FROM FEAR TO FRATERNITY: HOW HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAMS WITH A LEADERSHIP COMPONENT AFFECT THE HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN EXPERIENCE IN FRANKLIN COUNTY, KANSAS

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ABSTRACT

The transition to high school may be difficult for new freshmen and may actually be feared by some. Several high schools have adopted freshman transition programs as a way to assist freshmen with many complex issues inherent in the first year experience of high school. This study used an experimental design by using three high schools in Franklin County, Kansas to investigate one particular freshman transition program which has a unique leadership component, the LINK program. Its purpose was to see if the LINK program had a significant effect on the level of success experienced by freshmen in their first year of high school. Success in the freshman year was measured by three variables – the perceived level of positivity, the perceived level of participation and involvement, and the perceived level of feelings of support freshmen experienced from their school in their first year. The study found the LINK program did not significantly effect the level of success experienced by freshmen, but suggested how the LINK program and other freshmen transition programs may continue to be viewed in terms of their contribution to creating a more positive first year experience for freshmen.

DEDICATION

"The difference between what we are doing and what we are capable of doing would solve most of the world's problems." - Mahatma Gandhi

To my parents, who always believed in me and instilled the value of building meaningful relationships and working hard in our service to others.

To Jodie, who will never be forgotten and will be appreciated for being the first to encourage me to take this scholarly journey.

To my son and daughter, Brad and Laura, who have grown to be beautiful and loving parents, and inspire me to be a better person.

To a very special person, Deborah J., who is sharing life's journey at this time and showing me how to grow in a new relationship with her and the Divine.

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INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Introduction:

Each year in the public high schools of America, freshmen students, including those in Franklin County, Kansas, find themselves immersed in a significantly new experience. Although most students may look forward to moving on to high school, it is normal for them to feel uneasy and concerned about how they will get along in this new environment. New freshmen commonly feel uneasy or afraid because their new school surroundings are typically greater in size, less personal, have increased academic expectations, and appear to encourage greater competition (Haviland 29). This is "a time of risk and opportunity" for the adolescent freshmen when they are trying to obtain important academic and social skills for their future success (McLearn et al. 67). This critical time when freshmen are attempting to transition to high school is also a significant time in their personal development because they are navigating from adolescence to adulthood. Instead of feeling accepted and supported by their school, freshmen may feel excluded, unsupported and afraid.

John Smyth believes this period of time for freshmen "poses a considerable challenge for us collectively on how to construct the spaces within which forms of leadership can be exercised that are inclusive of the aspirations of young people" (282). This challenge may be accepted by educators taking a more serious look at the need for increased leadership from individuals who are prepared to help freshmen deal with the fear and hesitation to participate and become involved in high school. Because some freshmen may perceive they are not supported by their high school, their hesitation may

further develop into a sense of disconnect from their school and they may not take advantage of realizing their full potential - academically or socially. Many youth in America's schools are experiencing human disconnect at a time when the schools are being deficient in creating a sense of belongingness for the students, particularly those students who need it the most. Freshmen who do not adjust well to the new high school experience may become disassociated with their school, which ultimately can create less hope for their future success (Smyth 280).

Building leadership in a group setting may be regarded as an effort to bring about positive change and higher expectations. Assistant principal, John Capozi, reminds educators that, "'You've got to do everything to help every single student'" (qtd. in Chenowith 9). With this attitude, Capozi tries to create a culture where students are encouraged by others' leadership to create an expectation to excel in their achievements (qtd. in Chenowith 9). The Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (CTP) refers to the school culture as having the capacity for a more inclusive application of educational leadership which has a more holistic embodiment in the school organization and where leadership can operate at many other levels beyond the traditional "formal positions of authority" (14). This broader application of leadership may stimulate additional relationship building and improve the overall performance of a school (CTP 14). The CTP states that students will essentially benefit from what the center calls "leading for learning," because their schools are "creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students, professionals, and the system, and motivating or compelling participants to take advantage of these opportunities" (18).

Educators need to respond to the transition difficulties experienced by freshmen by adopting programs that may reduce "the negative effects on achievement" as students enter their high school for the first time, according to Stoltz (Why Worry 1). As freshmen begin their high school experience, Johnston and Johnston believe a key component for the freshmen transition process is to:

> Provide opportunities for peer interaction and social support. Attending a new school can be absolutely terrifying. Everything is new: the people, the expectations, the setting, the culture (or "the way we do things around here"), and the social hierarchies. Just as a visitor to [a] strange culture benefits from the assistance of an "insider" – someone who knows the ropes – so too do incoming 9th graders benefit from positive and helpful relationships with students already at the school. (2)

In recent years, some freshmen transition programs have used a leadership component to meet higher expectations and level of commitment to freshmen transitioning to their new high school culture. High school administrators may adopt a freshman transition program designed to have mentors who receive leadership skills training to support positive change within the culture of their school (Link Crew CTP Manual 1). One program found to include student leadership training is the LINK program. As noted in the LINK program's purpose statement:

> Schools today are different than ever before in history, as are students, families, and our communities at large. The transition from middle school to high school is one of the

> most difficult young people face: expectations are greater, schools are larger, and individual attention from teacher and school staff is often diminished. With this in mind, Link Crew has been developed as a program to help students make the transition with specific intervention and support from older peers. This support then continues throughout that first year of school, with the ninth grader knowing he/she always has someone on whom he/she can call. (Link Crew CTP Manual 13)

According to the LINK Program, the school culture will change simply because incoming freshmen feel a greater "sense of comfort" in their new surroundings (Link 2004). The LINK program supports positive changes in the high school culture by simply developing new opportunities from a more formal arrangement led by upperclassmen (Link Crew CTP Manual 2).

Background of the Study:

In the western part of Franklin County, there are three high schools that were chosen for this study – Ottawa High School, Pomona High School, and Williamsburg High School. (For the location of the three high schools in this study, see Appendix A- "Location of High Schools in Franklin County.")

The LINK program was adopted at Ottawa High School during the school year of 2006-2007. Designated staff and faculty members were assigned to formally develop, organize, and operate the new freshmen transition program. Because the LINK program was used at Ottawa High School, this school was chosen as the focus of this study and

served as a means to gain insight into the program's effects on transitioning freshmen students.

The effect of the LINK program on Ottawa High School freshmen was compared to two other high schools in Franklin County not using the LINK program – Pomona and Williamsburg. The high schools at Pomona and Williamsburg provide an orientation process with some degree of mentoring for their freshmen students. The major difference between the LINK program and the freshman orientation programs at Pomona and Williamsburg is that juniors and seniors there do not receive training in leadership development (a key feature of the LINK program). A close look was taken at how Ottawa High School with the LINK program (with its distinct leadership training of upperclassmen providing additional support to freshmen) may have benefited differently from the other two high schools not using the LINK program.

The LINK Program:

The LINK program was developed by the Boomerang Project of Santa Cruz, California approximately fifteen years ago (Link Crew CTP Manual 3). The LINK program is unique in the way it includes student leadership training for selected high school juniors and seniors, for the purpose of becoming more effective mentors for freshmen (Link Crew CTP Manual 1). The mentoring portion along with its leadership training is considered to be the strength of the LINK program. The objectives of the LINK program include:

- Empowering juniors and seniors as role models for freshmen.
- Increasing academic success through support of peers.
- Developing leadership skills in students on the high school campus.

- Allowing successful older students to pass on positive traditions to younger students.
- Exposing students to a variety of individuals in positive situations at the school.
- Teaching students that by working together they can be successful and enjoy participating in school with one another.
- Creating a supportive atmosphere that allows freshmen to feel connected with their high school (Link Crew CTP Manual 2).

Schools who adopt the LINK program into their high school attempt to realize these objectives by selecting high school juniors and seniors to serve as LINK Crew members. All LINK Crew members are trained to become leaders (Link Crew CTP Manual 1). According to Jodie Grover, High School Counselor and LINK Program Coordinator, this program is an effective strategy to assist freshman students of Ottawa High School in having a successful year. She believed this new program would improve its compliance with the Kansas Regents School System by creating more opportunities for success for all students within the Kansas Public School System (Grover).

It is important for freshmen to know people care about how they are doing. The LINK program focuses on building supportive and productive relationships between the freshmen and the upper classmen which is made possible from the formal leadership training received by the upper classmen (Link Crew CTP Manual 14-18). Upperclassmen are selected to be trained and serve in their roles as LINK Leaders in their school, for the specific purpose of creating success for high school freshmen. The generally expected outcome for all freshmen students is for them to fully realize their

potential as individuals, while LINK Leaders assist freshmen to feel more valued and supported by their high school (Link Crew CTP Manual 1).

