



Panel Discussion as an Effective Instructional Strategy Influencing Student Perceptions



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Background

- *Agricultural Leaders in Society* undergraduate course
 - Authentic Leadership
 - Relationship of organization, community and workforce changes to leader-behavior
 - Diversity within the agricultural industry to develop students' potential to influence positive organizational climates

(Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Weeks & Weeks, 2006)



Literature Review

- Need to investigate and discuss the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions within organizations
- Challenges women agricultural leaders face:
 - work-life balance
 - lack of mentorship
 - unsupportive organizational climates

(Albright, 2006; Fenton et al., 2010; Foster & Seevers, 2003; Trauger et al., 2008)



Literature Review

- Impact of instructional strategies on student learning in leadership education is limited
- Panel discussions
 - Used in a third or less of class sessions by 71% of leadership educators
 - Considered a “top 3” teaching practice by less than 6% of leadership educators
 - Undergraduate leadership development students report a preference for the instructional method



Conceptual Framework

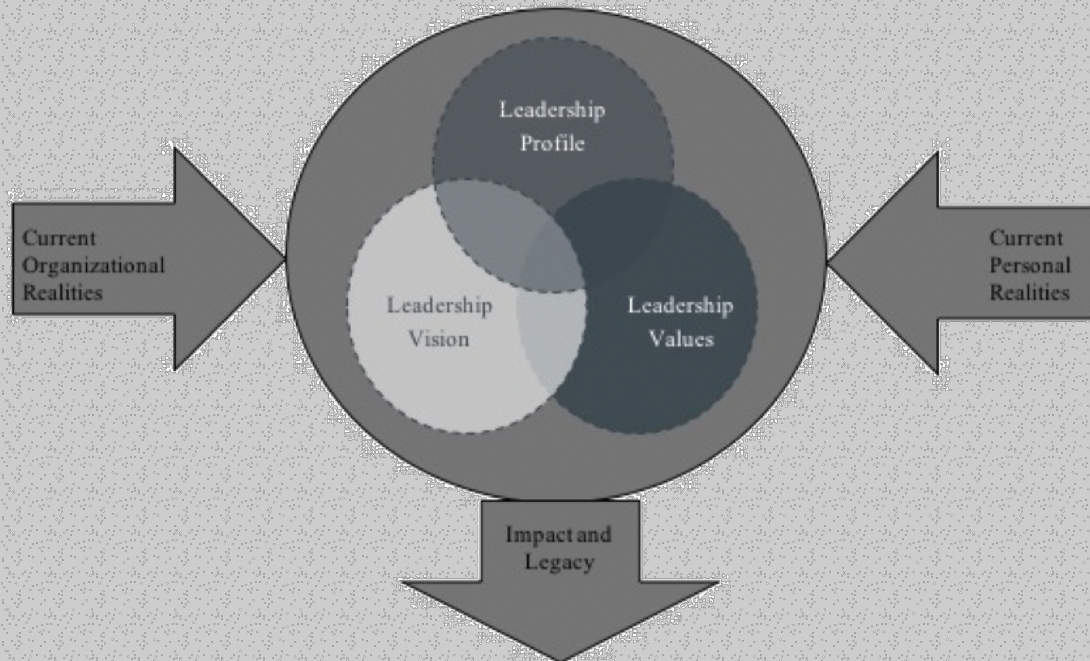


Figure 1. Discovering Leadership Framework. Adapted from *Discovering the Leader in You* (p. 153), by S. N. King, D. G. Altman, & R. J. Lee, 2011, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Copyright 2011 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Adapted with permission.





Methods

Participants ($N = 52$)

- Fall 2017 ($n = 32$) and Spring 2018 ($n = 20$) semesters
- Predominantly female, upper-level undergraduate students, majoring in either AGLE or AGED

Instrument

- Instructor-developed retrospective pre-post test evaluation
 - ◆ 12 questions, five-point, Likert-type scale
 - Cronbach's alpha = 0.74 ($p < 0.5$)
 - ◆ One four-point, Likert-type question to assess overall rating
 - ◆ One bipolar rating scale to assess recommendation
 - ◆ Open-ended questions



Results

Statements	Strongly Agree and Agree			
	<i>Pre-Test</i>		<i>Post-Test</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
I am aware of the unique challenges and opportunities that female leaders within the agricultural industry face.	32	61.6	50	93.4
I have an understanding of the potential issues related to work-life balance and strategies for achieving balance.	32	61.6	47	90.4
I have an understanding of the benefits of effective mentoring experiences.	25	48.1	48	92.3
I have an understanding of how the relationship between men and women working together in the agricultural industry has changed over the years.	26	50.0	50	96.2
I believe there are differences in the way men and women lead.	25	48.0	39	75.0
I am aware of the differences diversity (gender, generational, cultural, etc.) creates in the workplace.	40	76.9	51	98.1



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Results

- 88.5% ($n = 46$) recommend panel discussions
- The overall presentation was found to be *very helpful* ($n = 26$) or *helpful* ($n = 20$)



Results

- *“I get much more out of **interactive, “real-life” presentations** like this than just simple classes or professional lectures. Plus I am a woman seeking a career in the Ag field, so I value their advice and benefit from hearing their experiences.”*



Results

- *“The biggest thing I’ve learned from the women in agriculture panel was that **there are so many leadership styles being put into play throughout the industry, and that none of them are wrong, they just have a specific place in a specific job.** All the women were great and gave me a further insight into what it looks like to be a woman in agriculture.”*



Results

- *“I really enjoyed hearing the differences in the workplace for men and women. My favorite line that I agreed with was ‘I will hire the best person.’ Who cares race, color, male or female. I will hire the best.”*



Conclusions

- Support for the use of **panel discussions as a viable teaching strategy** in agricultural leadership education (Jenkins, 2012)
- Students' **perceptions and awareness of women agricultural leaders were significantly enhanced** after participation in the panel discussion
- The panel discussion encouraged **meaningful and timely conversations** regarding the leadership roles of women within the agricultural workforce



Discussion

- Students **perceived women and men leaders differ** in effectiveness and style, contrary to gender-based leadership research (Northouse, 2016)
- Improve course curriculum by **emphasizing diversity** in the workplace
- Students increased their awareness and understanding of how the **relationship between men and women working together** in the agricultural industry has changed over the years



Recommendations

- Potential speakers for future panels
 - Representatives of state commodity organizations, the USDA, Farm Bureau, and state government
- Men Additional discussion topics
 - Transitioning into the workforce
 - Career pathways
 - College student role
 - Additional advice for achieving work-life balance



Questions?



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