participated in this study. In addition, information was included showing the breakdown of study respondents who participated in either a daytime course or an evening course. Next, this chapter provided comparison statistics between the study population and the overall ASU student population regarding gender, age group and college of record. Results of statistical analysis regarding the preferred leadership styles of the study participants was provided in both summative form and by demographic variable including gender, age group, employment status, and college of record. Finally, the researcher provided reliability statistics for the LABS-III instrument. The next chapter will use the data provided in Chapter Four to facilitate a discussion of the study results and to provide a foundation for recommendations for policy and practice as well as recommendations for future research. Chapter Five will also provide some concluding remarks and observations for this study.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to provide information to the leadership of Athens State University regarding the institution's student population and their preferred leadership style. As part of a 2006 reaffirmation effort, the institution administered an employer survey regarding the skills of the institution's graduates. The results of this survey reflected a weakness in the students' ability to lead others (Institutional Report for Reaffirmation of ACBSP Accreditation, 2006). As a result, the College of Business redesigned two courses in the curriculum to specifically address these weaknesses.

Using inferential statistics, the results of this research study provide meaningful data regarding the preferred leadership styles of the institution's student population. This baseline data can be useful in that it provides a starting point for designing course improvements and strengthening the curriculum across the institution and, ultimately, strengthening the leadership skills of ASU graduates.

Findings

The findings in this particular study were not statistically significant regarding the demographic variables of gender, age group, employment status, or college of record meaning that none of these variables had a significant effect on the preferred leadership style of the ASU student. While there are numerous other demographic variables that could be researched that

may reflect statistical significance, the results of this specific study did provide meaningful data. The most significant and potentially problematic outcome was that the majority of ASU students currently lean toward the more traditional hierarchical style of leadership. However, the literature review provided in Chapter Two strongly suggested that previous traditional (hierarchical) leadership strategies will not effectively address today's global environment. Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) have asserted that the modern world presents numerous adaptive challenges to leadership and propose taking an ecology approach that focuses on the leadership issues that result from systemic processes. They also stated that "leadership based on position and authority is inadequate for the challenges we face today" (p. 63). Instead of the previous notion of leadership that involves a single figure with total responsibility, Allen et al. (1998) have suggested a new method is needed to represent the "living systems in which leadership processes operate" (p. 69).

Based on this premise, Athens State University, and higher education as a whole, stands at a crossroads. To continue doing what has always been done will provide the same results in student leadership skills, and this will not be sufficient. There must be a paradigm shift from the traditional hierarchical platform to the adaptive systemic platform. This leadership paradigm must be embraced by both educators and students. The hierarchical style of leadership will always have its place and will still remain appropriate in certain environments. However, systemic leadership attributes will replace many of the traditional management settings. These skills and practices must be provided through updated instructional pedagogy to include modeling and simulation exercises.

Senge (2006) noted that the title of leader has come to signify a position of authority or an individual at the top of the organizational chart. He added that this practice infers a level of

power to individuals in the position of leader that is not shared by those lower on the same organizational chart. Senge has stated that this minimizes the effect of all organizational members and their ability to affect change. He has stated that there are leaders at every level of the organization and notes that the ecology of leadership way of thinking was developed to recognize the vital role that each organizational member plays.

Descriptive statistics reveal that the average study participant was female between the ages of 19 and 25 years old and was employed either full or part-time. This varies somewhat from the average student currently enrolled at Athens State University as reported by the *2009 ASU Fact Book*. The *ASU Fact Book* reported that the average ASU student is a 31-year old female who is employed full-time. Results of this survey may vary because there were more day than evening classes involved in the research. As noted in Chapter Four the largest portion (63 percent) of survey responses were gathered from courses offered between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. The primary investigator suspects that had more participants been surveyed in evening classes the age of the respondents would have been higher.

It was evident from the statistical analysis conducted and reported in Chapter Four that study participants overwhelmingly preferred the hierarchical style of leadership. Only 12% of the study participants preferred the systemic style of leadership while 88% preferred the more traditional hierarchical style of leadership. This result was somewhat surprising to the researcher based on the young age of the average study participant. A review of the literature suggested that younger individuals would be more likely to prefer the open, relationship-oriented style of systemic leadership. Although the number of those who preferred the systemic style of leadership was higher among younger study participants it was still much smaller than expected. Another interesting result was the statistic that revealed that those between the ages of 26 and 30

years of age had a higher preference for the systemic style of leadership than the younger age groups. The significant number of students who preferred the hierarchical style of leadership as reported by this study may have been influenced by the large number of active duty and retired military personnel who reside in the institution's service area. In addition, there are a number of defense contractors and manufacturing industries in north Alabama that operate under the traditional hierarchical management style. Students living and working in these environments will, no doubt, be affected by these factors. This environment may even negatively affect the institution's ability to 'turn the tide' in its attempt to produce more systemic leaders through programmatic adjustments. However, significant, maybe even radical, changes must be made to the current curriculum at ASU in order to produce graduates that possess the skills necessary to be successful leaders in today's dynamic and changing world.