The formal mentoring aspect of the LINK program is a coordinated effort in the high school and addresses how freshmen feel supported by their school, participate in school activities in a positive manner, and believe they are having a successful high school experience. Grossman and Johnson see peer mentoring as a critical element in freshmen transition programs because of the way they improve the younger student's life – educationally, behaviorally, and emotionally. They conclude that a program's effectiveness is critical, so conducting a thorough evaluation of the program is necessary to determine if its intended outcomes occur (Grossman and Johnson 25). Furthermore, they believe a program may be effectively evaluated in three steps, which include:

1. Looking at what the outcomes of the program are most likely to affect and be worth tracking.
2. Gathering relevant information about the outcomes.
3. Knowing how to interpret the information collected (40).

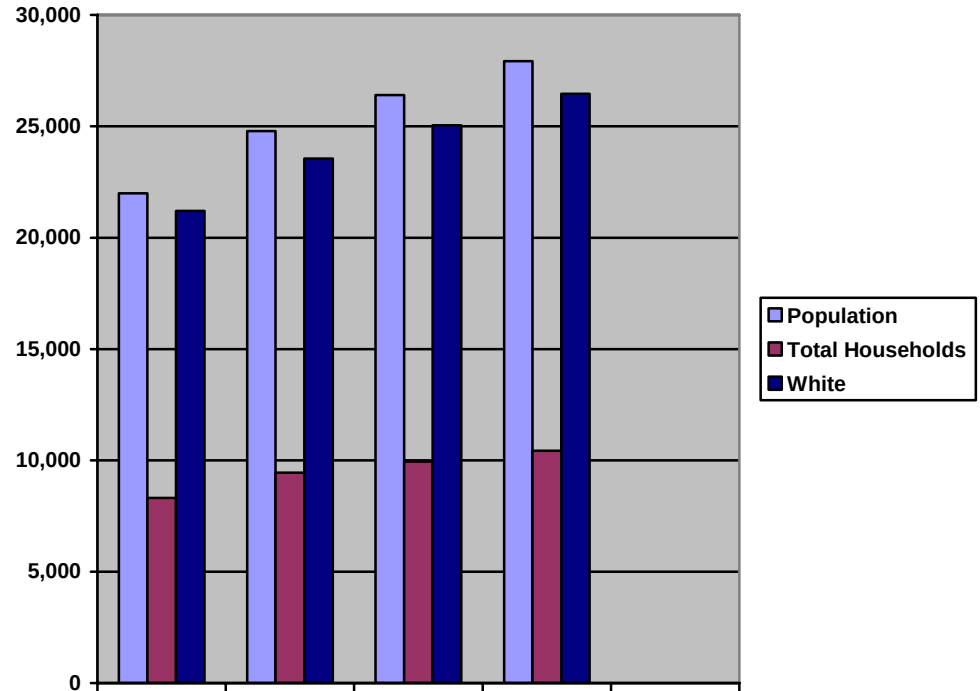
Demographics Related to the Study:

Franklin County is located in Northeast Kansas with Interstate 35 connecting it to Kansas City (30 miles to the northeast). Lawrence, Kansas is located twenty miles to the north, which is the home of the University of Kansas. Like many areas in Kansas, the economy of Franklin County has been slow but stable through the years as it has been based mostly on agriculture with some light industry included. The way of life, as with most agriculturally-based areas, is typically associated with an easier and slower moving life style. However, a recent economic development report, provided by Kanet,

Chambless and Baker, states this slower moving life style and pace is increasing in activity with more manufacturing and distribution-type businesses locating to the Ottawa area in recent years (1). In the past ten years, economic growth has started accelerating in the Ottawa area of Franklin County (1-3).

According to the Franklin County Strategic Plan 2006-2008, economic growth is anticipated in certain parts of Franklin County, which suggests significant opportunity for growth and change in its population and investment in education (1). The plan reported recent census data indicating 85% of Franklin County residents who are age 25 and older are high school graduates (Ottawa/Franklin County Economic Development 1). However, this level of achievement has been accomplished in relatively smaller schools throughout Franklin County in four different school districts – Central Heights, Ottawa, Wellsville, and West Franklin, with Ottawa being the largest of the four.

The anticipated demographic change for Franklin County is transitioning from a rural landscape to one of a suburban community due to its proximity to two metropolitan areas – Kansas City and Lawrence (Ottawa/Franklin County Economic Development 1-3). Figure 1 indicates the demographic changes for Franklin County from 2005 to 2010 to include a steady growth in population and in the number of households at a rate of 5.7%.



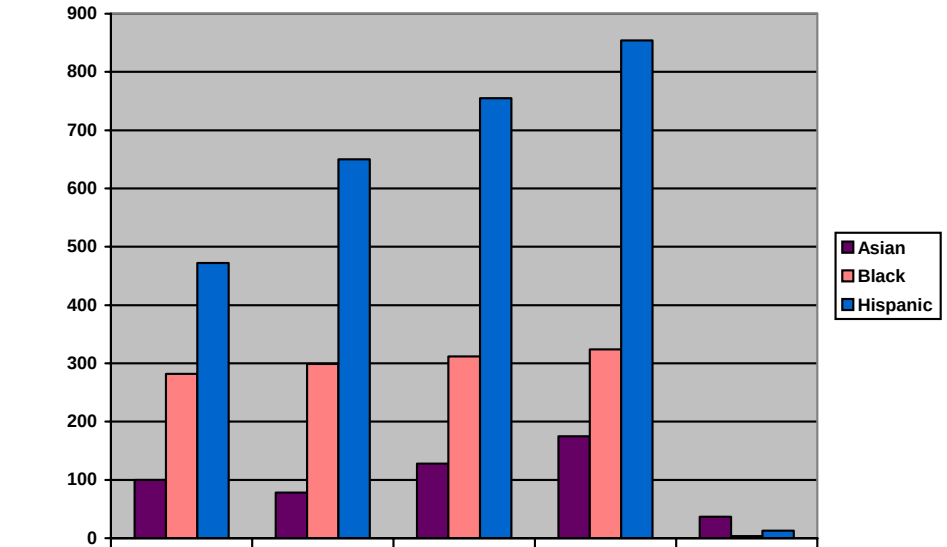
	1990	2000	2005 Estimate	2010 Projection	% Chg 2005-10
Population	21,993	24,784	26,406	27,916	5.7
Total Households	8,308	9,452	9,953	10,440	4.9
White	21,202	23,556	25,036	26,457	5.7

Fig. 1. Demographic Summary for Growth in Franklin County, Kansas

Source: PRO FILES: The Idea House of Kanet, Chambless, and Baker - Demographic Detail Summary Report for Franklin County, 23 January 2006

The White population for Franklin County is currently 95 % of the total population. Although the segment of the White population is growing at a steady rate of 5.7%, there is more significant growth of 36.7% expected to occur in the Asian

population and 13.1% growth in the Hispanic population, creating a sizable increase in diversity for Franklin County, as seen in Figure 2.



	1990	2000	2005 Estimate	2010 Projection	% Chg 2005-10
Asian	100	78	128	175	36.7
Black	282	299	312	324	3.8
Hispanic	472	650	755	854	13.1

Fig. 2. Demographic Summary for Diversity in Franklin County, Kansas

Source: PRO FILES: The Idea House - Demographic Detail Summary Report for Franklin County, dated January 23, 2006

Ottawa Area Chamber of Commerce President, Tom Weigand, predicted the increase in diversity in these two areas of the population – Asian and Hispanic is being influenced by the new Burlington-Northern Railroad Intermodal under construction in Gardner, Kansas, a community located approximately 20 miles northeast of Ottawa. Like other communities near the Kansas City Metro area, the population of the Ottawa - Franklin County area will continue to grow at a more rapid rate in its diverse populations.

Furthermore, these once "small town Kansas communities," like those communities in Franklin County, will be subject to a change in their social issues as they join the fast pace life style of their urban counterparts (Weigand).

Some social issues are already prevalent in the youth of Franklin County. From the Kansas Kids Count Data for Franklin County (2006), selected data was compared between Franklin County and the state of Kansas. The data in Table 1 is relevant to this study because it includes differences found in the emotional well-being for the area youth, which is felt to relate to the manner youth are adjusting in their social settings.

Table 1

Selected Data from Kansas Kids Count 2006

Area Affecting Potential Well-Being	Fr. Co. Rate	KS. Rate
Unemployment rate	6.2	5.5
Children in Poverty	12.8	13.8
Children Approved for Free School Meals	22.0	29.1
Students Graduating from High School	89.3	88.3
Reported Child Abuse and Neglect	68.1	64.3
Teen Violent Deaths	69.6	40.8
Juvenile Court Filings	20.0	20.6
Youth Reporting Tobacco Use	17.0	15.6
Youth Reporting Alcohol Use	17.9	16.5
Youth Reporting Other Drug Use	20.0	18.8

Source: Kansas Action for Children web site at www.kac.org

The factors relating to family income are slightly more favorable in Franklin County compared to the overall Kansas rate for youth. Franklin County has a lower rate reported for "children in poverty" at 12.8 % compared to the Kansas rate of 13.8% and the Franklin County rate for "children approved for free school meals" is at 22% compared to the Kansas rate at 29.1%. Additionally, the Kansas City Area Development Council on Franklin County estimated the median household income being $42,410 for 2005.

The remaining data from Table 1 is more relevant to this study because they have social ramifications to the youth of Franklin County. The youth of Franklin County have higher incidences in the categories that deal with the undesirable social behaviors and lack of emotional well-being for Kansas youth: Franklin County had 3.8% more "reported child abuse and neglect," 28.8% more "teen violent deaths," 1.4% more "youth reporting tobacco use," 1.4% more "youth reporting alcohol use," and 1.2% more "youth reporting other drug use" than the state.

Residents of Franklin County may find it difficult to adjust as economic growth changes the dynamics of their social setting. As the social setting changes from small to larger communities, so will the school environments for schools. As schools increase in size, many operational practices will become less easy to manage and practice, and students will be at greater risk of being overlooked and isolated in their school (Cotton 10). With the LINK program focusing on developing a strong connection between freshmen and upperclassmen, it is possible for a program like this to offset growth issues in the school and continue to contribute to freshmen having a successful experience in their first year of high school.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this investigation was to study the effects of the LINK program on incoming freshmen as they transition to high school in Franklin County. The potential outcome for the study was to make a contribution to the limited amount of available research on the LINK program and how it effected the overall social adjustment of freshmen during their freshmen year.

Although most educational research seems to be concerned about how certain programs affect the academic performance of students, this research focused on the personal adjustment and positive feelings freshmen have about their school. As a result, this may have an indirect effect on other aspects of the high school experience, such as academic performance, attendance, and graduating from high school. As Jabal indicated, there is potential in determining how leadership in school programs may influence students' ability, connect them with their school in the context of themselves, and how they shape the school environment (25).

This study expected to make a contribution to the pool of existing knowledge specifically related to the effects of high school transition programs in the freshmen year experience. Data collected and analyzed in this study may assist other high schools who are actively pursuing similar freshmen transition programs.

Overview of Methodology:

The design of this study is experimental, focusing on a selected group of participants (freshmen students) from three high schools located within two unified school districts in Franklin County, Kansas. Ottawa High School (of Unified School District No. 290) served as "the treatment school," where the LINK freshmen transition

program was implemented. The two high schools – Pomona High School and Williamsburg High School (from the West Franklin Unified School District No. 287) served as the control group. Quantifiable data was obtained from freshmen students at all three high schools using a written survey. The survey included twenty-five questions addressing three types of behavioral experiences of freshmen (also referred to as dependent variables in this study), including:

- The level of positivity experienced by freshmen in their school.
- The level of participation by freshmen in school and community activities.
- The level freshmen feel connected and supported by their school.

The data collected through the surveys was gathered at two different times during the 2006-2007 school year (once at the beginning of the year and once towards the end of the year) for both the experimental group (Ottawa) and the control group (Pomona and Williamsburg). The reason for administering the survey twice to both groups is to provide measurable data to perform three different statistical calculations within a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA):

1. The level of change from the beginning of the school year compared to the end of the year in both of the groups.
2. The level of change between the two different groups – the experimental group and the control group.
3. The effect of the treatment (LINK program) on each of the three dependent variables described above.

Research Questions:

The research questions for this study include:

1. Do freshmen transition programs have an effect on the level of positive and negative experiences of freshmen in their first year of high school?
2. Do freshmen transition programs have an effect on the level of participation and involvement of freshmen in their high school?
3. Do freshmen transition programs have an effect on the way freshmen feel supported by their school?

Hypothesis:

The research hypothesis states:

The LINK freshmen transition program has an effect on the success of high school freshmen in their first year high school experience in Franklin County, Kansas at the 0.05 level of significance. The independent variable, or treatment in the study, is the presence or absence of the LINK program and the dependent variable is the high school freshmen year experience in Franklin County, Kansas. Although this hypothesis was considered the primary focus of this study, additional hypotheses were tested to better answer the three research questions. These hypotheses were:

1. The LINK program has an effect on the level of positivity perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school.
2. The LINK program has an effect on the level of participation and involvement perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school.
3. The LINK program has an effect on the level of feelings of support perceived by freshmen from their school in their first year of high school.

Limitations and Delimitations:

There were limitations noted in this study which were believed to be uncontrollable which could possibly affect the outcomes being investigated. The limitations noted were:

1. The LINK freshman transition program was new to the Franklin County Unified School Districts with only one of the high schools implementing the program at this time (Ottawa High School). It would have been necessary to go outside of Franklin County to obtain additional data from schools using the LINK program.
2. Studying the effect of the LINK program was explored in only one school year – 2006-2007, allowing quantitative data to be produced in this limited time frame.
3. The treatment group is larger than the control group:
    a. Treatment Group = Approximately 120 students.
    b. Control Group = Approximately 40 students.
4. The number of new students experiencing the geographical area for the first time as well as their first year of high school was unknown.

The above limitations were deemed necessary because of the perception of how they might have had a negative impact on generalizations being made in this study. However, these limitations seemed to be typical issues commonly recognized in other studies.

The delimitations, or those items relating to the perceived weaknesses in this study but believed to be controllable, were recognized to be:

1. Only half of the school districts, or two out of the four, were included in this study. Ottawa High School was used as the treatment group and the two high schools of West Franklin served as the control group. Although this study is limited in scope by being performed in one year at half of the school districts, it was felt to have the potential to provide useful information for all high schools located in Franklin County not currently using the LINK program.
2. The students surveyed in this study were unpaired respondents preventing data comparisons to be made directly between individuals. However, the survey processes were closely monitored to maintain integrity, accuracy, and willing participation.
3. An adapted version of another survey (from Ann Stoltz) was used to allow for a better match-up to the population completing the questionnaire. However, these changes were minor in detail and did not change the content of the questions.

Assumptions:

Certain assumptions made in order for the research data to be meaningful and factual were:

1. Students participating in the Link program activities were cooperative and accepted the expectations of their LINK Leaders (upperclassmen).
2. The sampling of students in the study adequately represented males and females, the degree of diversity found in the high school's community, and the socio-economic background of the students.

3. The students at the three high schools responded diligently and honestly to the questions presented in both surveys.
4. The juniors and seniors serving as LINK Leaders demonstrated a genuine interest in freshmen students and effectively applied their program training.
5. The consolidation process between the two high schools located in West Franklin Unified School District No. 287, which took place one year after the study was conducted in 2007-2008, did not have an impact on the responses from the students participating in the survey.

Terminology:

Key terms central to the study included the following:

1. Freshman Transition Programs (FTP) – a program assisting ninth grade students in learning how to orient and connect with their new high school environment (Haviland 29).
2. LINK Program – a program developed by the Boomerang Project for high schools where careful planning, team-work, leadership, cooperation, and a clear strategy is used to orient, transition, and guide freshmen towards a successful first year experience in their high school (Link Crew CTP Manual 1).
3. LINK Teams (or Crews) – a group of 4-5 freshmen joined with an upperclassman (junior or senior) for the purpose of creating a sense of comfort in the new school environment and addressing attitudes of mutual respect for each other (Link Crew CTP Manual 1).