Study results revealed that a larger percentage of females preferred the hierarchical style of leadership at a rate of 91% while 84% of males preferred this style. Conversely, more males preferred the systemic style of leadership at a rate of 16% while only 9% of females preferred this style. Although the literature review for this study did not specifically discuss the differences in leadership styles based upon gender, this research statistic was surprising. It is well-supported in current literature that males tend to rely more on the authoritative, top-down style of leadership while females lean more in the direction of relationship-based leadership skills. However, the results of this specific study contradict these assumptions. These results should be considered as adjustments in the leadership curriculum are made at ASU. Gender-bias has traditionally been a part of leadership studies. However, based on the results of this study it is imperative that these biases be addressed using more current research. In addition, any new

leadership development programs at ASU must include strong systemic components for all participants.

As noted earlier, study results revealed that the older the study participant the more likely they were to prefer the hierarchical style of leadership. While 88% of the youngest participants (19 – 22 years old) preferred the hierarchical style of leadership, 100% of the oldest participants (51 – 60 years old) preferred this leadership style. As the study participants' age increased so did their preference for the hierarchical style of leadership. Conversely, the older the study participant the less likely they were to prefer the systemic style of leadership. These results were expected by the researcher based upon a review of current literature. These results provide an excellent opportunity for change at the institution. While the current economic downturn in the United States is causing an expected increase in college enrollment among older, returning students, the traditional college-age student will continue to populate college campuses. These younger students will be armed with sharpened skills in technology and diversity and their expectations of career preparation will be driven not by a national environment but a global one. Athens State University and other institutions must meet the challenges of today's student and tomorrow's leader by providing learning experiences that involve systemic skills including shared responsibility for organizational success, continuous feedback channels, and the ability to adapt quickly to fluid world events.

Preferred leadership styles did not appear to be affected by the employment status of the study participants. Those most preferring the hierarchical style of leadership, at a rate of 93%, involved study participants who were not employed followed by those employed full-time who preferred this style at a rate of 90%, and finally by those employed part-time who preferred the hierarchical leadership style at a rate of 84%. Those employed part-time revealed a higher

preference for the systemic leadership style at a rate of 16%. Those employed full-time preferred the systemic style at a rate of 10 percent and those not employed at all preferred this style of leadership at a rate of 7 percent. It was most interesting to the researcher that those who were not working at all had the highest preference for the hierarchical style of leadership. It would be helpful to know whether these individuals had ever been employed and what age group they were in. This data could be extremely helpful in curriculum redesign as it would provide a framework for current and preferred practice in employment situations. Numerous instructional tools are available that provide effective simulations in leadership situations. Incorporating these tools into course material would provide practical and tangible experiences for students, especially those with little or no employment history.

Study participants enrolled in the College of Business preferred the hierarchical style of leadership at a higher rate (90 percent) than students enrolled in the other two Colleges. Those enrolled in the College of Arts & Sciences followed closely at a rate of 89 percent. Finally, students enrolled in the College of Education preferred the hierarchical style of leadership at a rate of 86 percent. Those preferring the systemic style of leadership were led by students enrolled in the College of Education at a rate of 14 percent followed by students enrolled in the College of Arts & Sciences at a rate of 11 percent. Students enrolled in the College of Business preferred the systemic leadership style at a rate of 10 percent. It was not surprising that students from the College of Business (COB) were more likely to choose the hierarchical style of leadership. Although the field of leadership studies continues to evolve the most common framework presented in business programs is still based on the traditional, authoritative method of leading. What was surprising was the rate that students in the College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) preferred the hierarchical style of leadership. There are a wide variety of programs of

study available in the COAS and none of them present coursework in leadership skills. This fact led the primary investigator to expect a higher preference for the open, relationship-based format of the systemic style of leadership. However, data analysis from this study present that these students overwhelmingly preferred the older, more traditional style of leadership at a rate almost as high as COB students. It would be interesting to know why they chose this style and if it was based on personal experience or limited exposure to leadership coursework. Students from the College of Education preferred the systemic leadership style more than students in the other two colleges. The researcher expected that these students would have indicated a higher preference for the traditional form of leadership. Research results contradict this assumption and show that students preparing for a career as K-12 teachers had a higher preference for the systemic style of leadership. These research results point to the conclusion that issues surrounding leadership skills affect all students, regardless of their field of study, and that a peripheral glance at such issues in academic settings is no longer sufficient. Effective leaders are as vital in the kindergarten classroom as they are in the executive boardroom – this sentiment has not been disputed. The traditional business program would never consider turning out a graduate without at least one successful course in leadership skills. However, the traditional teacher education, computer science, or art history program has not previously provided leadership development courses as part of the standard curriculum. Future programs, regardless of their academic focus, must include substantial and regular leadership development opportunities and coursework for all students if the American workforce hopes to compete on a global stage.

Results of chi-square testing revealed that none of the demographic variables had a significant effect on the preferred leadership style of the study participants. The first variable tested was gender and results revealed no significant difference in preferred leadership style ($p =$

.065 > .05). The second variable tested was age group. Chi-square results revealed no significant differences in preferred leadership styles based on the age of the participant ($p = .480 > .05$). Next the researcher used the demographic variable of employment status and found that there were no significant differences in preferred leadership styles based on this variable ($p = .116 > .05$). The final variable tested was college of record. Chi-square results revealed no significant differences in preferred leadership style based on the study participants' college of record ($p = .717 > .05$).