4. LINK Crew Training – training received by upperclassmen who will serve as LINK Crew Leaders, including team-building activities, cooperative skill development, and discussion skills; they become leaders, motivators, role models, and teachers (Link Crew CTP Manual 1).
5. LINK Crew Leaders – juniors and seniors who are selected to apply their leadership and interpersonal skills to provide academic and social support to freshmen through responsible relationship building (Link Crew CTP Manual 6).
6. LINK Orientation – groups of 3-4 LINK Crews (15-20 freshmen and 3-4 LINK Crew Leaders) meeting in separate classrooms with focused activities to include:
    a. Getting to know other students, and
    b. Learning strategies for being successful in school (Link Crew CTP Manual 5).
7. LINK-Scheduled Social Follow Ups – sponsored social events in the high school to encourage Link Crew Leaders to stay connected and help freshmen; i.e. movies, lunches (Link Crew CTP Manual 5).
8. LINK Program Administrators – designated program advocates who assist in coordinating LINK participants, including students and high school staff, while providing the program with vision, advocacy, and resources for its sustainability (Link Crew CTP Manual 11).
9. High School Mentoring Program – a strategy to connect more experienced high school upperclassmen with less experienced freshman in order to assist

freshmen in successfully adapting and developing in the new high school environment through frequent and on-going meetings, supportive relationships, and within a program structure (Sipe11-12).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The foundation for this study is that high school freshmen require special support and assistance with their first year of high school if they are to transition successfully into their new setting and realize their individual potential. The literature review started by providing a general description and purpose for developing freshmen transition programs (FTPs) in high schools. Second, the outcomes of this study were explored as they appeared in different types of FTPs existing in certain high schools. Primary studies and secondary sources of research were also used to investigate the effect of these three outcomes in FTPs. Summary comments were then included to support the conceptual framework of how FTPs have an effect on improving the freshmen year experience, including the unique contributions made by the LINK program where a strong leadership component exists.

Description and Purpose of FTPs:

As defined in the terminology of this study, freshmen transition programs (FTPs) are defined as programs assisting ninth grade students in learning how to orient and connect with their new high school environment (Haviland 29). The word "transition," according to The Center for Mental Health in Schools (CMHS) at UCLA, refers to the moving from "one state of certainty to another with a period of uncertainty in between" (qtd. Schilling et al 2).

Mizelle and Irvin indicated the main reason for assisting adolescents with a successful transition to high school was the basic purpose of the middle level education movement (1). They said it has only been recently that high schools have taken on a

more active role with assisting freshmen. But it is important for schools to find more ways to support freshmen because, "the transition to high school has never been more treacherous nor the consequences more personally disastrous for so many" (Mizelle and Irvin qtd. George 1). Mizelle and Irvin concluded the only way students can fully stand a chance of transitioning from the middle school to high school is to have several elements of the school system come together to structure the experience as seamlessly as possible between the two schools (6). As an intervention, FTPs make a difference in how students are prepared to respond to the opportunities provided by their school (CMHS, UCLA 4).

Freshmen transition programs may vary in type, content, amount of school time spent, number of activities, and the number of people involved in their management. Different types of FTPs were investigated to determine if they showed evidence of supporting the three outcomes of this study – the level of positive experiences, participation, and feelings of support by freshmen in their high school.

Outcome 1 - How FTPs Contribute to the Level of Positivity for Freshmen:

At Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, the FTP was called "The Freshman Advisory Program." This program was used to have a positive change in the "climate" for the learning environment and make it "favorable to education" (Galloway and Gallenberger 30). The school attempted this positive experience for freshmen by beginning with a thorough orientation, allowing the new students to become fully acquainted with their school. The school then assigned freshmen to "advisory groups" where they continued throughout their first year of high school, knowing who would assist them as a student mentor, adult adviser, and academic counselor. Several activities existed to assist freshmen with information pertaining to their success in the first year

experience of high school, including goal setting, involvement in school activities and sports, and how to plan their participation in school (Galloway and Gallenberger 30). Galloway and Gallenberger stated, "The program not only assisted incoming freshmen with their transition to high school, but it also built a student support system for the entire year by establishing positive relationships with older students and adults" (30). And at Stevenson High School, educators felt "they [were] committed to providing a positive school environment for students" by administering up to six student surveys each year (Galloway and Gallenberger 30). These surveys helped to determine if the school needed to improve, add, or modify its practices and programs. By receiving feedback from students, the educational administrators believed they helped guide Stevenson High School to improve its ability to support its students (Galloway and Gallenberger 33). As it relates to the outcomes of this study, Stevenson's on-going survey efforts provided results indicating the school's FTP affected freshmen's level of positivity towards their school and the way freshmen felt valued by their school (Galloway and Gallenberger 33).

Schools perform a key role in the development of young people and allow them to feel they can succeed (DeWit et al. 7). Schools promote "trusting and supportive relationships among students and teachers" and "school environments needed to pay attention and provide meaningful interactions that increase positive school membership for all students" (DeWit et al. 7). In Ann Stoltz's study on the LINK program, she stated the transition to high school is a "scheduled event" that seemed to have a significant impact on the social adjustment of the student. In her study, Stoltz found new freshmen experienced a major change in their social structure, academic expectations, and the influence of their peers, including upper classmen (The Relationship 4). What helped

freshmen with this significant change of scene also allowed them to feel a strong sense of acceptance within the school environment, according to Stoltz (The Relationship 4).

One of the constructs being investigated in the Stoltz study was to determine the degree to which high school freshmen developed a sense of acceptance and feeling connected with their school. The LINK program, according to Stoltz, supported a cultural change where LINK Leaders are personally assigned to freshmen to build a personal relationship between them, to conduct activities connecting freshmen to their school, and to help them feel supported by various members throughout their school (The Relationship 10).

As Stoltz mentioned in her study, the LINK program included a comprehensive orientation and mentoring program allowing the upperclassmen, also known as LINK Leaders, and the freshman students to get well-acquainted with each other before beginning the process of providing suggestions for freshman (The Relationship 10). This orientation process gave LINK Leaders and freshmen the opportunity for each student to "tell their story," in a manner with "courage balanced with consideration," as defined by Covey (Principled 45). From this connection with each other, the LINK Leaders progressed with the freshmen by making suggestions that related to appropriate conduct and a positive high school experience. This reminded freshmen it is not necessary to resort to undesirable or negative behavior that runs contrary to the acceptable expectations of the school. As Stoltz stated, this mentoring effort by upper classmen assigned to serve as LINK Leaders, was able to provide freshmen with "strategies for succeeding in high school through activities and instruction in 9th grade classes" (The Relationship 17).

Anderson noted in his study that a program such as LINK "welcomes freshmen and makes them feel comfortable throughout the first year of their high school experience by assigning up to 10 freshmen to a junior or senior Link Crew Leader" (11). This level of collaboration within the high school community is a significant variable where freshmen may immediately and continually feel supported from the older peers of their school. In the case of the LINK program, the juniors and seniors took on the role and responsibility of creating a strong relationship with the freshmen to achieve the goal of a successful transition of freshmen to their high school.

Outcome 2 - How FTPs Influence Freshmen to Participate More in School Activities:

At Maine-East, a high school located outside of Chicago, Illinois, it was determined that students entering their first year were not adjusting well. To address this dilemma, the school principal, David Barker, responded by using a version of the "Freshman Advisory Program," where upperclassmen provided freshmen with a structure of academic and social guidance to encourage freshmen to become more involved and actively participate throughout their first year. Joan Lampert reported this school experience where "Students in their first year at a Chicago-area high school find a lifeline in upperclassmen mentors" (61). When the freshmen of this school were asked what they thought was the purpose of the Freshmen Advisory, "virtually all of the responses were positive" and students said this help was "along with the lines of 'to help us through our first year of high school and help us with all the stresses of everyday life'" (Lampert 63). And when the freshmen were asked what they liked best about the program, they said, "they like being able to do their homework in a relaxed place where they can get help," and they saw their mentors as "working hard to help them" (Lampert 63).

From the mentors' viewpoint, the upperclassmen at Maine-East felt the program "enhanced their own growth and development, noting they became more involved and outgoing, more understandable of their teachers and more accepting of differences" (Lampert 63). Lampert felt this program would continue to build a framework that encourages attachment, achievement, and awareness – so all first-year students at Maine-East can openly participate in their school and do well in the process (63).

Blankstein called freshman transition programs "a better way" because the Chicago area school had "developed a strengths-based approach" (108). This is because this FTP viewed and treated its people on the basis of recognizing the fundamental needs that motivated their behavior to participate in their school, which he said is possible through a theoretical model called, "The Community Circle of Caring" (Blankstein 108-109). According to Blankstein, the four critical components in this model are similar characteristics found in the freshman transition program of Maine-East and the LINK program, which include: 1) contribution, 2) connection, 3) self-control, and 4) competence. The "four C's" help students in the following ways:

1. Contribution instead of self-centeredness – by allowing older students to teach and lead younger students through teaming opportunities and cooperative learning.
2. Connection instead of disconnection – by welcoming and greeting students warmly and systematically so that they are positively connected in extra-curricular engagement and to use this measure for all students as a measure of success for schools.

3. Self-control instead of compliance and obedience – by seeking participation from students through their feedback, which assists in their becoming more self-aware and improving their level of emotional intelligences.
4. Developing competence instead of building incompetence – by demanding mastery of material and finding and emphasizing strengths in students.

The four *C's* "provide a framework for rethinking and coordinating the actions of the entire school community" (Blankstein 109). This "rethinking" reminds schools that the ultimate goal of their program is to be "one of creating an environment and culture that meets students' basic needs," where they may be "prosocially" active (Blankstein 110). By "having an improvement plan for all students," an intervention like the LINK program would help students understand their failure is not an available option and their only clear choice is to learn and succeed from their involvement and participation (Blankstein 111).

In her study, Stoltz explored the degree of involvement and participation of freshmen who were influenced by the LINK freshman transition program. In their transition, freshmen were regularly and actively supported by upper classmen serving as LINK Leaders. She went on to state, "Since a major portion of the adolescent's day is spent in school, those peer relationships within the school environment may be critical determinants of social success" (The Relationship 19). Therefore, by freshmen interacting with their upperclassmen on a regular basis and in on-going scheduled activities, they were automatically involved with their school because of the design of the LINK program. As a component of these regularly scheduled meeting times, freshman

students were encouraged to explore other ways to have positive experiences and to participate more in their school.

Outcome 3 - How FTPs Affect the Way Freshmen Feel Supported by Their School:

"For Freshmen Only" was a program found to have "valuable insight" for freshmen as it shows them how to "navigate the big house" and helps address the academic demands and opportunities presented in high school (Haviland 28). Haviland goes on to say that "the anxiety associated with graduating to the next level is common" because of such things as: difficult high school classes, time management issues, managing extra school activities, feeling that things are less personal, more competitiveness, and a stronger orientation to making good grades (28). This program provided additional support beyond "the tour" by providing freshmen with a "series of workshops" taught by successful upperclassmen (Haviland 28). The intent of the workshops was to address the issues described as "relevant" and "always authentic," so they could help the school deal with any inconsistencies experienced within its environment, especially with those making sure students feel they are not being turned away or feeling fear of being excluded (Haviland 29-30). As it was found in the LINK program, the intended outcome of linking upperclassmen with freshmen was "to allow freshmen to feel more connected to their school through the creation of a supportive and positive atmosphere" (Link Crew 2).

A report by Digs and Walters from the University of Colorado at Denver Health Sciences Center (UCDHSC) provided a pilot evaluation of the LINK freshman transition program in 2006. In their evaluation, they included six high schools using the LINK program along with one comparison school site which did not use the program. The

number of years for each of the six schools having used the LINK program ranged from five to fourteen years (Diggs and Walters 7). The report included the following in its "Summary of Findings" as it related to the LINK program:

- Most of the freshman student respondents (70%) were satisfied with the LINK program.
- Most freshmen respondents felt they were a part of their school (71%).
- Forty-five percent (45%) of the freshmen respondents reported that they participate in "a lot" of school activities.
- More than half (54%) of the freshman student respondents indicated they would miss their school if they had to leave (Diggs and Walters 4-6).

Because of its findings on the positive effects of the LINK program on the freshmen year experience, the UCDHSC report suggested schools adopting the LINK program should use it further as a means to strengthen and increase the amount of contact between Link Leaders and freshman students (Diggs and Walters 2). The report stated the leadership component in the mentoring aspect of the LINK program had an effect on the following:

- The overall ratings from the freshman respondents of the LINK program as being positive, rating the program as either "excellent" or "good."
- Freshman students participating in the LINK program were observed to be well connected and involved in school as noted with 71% reporting that they feel they are a part of their school.

- The freshmen respondents reported they felt more welcomed, knew more students, and were more prepared for school as a result of the LINK program (Diggs and Walters 4-6).

Like the "For Freshmen Only" program, the LINK program appears to have a positive influence on how freshmen connect with their school. Both programs allowed freshmen to become well-oriented to their school while establishing a genuine connection with upperclassmen. This connection established between the freshmen and the upperclassmen seemed to affect the freshmen's overall sense of feeling they are a part of their school and would miss their school if they had to leave. But it is unclear if a significant distinction exists between the LINK program and other FTPs as it relates to how students feel connected to their school, which is one of the outcomes being investigated in this study.

Summary Review of FTPs and Their Contribution:

In review of the literature, FTPs were generally believed to make a significant contribution to the freshmen year experience. The reason for FTPs' noted contributions may exist because they are expected to address a variety of complex issues found in the social adjustment of students entering high school for the first time. The contributions noted the most were focused on freshmen students' transition to a new environment. As a report from the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools stated, "School reform and improvement strategies are beginning to address ways to minimize the number of times students have to face the newness of a new year," but major changes in schools are needed to address this "full range of transitions" (36). Due to this serious approach to

school improvement, FTPs were regarded as an important contributor in assisting freshmen transition with their new school experience (CMHS 36).

A key aspect of the LINK program is the idea of building relationships through leadership. "People make things happen….and…investment in relationships is an investment in the achievement of goals" (Jarvis and Chavez 37). According to Jarvis and Chavez, when relationships are included with the role and responsibilities and focused together, it "can assist leaders in defining their purpose (personal and organizational), identifying actions that foster achievement of purpose, and seeking greater meaning in work itself" (37).

Covey emphasized the importance of building leadership in a school environment because it allowed a school to progress "from effectiveness to greatness" (The 8th 270). He said it was important to become a leader so others may do the same with the common ability to "share the voice of inspiration with others" (The 8th 270). "The 8th habit," as he calls it, gives a person a "mind-set and a skill-set" to continually seek the potential in others (The 8th 271).

In reviewing some of the different FTPs currently being used in high schools, their basic purpose was to assist in transitioning freshmen to their new high school by responding to issues around their social adjustment. Although several FTPs used upperclassmen to assist freshmen, none of them were found to include a leadership training component like the LINK program. As stated in the LINK Crew Handbook for Administrators, "They [Link Crew Leaders] become leaders, motivators, role models, and teachers" (Link Crew 1).

FTPs addressed the level of positivity felt by freshmen by trying to reduce the level of fear and anxiety felt by students through the creation of trusting and supportive relationships with upperclassmen. The upperclassmen were a key element of the FTPs as they were expected to be genuine and work hard to recognize any difficulties of adjustment being experienced by freshmen in their new school. FTPs provided a formal structure so relationships between freshmen and upper classmen could be strengthened through relevant and meaningful activities with the purpose of encouraging freshmen to find ways to be more involved and participate more often in their school. As freshmen graduated to this level of high school and received the personal attention from their upperclassmen in the FTP programs, freshmen had the opportunity to feel more connected to their school and perceive their school cared about them.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Research Design:

This study used an experimental approach to investigate the LINK program and its effects on freshmen students experiencing their first year of high school. The primary independent variable was the LINK program and it served as the treatment in the experimental group. The effect from the presence and absence of the LINK program was made possible by comparing data from the experimental group to the data collected from a control group where the LINK program was not present.

The experiment studied the effect of the LINK program (independent variable) on three dependent variables found in the freshmen year experience. These three dependent variables (DV) were:

1. The level of positivity perceived by freshmen in their school.
2. The level of participation and involvement perceived by freshmen in their school.
3. The level of feelings of support perceived by freshmen from their school.

This study also looked at the effects of the LINK program over a period of time. This was accomplished by administering a survey prior to the program's initiation followed by the same survey at the conclusion of the program. It was appropriate to investigate the effect of time and its impact on the three dependent variables as the LINK program was used throughout the school year.

The subjects in the experimental group (treatment group), were the freshmen students of Ottawa High School (OHS). The treatment being administered to the

experimental group at OHS was the LINK program. The subjects in the control group, the group where the LINK program did not exist, were represented by the freshmen students of Pomona High School (PHS) and Williamsburg High School (WHS).

The method for collecting data was accomplished by using a 30-question survey to obtain responses from the freshmen students. The questions from the survey were obtained from another survey developed by Ann Stoltz in a pilot study at Valley High School, California (See Appendix B page 73). Permission was granted indirectly from the Boomerang Project, the creators of the LINK program, and it was later confirmed from Ms. Stoltz to allow her survey questions to be borrowed and adapted for this study. The reasons for adapting Stoltz's survey to this study were due to her questions being designed to measure the same outcomes being measured in this study as it relates to the effects of the LINK program. The changes made to Stoltz's survey consisted of the following:

1. A reduction was made to the number of questions from 53 to 30 to more efficiently address the three outcomes of this study – level of positivity, level of participation and involvement, and perceived level of support and connection felt by freshmen from their school.
2. Minor modifications in the wording were made to 4 of the 30 questions so freshmen students from the comparison schools could respond to the same question regarding their freshmen year experience in their school.
3. The last question in the survey related to how students felt about their school by asking them to provide a rating (See Appendix C page 80 for the survey used in this study).