The LABS-III survey instrument was subjected to reliability analysis and the results revealed that the Cronbach's coefficient Alpha score for both the hierarchical and systemic portions of the instrument was .86.

An item analysis of the LABS-III statements provides more specific and thought-provoking data. As noted in Chapter Three, the lower the score on the fourteen systemic items the more likely the respondent was to prefer the systemic style of leadership. Conversely, the lower the score on the fourteen hierarchical items the more likely the respondent was to lean in the direction of the more traditional hierarchical style of leadership. Statements One and Two were systemic in focus and respondents scored 95.7 percent and 98 percent, respectively, on the two lowest options (strongly agree, agree) of the scale. This indicates a stronger affinity toward the systemic style of leadership based on these statements.

Likewise, Statements Four and Five were also systemic and had responses at 93 percent and 86.6 percent, respectively, on the two lowest options on the scale pointing toward a more systemic preference. Statements Three, Six, Seven, and Eight were hierarchical in nature and had a high rate of mid-range (neither) responses. Statements Three, Six, and Seven also revealed that respondents disagreed with the statement at a rate of 10.3 percent, 15 percent, and 24 percent,

respectively. This placed their preferences on the high end which indicates that they were less likely to prefer the hierarchical style of leadership. Statement Eight was also hierarchical in nature but respondents scored 79.4 percent on the low end of the scale indicating a higher preference for this style of leadership.

Statements Nine, Eleven, and Twelve were all systemic in nature and respondents scored 86.6 percent, 89 percent, and 93.7 percent on the two lowest items on the scale. This means that they had a higher preference for the systemic style of leadership. Statements Ten, Thirteen, Fifteen, Sixteen, and Seventeen were hierarchical. Participants selected the three lowest scoring responses on these five statements at a rate of 88.3 percent, 86.7 percent, 71 percent, 85.7 percent, and 46 percent, respectively. It is interesting to note that these hierarchical statements experienced a higher response rate in the “neither” column than any of the previous systemic statements. It appears that respondents did not feel as strongly about these statements as they did some of the systemic statements. In addition, Statement Seventeen indicated a selection rate of 54 percent on the two highest scoring responses (disagree and strongly disagree). Based on the scoring constructs for the LABS-III instrument this would indicate a higher preference for the systemic style of leadership.

Statements Eighteen, Nineteen, and Twenty were systemic and had response rates towards the low end of the scale at a rate of 74.7 percent, 85.3 percent, and 86.7 percent, respectively, indicating a higher preference for systemic leadership. In addition, it is interesting to note that participants selected the “neither” or middle response at a rate of 20.3 percent, 11 percent, and 10.7 percent, respectively. This was surprising to the researcher who assumed that these three statements would all receive either a one (strongly agree) or a two (agree) rating because of their focus on anticipating the future, ethical leadership, and continuous learning.

Statements Twenty-One, Twenty-Two, and Twenty-Five were hierarchical in nature. Participants rated the three lowest scores (strongly agree, agree, neither) at a rate of 80.3 percent, 71.6 percent, and 77 percent, respectively. This means that they were more likely to prefer the hierarchical style of leadership towards these statements. It is interesting to note that these three statements received comparatively higher scores on the highest scoring responses (disagree and strongly disagree) on the scale at a rate of 19.4 percent, 11.7 percent, and 23 percent, respectively. It appears that the hierarchical statements were more likely to draw one of these responses than any of the systemic statements.

Statements Twenty-Three, Twenty-Four, and Twenty-Six were all systemic. Participants selected the two lowest scores at a rate of 58.7 percent, 92 percent, and 95.3 percent, respectively, indicating a higher preference for the systemic style of leadership. The final two statements, Twenty-Seven and Twenty-Eight, were hierarchical. Study participants selected the three lowest choices (strongly agree, agree, or neither) at a rate of 94 percent and 98.4 percent, respectively. This indicates that participants were more likely to prefer the hierarchical style of leadership based on these two statements.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research study was to determine the preferred leadership styles, beliefs, and patterns of students at Athens State University and to determine if there was a significant difference in leadership patterns among these students based on a set of demographic variables. The research was conducted through quantitative methodologies and used descriptive statistics to provide specific data regarding study participants including gender, age group, employment status, and college of record. Statistical results reveal that none of these variables had a significant effect on the preferred leadership styles of students. However, research results

did reveal that the study participants had a significantly higher preference for the traditional hierarchical style of leadership. Six research questions guided this study. They are restated here along with research results.

Research Question One

What are the preferred leadership patterns of the students at Athens State University?

Research results revealed that the students at Athens State University overwhelmingly preferred the traditional hierarchical style of leadership over the systemic style of leadership

Research Question Two

What differences exist in the number of students who prefer one leadership pattern (systemic or hierarchical) more than another based upon gender, age group, employment status, and college of record?

Research results revealed that females preferred the hierarchical style of leadership at a slightly higher rate than males. In addition, results show that the older the study participant the more likely they were to prefer the hierarchical style of leadership. There were only slight differences in preferred leadership style based upon employment status in that those who were not employed indicated a higher preference for the hierarchical style. Finally, there were no differences in the preferred leadership style based upon the study participants' college of record.

Research Question Three

Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon gender?

Results of this study reveal no statistically significant differences in leadership preferences based on gender.

Research Question Four

Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon their age group?