The 30 questions used to obtain a quantitative measurement for the three outcomes (dependent variables or DV) of this study are broken down as follows, including comments relating to the manner they were adapted from Stoltz's survey:

Questions 1-5: General Demographic Information - confirmed name of school, student's perception of participation in a transition program, gender, age, and ethnicity. Stoltz's questions asked for gender, age, and ethnicity.

Questions 6-8: The Level of Participation (DV No. 2) - asked freshmen if they planned to or were currently participating in school or involved in community activities, giving them the opportunity to respond to more than one activity. These questions were adapted from questions 4 and 5 from Stoltz's survey. Also, the number of responses for a students' participation collected from Questions 6-8 were averaged when conducting the analysis.

Questions 9-13, 29-30: The Level Freshmen Feel Supported from Their School and the Level They Feel Connected to Their School (DV No. 3) - Questions 9-13 used a four-point Likert-type scale and questions 29-30 used a five-point Likert-type scale. These questions asked freshmen if they felt close to the people in their school, felt to be a part of the school, felt happy, felt treated fairly, felt safe (supported), and how they generally felt about their school. Stoltz used questions 27-31 and 34 in her survey to explore this outcome.

Questions 27-28: Negative Experiences (DV No. 1) – These questions used a five-point Likert-type scale to ask freshman how often they got in trouble with other students or with their teachers. Stoltz used questions 32-33 in her survey.

Questions 14-26: Positive Experiences (DV No. 1) – These questions used a four-point Likert-type scale and addressed student's desire to work hard, obtain good grades, do well in school, get along with teachers, and accomplish goals in a positive manner. These questions were adapted from Questions 38 through 53 in Stoltz's study. Also, Questions 16, 18, 19, and 20 were reverse scored due to their use of negative words in their content.

The survey was administered to freshmen by well-experienced adult educators. These individuals also served to minimize the risk of bias to the study. Internal validity was addressed by administering the surveys to students in the natural surrounding of their school and at a time during the day when other stimulus or expectations did not appear to exist. Experimenter bias was controlled by the person conducting this study keeping an appropriate distance (out of sight) when the survey was performed. To test the reliability of the survey, an attribution scale was established by calculating a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for some of the questions.

Because the freshmen students participating in the survey were under the age of 18, written permission was obtained from the students and one of their parents or guardian. The survey was administered twice to the same body of freshmen students within the academic year – August 2006 through May 2007. The first survey was conducted in October of 2006 and served as a pretest for student responses. The survey was given a second time to the students in April of 2007 and served as a posttest.

A pretest and a posttest were given to freshmen students in both the experimental group (Ottawa High School) and the control group (Pomona and Williamsburg High Schools) to obtain a basis of comparison between the two groups over time, from October

2006 through April 2007. High school teachers managing the LINK program were selected to administer the survey. These individuals were chosen to help maintain consistency, research objectivity and to assure the same students taking the pretest survey in October were taking the posttest in April.

Analysis:

This study used an experimental research approach to investigate the differences between two groups – an experimental group and a control group. To examine the differences between the two groups, or comparison groups, responses were collected from both groups by use of a survey. These responses provided data to determine if there was a main effect created from the presence of the LINK program in the treatment group compared to the absence of the LINK program in the control group.

A second main effect was time, which was explored by determining if the freshmen students' responses changed from early in the year to the later part of their school year. This was accomplished by administering the survey described herein as a pretest and posttest to both the treatment group and the control group. The data collected from the comparison groups made it possible to compare the mean scores from both. A factorial ANOVA was used to explore the interaction between the two main effects – i.e. an interaction between the presence or absence of the LINK program and the effect of time measured from the pretest and posttest. The main effect and interactions were also calculated for each of the three independent variables – positivity, participation, and feelings about school.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The focus of this study was on a select group of freshmen students from three high schools in Franklin County Kansas for the purpose of investigating the effect of the LINK freshmen transition program. The LINK program was being used for the first time with the freshmen at Ottawa High School. This group of freshmen served as the treatment group in the investigation. Pomona High School and Williamsburg High School (located in USD 287) served as the control group since the freshmen students at these two schools were not exposed to the LINK program.

To obtain measurable data from both groups of freshmen students, a 30-question survey was used. The 30 questions collected responses from students in order to investigate the following information:

- Demographics of the study (Questions (1 – 5).
- Level of positivity perceived by freshmen (Questions 14 – 28).
- Planned participation perceived by freshmen (Question 6).
- Participation perceived by freshmen (Question 7).
- Community involvement perceived by freshmen (Question 8).
- Feelings of support perceived by freshmen (Questions 9 – 13, 29, and 30).

The survey was administered twice to both freshmen groups, once in the early part of the year (October 2006) and a second time in the latter part of the high school year (April 2007).

The effect of the LINK program on the freshman year experience at Ottawa High School was investigated by testing the following hypotheses:

1. The LINK program has an effect on the level of positivity perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school.
2. The LINK program has an effect on the level of participation and involvement perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school.
3. The LINK program has an effect on the level of feelings of support perceived by freshmen from their school in their first year of high school.

These hypotheses were tested in the experiment by looking at a two-way interaction, using the presence and absence of the LINK program along with the effect of using the program over time as the two independent variables. This two-way interaction test was used to test the level of significance of the two independent variables on three dependent variables – the level of positivity, the level of participation and involvement, and the level of feelings of support by freshmen in their school.

The differences between genders were tested to further explore the effects of the LINK program on the freshmen year experience. Before reporting the findings relating to the hypotheses, a descriptive analysis of the demographics of the study's group (3 high schools in Franklin County) is included, reporting sample size, ethnicity, average age, and gender.

Descriptive Analysis of the Demographics:

A description of the demographics of the entire group of students involved in the study was collected from the first five questions of the survey. A total of 160 students participated in the study, taking both the pretest and posttest surveys. From the sample size (n = 160), 75% students were from Ottawa High School (n = 120), 21% from Pomona High School (n = 34), and 4% from Williamsburg High School (n = 6). As seen in Figure 3, 75% of the students represented the treatment group (Ottawa) and 25% for the control group (Pomona and Williamsburg).

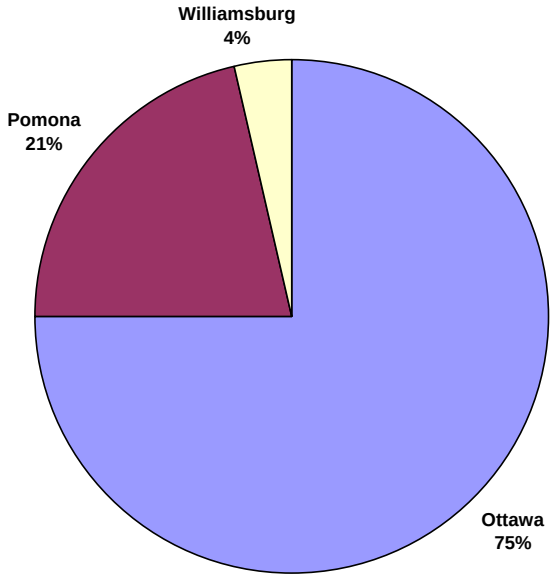


Fig. 3. Percentage of Freshmen Represented at 3 High Schools

Information pertaining to the size of the freshmen population and total student population of each of the three high schools are found in Table 2. The numbers reflect the population of students in the beginning of the year for each school.

Table 2

Population of Freshmen and Total Students at 3 High Schools

High School	Freshmen	Total Students
Ottawa	178	841
Pomona	52	200
Williamsburg	18	73

Source: Board of Education office for each school, September 2006.

Based on the numbers reported in Tables 2 and 3, the response rate for the survey completion from each school was 71% for Ottawa (126 out of 178), 71% for Pomona (37 out of 52), and 56% for Williamsburg (10 out of 18).

The ethnicity for the three high schools is found in Table 3. It should be noted some students reported more than one ethnicity causing the number of participants to be 173, 13 students more than the actual 160 students initially reported for the study.