Research results from this study show that the age group of the study participant had no statistically significant affect on the participants' preferred leadership patterns.

Research Question Five

Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon their employment status?

Results of this study reveal no statistically significant differences in preferred leadership patterns of the study participants based upon their employment status.

Research Question Six

Are there significant differences in preferred leadership patterns among students at Athens State University based upon their college of record?

Research results reveal that the study participant's college of record had no statistically significant affect on the participants' preferred leadership patterns.

Based on the results provided by this study, the leadership of Athens State University will have essential information to help redesign curriculum that specifically promotes open, systemic leadership thinking among students with the goal of strengthening their leadership skills for the workplace. According to Thompson (2006) systemic thinkers and systemic organizations alike will likely find more success in the future and "will yield greater levels of overall adaptability, success, and sustainability" (p. 344). These findings and conclusions were used by the researcher to provide the following recommendations for policy and practice and as well as recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the results of this study, the students enrolled at Athens State University overwhelmingly preferred the traditional hierarchical style of leadership. Specifically, the older the student was, the more likely the preference for this style of leadership. The literature review provided in Chapter Two encourages a shift to a more systemic leadership style. Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) suggested replacing the traditional hierarchical style of leadership with an open process that involves all members of the organization. Senge (2006) noted that the type of leadership necessary for systemic change is being found in today's younger generation. Results of this specific study support this statement as reviewed in the statistical analysis of age groups and the corresponding preferred leadership style. Senge (2006) stated that "often ignored as leaders, teenagers and young adults have a strong stake in the future, perhaps the strongest" (p. 370).

Recommendation One

The instructional leadership of Athens State University should revisit the curriculum regarding leadership development across disciplines and examine the learning objectives. New learning objectives should be developed that focus more on an open, systemic style of leadership development and these objectives should permeate every degree program across the institution. This should include, according to Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998), an emphasis on relationship-building activities; skills for providing specific feedback that build trust; opportunities for collaboration among colleagues; an awareness and respect for diverse perspectives; and rewards for thinking outside the traditional leader/follower paradigm. Rubenstein (2005) has stated that today's workplace has changed and that the traditional leader/follower style will no longer be effective. He suggested a "distributed leadership" model

that transcends all levels of the organization and asserts that the key to future success will require involving all members of an organization in 'leadership prerogatives.' Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz (1998) have concluded that leadership in today's global society will demand an increase in personal responsibility and a decrease in dependence on positional leadership. Future research should note that the results of this particular study did not uncover any significant differences in preferred leadership style based on gender, age group, employment status, or college of record. Therefore, any new or revised curriculum initiatives would not necessarily need to target any one demographic.

Recommendation Two

The leadership of Athens State University should consider amending its institutional mission statement to include leadership skills development as one of its core commitments to students and faculty alike. Presently, ASU has an institutional mission statement and twelve goals related to achieving that mission. Neither the current mission statement nor the twelve goal statements include any language related to developing the leadership skills of its students. A specific statement that emphasizes the role of the university in developing the leadership skills of its students would provide a strong message and would ensure the inclusion of a leadership component in future learning objectives set by the institution. Taking an excerpt from the current mission statement, it appears that the most appropriate place for this inclusion is in the statement "The University prepares students for professional careers, graduate school, lifelong learning, and enrichment". The amended statement could read "The University prepares students for professional careers, graduate school, lifelong learning, enrichment, *and the opportunity to develop and strengthen leadership*". In addition, a new goal should be added that states, "To

promote effective leadership skills among students through the use of current instructional methods and faculty modeling”.

Astin and Astin (2000) have noted that the United States is suffering a crisis in leadership and caution that “the concept of leadership and the educational goals of leadership development have been given very little attention” (p. 3). Greenleaf (2003) has stated, “there is nowhere any greater need for dependable servants to emerge as great leaders . . . than among those who guide the destinies of contemporary American universities” (p. 63).

Recommendation Three

Athens State University should consider developing meaningful learning experiences related to leadership skills and include them in all Capstone courses for seniors. The literature review for this study revealed that there is a difference between learning about leadership and “doing” leadership. Dempster and Lizzio (2007) have noted that there is a gap between what we know about students’ understanding of leadership and how they see and experience leadership. Astin and Astin (2000) stated “students will find it difficult to lead until they have experienced effective leadership as part of their education” (p. 2). One effective way of providing experiential learning would be a job shadowing activity. This activity would be administered through each of the three colleges.

The College of Business currently has a Business Advisory Council comprised of business and industry representatives who review and discuss new course and program needs and suggest possible opportunities for meeting future stakeholder needs. These Advisory Council members could serve as mentors and provide job-shadowing activities to students through the senior capstone course. Students would commit to a specific mentor for a predetermined period of time. The College of Education could administer this activity through its internship program

that students participate in during their last semester. The College of Arts and Sciences has a senior capstone course required for each degree program. A proper vehicle for administering the job-shadowing program should be developed for the College of Arts and Sciences students. Regardless of program of study, all students would be required to participate in a job-shadowing activity during their senior semester. A common core of leadership issues (decision-making, communication, planning, ethics, emotional intelligence, self-confidence, technology, diversity, etc.) should be developed by faculty along with a set of goals for the job-shadowing activity. In each situation, the ASU faculty member would provide the mentor with a set of goals for each student related to leadership issues. Mentors would be asked to allow the student to observe, where appropriate, the daily activities related to these goals. Students would conclude this activity by presenting a written product chronicling their job-shadowing experience along with a presentation to their faculty member and classmates regarding this experience. The job-shadowing experience would need to be carefully monitored to ensure its effectiveness as a positive learning experience and mentors should receive frequent feedback regarding their contributions to this activity.

Recommendation Four

ASU faculty members should receive professional development training and tools to help them recognize their own leadership skills as well as assist them in assessing and developing their students' leadership skills. The leadership of Athens State University must recognize that strong leadership skills are vital for all students, not just for those in the field of business. Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, and Burkhardt (2001) have reported that all students have leadership potential and that institutions of higher education can uncover and develop this potential with targeted programs that will also increase the student's educational success. One way to

incorporate leadership skills into the faculty culture would be to include leadership attributes in the promotion process. Faculty currently follow a specific process when applying for promotion and this process involves scholarly, community, and collegial activities. An additional component for leadership and leadership development could be added to the promotion process that would encourage faculty to not only be involved in leadership activities but to seek out professional development opportunities regarding their own leadership skills.

The administration of Athens State University might consider creating an Innovative Leadership Grant Program that would award professional development funds to faculty based on a competitive application process. Faculty would be encouraged to research and identify innovative leadership development opportunities and submit an application to participate in that program. The program selected should provide the faculty member with training and development that the faculty member could then bring back to share with their colleagues. This should be done ideally on an annual basis and should be peer-evaluated.

Recommendation Five

Based on the results of the literature review provided in Chapter Two of this study, Athens State University should consider establishing an official point of contact for the non-traditional student, such as an *Office of Student Support Services for Returning Adult Students*. This office should be a function of the Student Services Division and should provide services ranging from how to apply for admission to the institution, assistance with study skills and time management issues, career development opportunities, graduate school admission, and support activities for the family members of these students. It is imperative that the overarching mission of this office be to meet the needs of the returning adult student. This mission should drive every aspect of this new endeavor including the office location, office personnel and leadership, and

office operating hours. Fiscal resources should be set aside to sponsor events on the weekends and evenings targeting these students such as recruiting, admissions, and financial aid workshops. Funding should also be provided for a full-time counselor trained to meet the needs of adult students and the unique challenges they face.

Recommendation Six

Athens State University should consider providing specific professional development activities for faculty that will assist them in supporting the non-traditional student, both inside and outside the classroom. Groves and Groves (1980) have found that faculty lacked experience in dealing with the nontraditional student. Research by Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989) have reported that faculty might be uncomfortable teaching courses directed to the non-traditional student. Trueman and Hartley (1996), Harper and Kember (1986), and Knowles (1984) all have provided research that the adult student learns differently from the traditional student. Since the average ASU student is a 31-year old female who is employed full-time most every faculty member will have the opportunity to interact with a nontraditional student in a classroom setting. Based on the literature review in Chapter Two we know that these individuals are motivated differently, they learn differently, and they have unique experiential insights. ASU faculty should receive focused and practical training to assist them in classroom activities that address these students' needs and abilities. This training should be provided on a continuous basis with regular topical sessions offered every semester. This activity should be sponsored through the Academic Affairs Office and should receive line item funding to ensure its success. The University currently sponsors a monthly lunchtime brown-bag table-topic series for faculty. This event is usually convened by a peer faculty member regarding their area of expertise and all faculty are invited to attend. It would be most appropriate to devote some of these table-topic

events to issues surrounding the adult learner where faculty could share their questions, challenges, and best practices. These table-top events should be in addition and in support of the training opportunities provided by the Academic Affairs Office.

Recommendation Seven

ASU should consider creating a more inclusive environment that specifically targets the part-time, non-traditional student and provide opportunities for student involvement in non-academic activities. The *2009 ASU Fact Book* reports that more students are enrolled at the institution on a part-time basis than those who are taking a full course load. Specifically, 56 percent of the students enrolled in the fall 2008 semester were enrolled on a part-time basis. These activities could include library activities, such as a monthly book reading, a poetry sit-in, or a young authors contest specifically for the children of ASU's student. Another activity might include a monthly pizza and puzzle night for students and their families sponsored by the ASU Alumni Association. The ASU Lecture Series could sponsor a family movie night and provide free tickets to select family entertainment. Tinto (1986) have noted that part-time students are at a disadvantage regarding college completion because students, usually traditional students, who are more integrated into a college's social and academic structure are more likely to graduate. Gilley and Hawkes (1989) have asserted that the non-traditional student who attends part-time often feels discriminated against because most college services and programs target the traditional college student. Taniguchi and Kaufman (2005) have recommended that higher education institutions seek to improve the persistence and completion rates of nontraditional students. The more involved these unique students and their families are with social activities sponsored by ASU the more likely they are to feel a connection to the institution. This in turn could positively affect their persistence and their educational success.

Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendation One

A future study could be replicated at the community college level where there is an even larger population of nontraditional students. Based on the results of the literature review provided in Chapter Two, the nontraditional student can be defined as any student over the age of 21 (Taniguchi & Kaufman, 2006); any student over the age of 25 (Gilley & Hawks, 1989; Lutes, 2004; Kasworm, 1990; Compton, Cox, & Laanan, 2006; and Luzzo, 1999); or even any student more than 30 years old (Rawlins, 1979). Chapter Four revealed that the largest group of participants in this study was between the ages of 19 and 25 years old.