Table 3

Ethnicity of Freshmen Participating in the Study

Ethnicity	Ottawa	Pomona	Williamsburg	Total
African American	5	0	1	6
Asian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0
Caucasian/White	108	31	6	145
East Indian	0	0	0	0
Hispanic	5	3	0	8
Middle Eastern	0	0	0	0
Native American	6	3	2	11
Other	2	0	1	3
Total	126	7	10	173

As noted in Table 3, a majority of the respondents (83.82%) were reported as Caucasian/White (n = 145) with the remaining 16.18% reported from all the other ethnic groups (28). Three groups predominately made up the minority population reported - African American (3.47%), Hispanic (4.62%), and Native American (6.36%). The percentage of individuals not reporting their ethnicity was 1.73%. The percentage of

students reporting an ethnicity other than Caucasian/White among the three schools showed Ottawa at 20.63%, Pomona at 16.22%, and Williamsburg at 40%.

The average age of the three entire groups was 14.2 years with a range of 13 – 16 years as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4

Age of Freshmen Participating in the Study

High School	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16	Average Age
Ottawa	1	82	35	1	14.3
Pomona	0	27	7	0	14.2
Williamsburg	0	4	1	1	14.5

The group was made up of 58% females (n = 93) and 42% males (n = 67) as reported in Table 5.

Table 5

Gender of Freshmen Participating in the Study

High School	Females	Males
Ottawa	68	52
Pomona	20	14
Williamsburg	5	1
Total	93	67

Reliability:

To look at the reliability of the survey, a Cronbach's alpha was calculated on the questions intended to measure the construct of "positivity" and questions intended to measure the level of "feelings of support" by freshmen. The analysis for reliability in this study was performed to mirror Anne Stoltz's test for reliability in her study where she obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .84 from a composite scale for the variable of student "satisfaction" with the LINK program (Stoltz 25). Where Stoltz referred to the level of student "satisfaction," this study used the construct "positivity," with the same questions used to measure both constructs. Furthermore, the constructs for measuring participation in Stoltz's study and for this study were single item questions so a Cronbach's alpha was not calculated to perform a reliability check.

In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for "positivity" was .254 (number of question items = 13, n = 298). This alpha is not close to 1.0, indicating a potentially unreliable measure of the construct. The Cronbach's alpha for "feelings of support" was .862 (number of items = 7, n = 301). This alpha was close to 1.0, indicating a reliable measure of this construct. Generally speaking, "a measure is considered reliable for most research and practical purposes if it reliability coefficient is .80 or higher. (In the case of one type of reliability coefficient, Cronbach's alpha, a value of .70 or higher usually is sufficient.)" (Gall et al. 140).

The calculations to follow included a factorial analysis of variance to test the effect of the LINK program over time on freshmen's perceived level of positivity, planned participation, participation, community involvement, and feelings of support in their schools.

The Level of Positivity in Freshmen:

A 2 (time) by 2 (LINK) by 2 (gender) ANOVA was conducted on the positivity score. No interaction effects were found to be significant ($\alpha = .05$). A significant main effect for the time the test was administered was observed ($F(1,307) = 4.529$, $p = .034$). The average pretest score of 51.736 was significantly higher than the average posttest score of 50.032. This indicates freshman students perceived more positive experiences at the beginning of the school year than they perceived at the end of the year. A main effect for the presence or absence of the LINK program was also observed ($F(1,307) = 5.777$, $p = .017$). The average positivity score for freshmen in the LINK program at Ottawa was 50.208 while the average score for freshmen in the other two schools (Pomona and Williamsburg) was 52.937. This indicated a significantly higher average positivity score for freshmen at Pomona and Williamsburg than for the freshmen at Ottawa. A significant main effect was also observed for gender ($F(1,307) = 11.964$, $p = .001$). The average positivity score for males (49.1037) was significantly lower than the score for females (52.2333) for schools.

As noted above, no interaction effect was significant regarding the LINK program's effect on the level of positivity in freshmen over time. Figure 4 shows the pretest and posttest positivity scores for the school with the LINK program lower than the pretest and posttest positivity scores for the schools not using the LNK program.

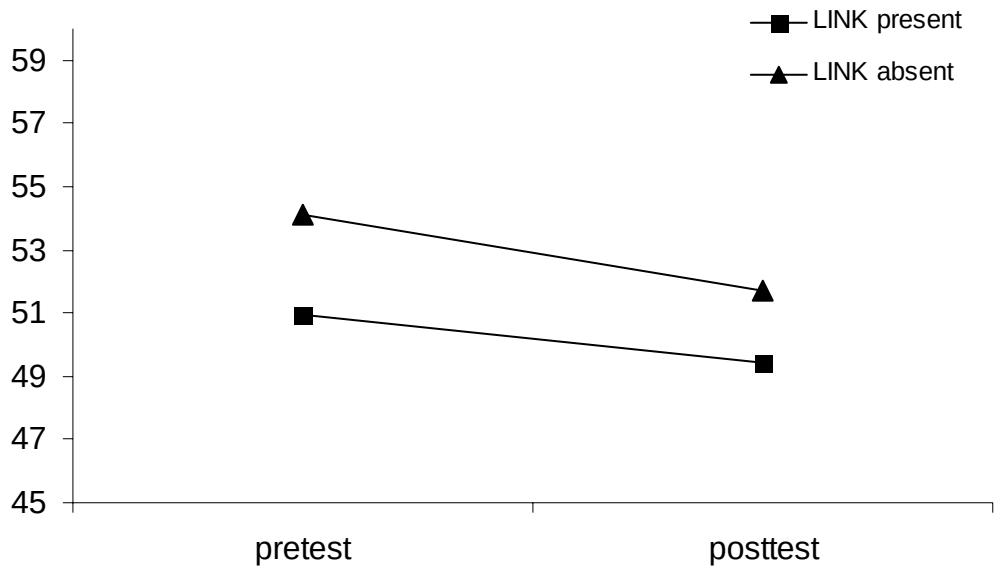


Fig. 4. Nonsignificant Interaction for Positivity

There is no evidence the LINK program is related to changes between the pretest and posttest scores as illustrated by the non-intersecting lines in Figure 4. Therefore hypothesis 1, which states the LINK program has an effect on the level of positivity as perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school, is not supported.

Planned Participation in Freshmen:

A 2 (time) by 2 (LINK) by 2 (gender) ANOVA was conducted on the planned participation score. No interaction effects were found to be significant ($\alpha = .05$). A significant main effect for the time the test was administered was observed ($F(1,309) = 8.995$, $p = .003$). The average pretest score of 1.774 was significantly higher than the average posttest score of 1.380. This indicates freshmen students planned to participate more in the school at the beginning of the year than they actually did by the end of the

year. A main effect of the presence or absence of the LINK program was also observed ($F(1,309) = 16.546$, $p < .001$). The average planned participation score for freshmen in the LINK program at Ottawa High School was 1.450 and for the other schools (Pomona and Williamsburg) was 1.962. This indicated a significantly higher average planned participation score for the freshmen at Pomona and Williamsburg compared to the freshmen at Ottawa. A significant main effect was also observed for gender ($F(1,309) = 6.550$, $p = .011$). Male students' average planned participation score (1.321) was significantly lower than the female students' average score (1.772) for all schools.

As noted above, no interaction effect was significant regarding the LINK program's effect on the level of planned participation by freshmen over time. Figure 5 shows the pretest and posttest planned participation scores for the school with the LINK program lower than the pretest and posttest planned participation scores for the schools not using the LNK program.

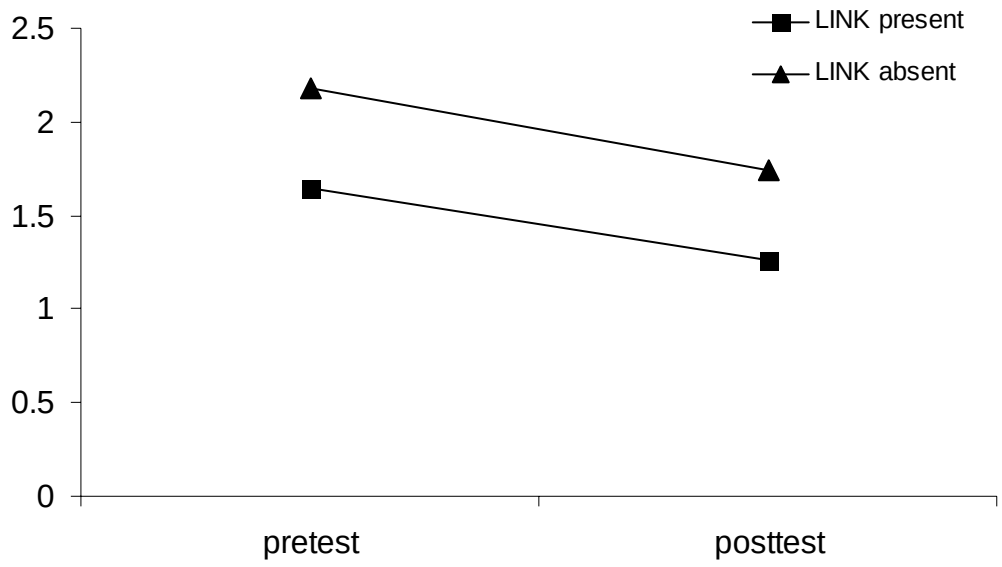


Fig. 5. Nonsignificant Interaction for Planned Participation

There is no evidence the LINK program is related to changes between the pretest and posttest scores as illustrated by the non-intersecting lines in Figure 5. Therefore hypothesis 2, which states the LINK program has an effect on the level of participation and involvement as perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school, is not supported.