Recommendation Two

A future study could be conducted using the LABS-III instrument that focused more on the nontraditional student by identifying the younger age group of participants, possibly 19-21 years old, and removing those participants' survey responses. In addition, those participants identified as 'not employed' could also be removed from the study. Finally, to address the nontraditional student the demographic portion of the instrument could add a question regarding the enrollment status of the student (full-time/part-time). Results of this study would provide more specific results regarding the preferred leadership styles of the nontraditional student as outlined in the literature covered in Chapter Two.

Recommendation Three

A future study could be conducted using additional independent variables. This study used gender, age, employment status, and college of record as independent variables. None of these variables were found to have a significant difference on the preferred leadership styles of the study participants. A duplicate study that included these variables as well as variables

concerning student ethnicity, GPA, involvement in student leadership activities, volunteer activities, marital status, and parenting status would provide additional data regarding today's student and tomorrow's leaders.

Recommendation Four

A future study could be conducted with students at the graduate level of study. This study focused on students in their junior or senior year of college. A duplicate study at the next level of academic rigor could provide helpful data regarding student leadership styles to educators at both the undergraduate and graduate level of instruction.

Recommendation Five

A similar research study could be conducted using qualitative research methods. A grounded theory approach could provide more in-depth data regarding study participants through multiple interviews. A grounded theory approach would most assuredly involve a longer period of time involving an extended data-gathering period and a more in-depth data analysis period to allow for multiple field visits and a variety of coding activities.

Concluding Thoughts

The researcher has mixed feelings about the results of this study. Every individual who sets out to conduct this type of research no doubt believes that there will be some significant findings, otherwise these activities would never occur. While the statistical significance did not appear as expected valuable information was collected and important lessons were learned. The researcher set out to study the leadership patterns of students at a specific institution of higher education. These students provided all of the information requested through the survey instrument and did so enthusiastically. From this experience the researcher saw first hand that students are still willing to participate in individual research projects and several of them

expressed a desire to read the final results of this study. In addition, faculty colleagues were also more than willing to assist in this research project and likewise shared their desire to read the results. This provided positive reinforcement that the researcher did not expect.

Another lesson from this experience revealed that the students enrolled at Athens State University overwhelmingly operated via a traditional hierarchical style of leadership. This fact alone provides valuable information regarding the population that ASU serves. It also offers the institution a glimpse into the attitudes of these individuals. Used judiciously, this information could prove very beneficial in meeting the needs of the students ASU serves. Finally, the researcher realized the vastness of resources and knowledge available to those willing to seek it. Developing effective leadership skills is a lifelong journey that requires honest personal reflection and continuous improvement. This project has confirmed for the researcher the importance of the journey.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT AND
EXPLANATORY PROTOCOL STATEMENT

The University of Alabama
Informed Consent Statement for Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Survey

You are being asked to take part in the Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Survey. The study is being conducted by Jackie Smith, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program and is being supervised by David E. Hardy, Ph.D. who is an associate professor in the Higher Education Administration Program within the college of Education at the University.

STUDY PURPOSE: There are two purposes for this study. One is to gather information specific to the Athens State University (ASU) student and their leadership styles and beliefs and their preferred leadership patterns. The other is to determine if there is a significant difference in leadership patterns among students based on their major of study.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDY: The information gained from this study will provide data regarding leadership and the nontraditional student. Results may be used by institutional leaders to develop new and more effective instructional methods to strengthen the leadership skills of ASU graduates.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY: You have been asked to participate in this survey because you are a student enrolled in a degree program at Athens State University. Approximately 350 students have been invited to participate in this study.

PROCEDURE FOR THE STUDY: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Survey consisting of 28 items along with a brief demographic survey that consists of 4 questions. This survey will be administered using paper and pencil. You will be provided instructions prior to beginning and the survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you require special accommodations please notify the principal investigator and every effort will be made to meet those requests. Your participation in this study will only involve your time. There will be no cost.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY: The benefits to participating in this study include assisting the principal investigator to better understand the leadership attitudes and beliefs as well as the preferred leadership patterns of the nontraditional student enrolled at Athens State University. This information will also be helpful in improving the programs and services provided to students at Athens State University.

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY: There are no risks involved in participating in this study. Although the survey does ask for some personal information, all responses are confidential and there will be no potential legal or disciplinary consequences for you. Collected data will be kept in a secure location accessible only to the researcher administering the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All findings in this study will be summarized according to College and program of study and will not identify individual students.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate there will be no penalty and you may withdraw from this study at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have questions or problems related to this study please contact the principal investigator, Jackie Smith, at 256-216-6649 or jackie.smith@athens.edu. You may also contact Dr. David Hardy at 205-348-6874 or dhardy@bamaed.ua.edu. For questions about your rights as a research participant or to discuss problems, complaints, or concerns about a research study, or to obtain information, or offer input you may call Ms. Tanta Myles, the Research Compliance Officer at UA at 205-348-5152.

I have read this consent form. I understand what I will be asked to do. I freely agree to take part in this research survey and understand that completion of the survey constitutes my consent to take part in the research. I may keep a copy of this consent form.

APPENDIX B
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Please circle the appropriate response to the items below. Your responses are anonymous and will be used solely for the purpose of dissertation research.

1. Are you a

- (a) Male
- (b) Female

2. Are you currently employed

- (a) part-time
- (b) full-time
- (c) not employed at this time

3. What is your approximate age?

- (a) 19 – 22 years
- (b) 23 – 25 years
- (c) 26 – 30 years
- (d) 31 – 40 years
- (e) 41 – 50 years
- (f) 51 – 60 years
- (g) 61 years or older

Please place an X in the box beside your major or program of study

College of Arts and Sciences – B.S. or B.A. in

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Behavioral Science | <input type="checkbox"/> | Religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> | Social Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Sociology | <input type="checkbox"/> | Liberal Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Health Science | <input type="checkbox"/> | Computer Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Health & Wellness Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | Computer Science – CIS Option |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Public Safety and Health Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> | Computer Science -Networking Option |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Art | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mathematics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | English | <input type="checkbox"/> | Biology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | History | <input type="checkbox"/> | Chemistry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Justice Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> | General Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Political Science | <input type="checkbox"/> | Physics |

College of Business – B.S. in

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | Accounting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Management with Minor | <input type="checkbox"/> | Management of Technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Human Resource Management | <input type="checkbox"/> | Certificate in Contract Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Certificate in Marketing | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| | Technical Education (Class B) | | Post-Secondary Education |
| | Military Instructor/Staff Dev | | Early Childhood Education P-3 |
| | Elementary K-6 | | Physical Education P-12 |
| | Health Education 6-12 | | Biology Licensure/Certification |
| | Chemistry Licensure/Cert. | | English/Lang Arts Licensure/Cert |
| | General Science Licensure/Cert | | History Licensure/Certification |
| | Mathematics Licensure/Cert | | Social Science Licensure/Cert |
| | Special Education K-6 | | Special Education 6-12 |

College of Education – B.S.Ed., B.S., or B.A. in

LABS-III

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the response that best represents your opinion.

SA = STRONGLY AGREE; A = AGREE; N = NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE; D = DISAGREE; SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE

| | S | A | N | D | S |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | A | | | | D |
| 1. Individuals need to take initiative to help their organization accomplish its goals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Leadership should encourage innovation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. A leader must maintain tight control of the organization. | | | | | |
| 4. Everyone in an organization needs to be responsible for accomplishing organizational goals. | | | | | |
| 5. Leadership processes involve the participation of all organization members. | | | | | |
| 6. A leader must control the group or organization. | | | | | |
| 7. A leader should maintain complete authority. | | | | | |
| 8. A leader should take charge of the group. | | | | | |
| 9. Organizational actions should improve life for future generations. | | | | | |
| 10. The main task of a leader is to make the important decisions for an organization. | | | | | |

| | S A | A | N | D | S D |
|---|--------|---|---|---|--------|
| 11. Leadership activities should foster discussions about the future. | | | | | |
| 12. Effective leadership seeks out resources needed to adapt to a changing world. | | | | | |
| 13. The main tasks of a leader are to make and then communicate decisions. | | | | | |
| 14. An effective organization develops its human resources. | | | | | |
| 15. It is important that a single leader emerges in a group. | | | | | |
| 16. Members should be completely loyal to the designated leaders of an organization. | | | | | |
| 17. The most important members of an organization are its leaders. | | | | | |
| 18. Anticipating the future is one of the most important roles of leadership processes. | | | | | |
| 19. Good leadership requires that ethical issues have high priority. | | | | | |
| 20. Successful organizations make continuous learning their highest priority. | | | | | |
| 21. Positional leaders deserve credit for the success of an organization | | | | | |
| 22. The responsibility for taking risks lies with the leaders of an organization. | | | | | |
| 23. Environmental preservation should be a core value of every organization. | | | | | |
| 24. Organizations must be ready to adapt to changes that occur outside the organization. | | | | | |
| 25. When an organization is in danger of failure, new leaders are needed to fix its problems. | | | | | |
| 26. An organization needs flexibility in order to adapt to a rapidly changing world. | | | | | |

| | S | A | N | D | S |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | A | | | | D |
| 27. Leaders are responsible for the security of organization members. | | | | | |
| 28. An organization should try to remain as stable as possible. | | | | | |

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APPENDIX C

AUTHOR'S PERMISSION TO USE LABS-III INSTRUMENT

From: "Wielkiewicz, Richard" Wednesday - March 4, 2009 9:09 AM
To: 'Jackie Smith' <Jackie.Smith@athens.edu>
Subject: RE: Permission to use LABS-III Instrument

Dear Jackie,

The short answer is that you, of course, have permission to use the LABS in your research. The longer answer involves me asking whether I can provide you with some additional information. First, I will attach an electronic version of the LABS to this message that includes a few demographic questions as well. You may find this useful in preparation of your survey. If you use this version, you should cite the Wielkiewicz (2000) article in any reports or manuscripts you produce.

Below is a list of additional citations regarding the LABS-III

Thompson, M. D. (2006). Student leadership process development: An assessment of contributing resources. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47, 343-350. [This article takes a unique approach to data analysis.]

Wielkiewicz, R. M., & Stelzner, S. P. (2005). An ecological perspective on leadership theory, research, and practice. *Review of General Psychology*,

Wielkiewicz, R. M., Prom, C. L., & Loos, S. (2005). Relationships of the leadership attitudes and beliefs scale with student types, study habits, life-long learning, and GPA. *College Student Journal*, 39(1), 31-44.

Wielkiewicz, R. M. (2002). Validity of the Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale: relationships with personality, communal orientation, and social desirability. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45, 108-118.

Wielkiewicz, R. M. (2000). The Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale: An Instrument for Evaluating College Students= Thinking About Leadership and Organizations. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41, 335-347.

Allen, K. E., Stelzner, S. P., & Wielkiewicz, R. M. (1998, Spring). The ecology of leadership: Adapting to the challenges of a changing world. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 5, 62-82.

Wielkiewicz (2000) describes the development of the scale and Table 5 contains all the items along with scoring directions. Allen, et al. (1998) and Wielkiewicz and Stelzner (2005) describe the theoretical basis of the scale. The remaining articles are validity studies. If you would like copies of these articles, please let me know I will send them to you.

Richard Wielkiewicz

-----Original Message-----

From: Jackie Smith [mailto:Jackie.Smith@athens.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, March 04, 2009 8:06 AM

To: Wielkiewicz, Richard
Subject: Permission to use LABS-III Instrument

Hello Dr. Wielkiewicz!

My name is Jackie Smith and I am completing my dissertation as part of the doctoral program in Higher Education Administration at The University of Alabama. I would like to conduct my research at Athens State University (my employer) located in Athens, Alabama.

ASU is a small, nonresidential, public institution offering only junior-senior level coursework and we prepare students for professional careers and/or graduate school. ASU is a baccalaureate degree granting institution offering 3 degree options: BA, BS, and BS in Education. Admission standards require that students must have completed at least 64 semester hours of college course work or hold an associate's degree to enroll. Our enrollment is approximately 3,000 students. The average student at ASU is 31 years old, is employed full-time, and has a family. We have 3 colleges; College of Business, College of Arts & Sciences, and College of Education. We are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The title of my dissertation is "A Study of the Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs of Nontraditional Students at Athens State University".

With your permission, I would like to use the LABS-III instrument with this nontraditional population of students to assess students' perceptions of leadership processes and how they expect leaders to act. In addition to the LABS-III instrument I will also use a brief demographic survey to gather information regarding age, gender, employment status, and program of study of the participants.

My research questions are:

1. What are the preferred leadership patterns of the nontraditional students at Athens State University?
2. Are there a significant number of students who prefer one leadership pattern (systemic or hierarchical) more than another?
3. Is there a correlation between preferred leadership patterns and declaration of major among students at Athens State University?

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the ecology theory of leadership as stated in the 1998 article authored by Allen, Stelzner, and you. Studies regarding leadership and the nontraditional student have not been well documented. I hope that this study can contribute to the small body of research that exists for use by higher education professionals. In addition, this research could be used specifically by Athens State University to develop new and more effective instructional methods for strengthening the leadership skills of students.

I realize this is a rather long email message so I will stop here. However, I will be happy to provide you with my entire proposal if you like. Thank you for taking the time to consider my request and I look forward to your response.

APPENDIX D
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Office for Research
Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Subjects

THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA
R E S E A R C H

June 30, 2009

Jackie Smith
Department of Higher Ed. Admin
College of Education
Box 870231

Re: IRB#: 09-OR-197, Leadership Styles and Beliefs of Nontraditional Aged
Students at Athens State University

Dear Ms. Smith:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your
proposed research

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46.
Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not
limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language,
communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research
employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human
factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

Your application will expire on June 30, 2010. If your research will continue beyond
this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure Form. If
you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved
Protocol. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except
when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the
study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the Continuing Review and
Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved consent form to obtain consent from
your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal,
please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carpenter T. Myles, MSM, ~~CM~~
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office of Research Compliance
The University of Alabama



152 Rose Administration Building
Box 870117
Tuscaloosa, Alabama 35487-0117
(205) 348-5152
fax (205) 348-8882

APPENDIX E
DATA DICTIONARY
FOR SMITH SURVEY INSTRUMENT

DATA DICTIONARY
FOR SMITH SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Demographic Portion of the Instrument

Question 1 – Gender

Male = 0 Female = 1

Question 2 – Employment Status

Not Employed = 0 Employed Part-Time = 1 Employed Full-Time = 2

Question 3 – Age Group

61 years old or older = 0
51 – 60 years old = 1
41 – 50 years old = 2
31 – 40 years old = 3
26 – 30 years old = 4
23 – 25 years old = 5
19 – 22 years old = 6

Question 4 – College of Record

College of Education = 0
College of Business = 1
College of Arts & Sciences = 2

LABS-III Portion of the Instrument

Items 1 – 28 were scored using a Likert scale ranging from 1 – 5

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly Disagree

Hierarchical Items = 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28

Systemic Items = 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26

- Those scoring lower on the hierarchical items are associated with stronger beliefs in the hierarchical nature of leadership.
- Those scoring lower on the systemic items have a stronger affinity for the systemic style of leadership.

Preferred Leadership Style Coding

Hierarchical Style Preferred = 0 Systemic Style Preferred = 1