Participation by Freshmen:

A 2 (time) by 2 (LINK) by 2 (gender) ANOVA was conducted on the participation score. Again, no interaction effects were found to be significant ($\alpha = .05$). A significant main effect for the time the test was administered was observed ($F(1,300) = 3.927$, $p = .048$). The average pretest score of 1.490 was significantly higher than the

average posttest score of 1.268. This indicated freshmen students participated more at the beginning of the school year than they were actually participating at the end of the year. A main effect for the presence or absence of the LINK program was also observed ($F(1, 300) = 7.134$, $p = .008$). The average participation score for freshmen in the LINK program at Ottawa High School was 1.297 and for the other schools (Pomona and Williamsburg) was 1.620. This indicates a significantly higher average participation score for freshmen at Pomona and Williamsburg compared to the freshmen at Ottawa. A significant main effect was also observed for gender ($F(1, 300) = 7.542$, $p = .006$). Male students' average participation score (1.114) was significantly lower than the female students' score (1.580) for all schools.

As noted above, no interaction effect was significant regarding the LINK program's effect on the level of participation by freshmen over time. Figure 6 shows the pretest and posttest participation scores for the school with the LINK program lower than the pretest and posttest participation scores for the schools not using LNK.

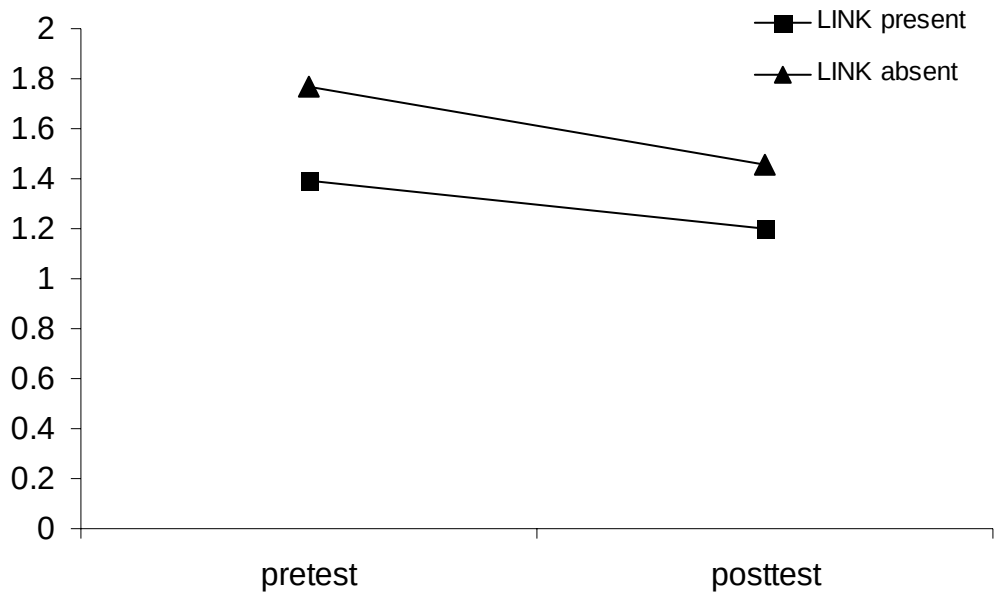


Fig. 6. Nonsignificant Interaction for Participation

There is no evidence the LINK program is related to changes between the pretest and posttest scores as illustrated by the non-intersecting lines in Figure 6. Therefore hypothesis 2, which states the LINK program has an effect on the level of participation and involvement as perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school, is not supported.

Community Involvement by Freshmen:

A 2 (time) by 2 (LINK) by 2 (gender) ANOVA was conducted on the community involvement score. No interaction effects were found to be significant ($\alpha = .05$). There was no significant main effect for the time the test was administered ($\alpha = .05$). There was no significant main effect for the presence or absence of the LINK program ($\alpha = .05$). A significant main effect was observed for gender ($F(1, 303) = 10.363$, $p = .001$). Male

students' average community involvement score (1.008) was significantly lower than the female students' average score (1.318) for all schools.

As noted above, no interaction effect was significant regarding the LINK program's effect on the level of community involvement by freshmen over time. However, unlike the planned participation and participation scores, there was no decrease in the pretest and posttest scores for community involvement over time as illustrated in Figure 7.

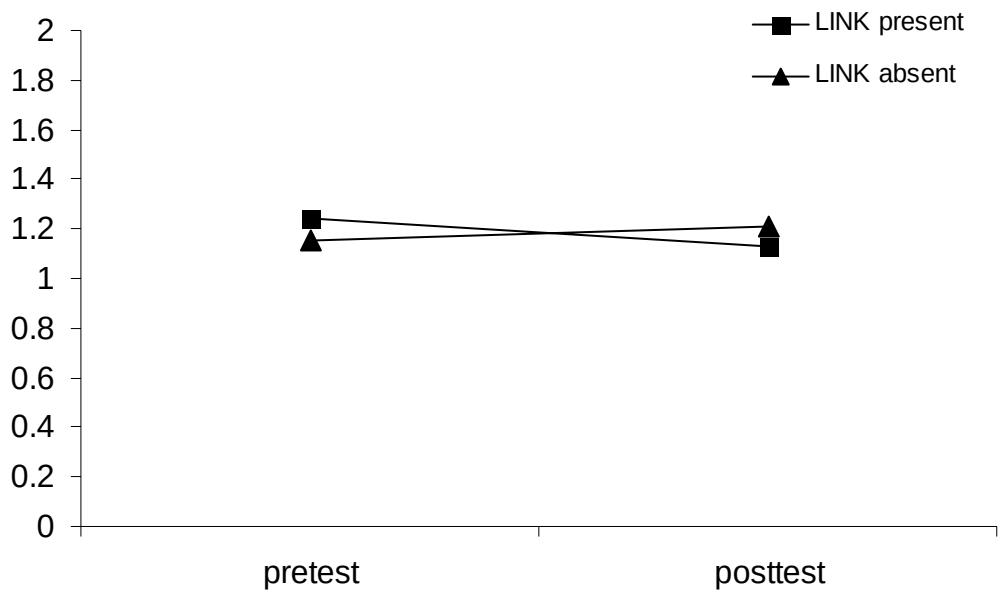


Fig. 7. Nonsignificant Interaction for Community Involvement

Again, there is no evidence the LINK program is related to changes between the pretest and posttest scores as illustrated in Figure 7. Therefore hypothesis 2, which states

the LINK program has an effect on the level of participation and involvement as perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school, is not supported.

Feelings of Support in Freshmen:

A 2 (time) by 2 (LINK) by 2 (gender) ANOVA was conducted on the feelings of support score. No interaction effects were found to be significant ($\alpha = .05$). There was also no significant main effect for the time the test was administered ($\alpha = .05$). A main effect for the presence or absence of the LINK program was observed ($F(1, 311) = 17.188$, $p < .001$). The average feelings of support score for freshmen in the LINK program at Ottawa High School was 23.942 while the average score for freshmen at the other schools (Pomona and Williamsburg) was 27.051. This indicates a significantly higher average feelings of support score for freshmen at Pomona and Williamsburg than for the freshmen at Ottawa. A significant main effect was also observed for gender ($F(1, 311) = 10.181$, $p = .002$). Male students' average feelings of support score (23.343) was significantly lower than the female students' average score (25.742) for all schools.

As noted above, no interaction effect was significant regarding the LINK program's effect on the level of feelings of support by freshmen over time. Figure 8 shows the pretest and posttest feelings of support scores for the school with the LINK program lower than the pretest and posttest feelings of support scores for the schools not using the LNK program.

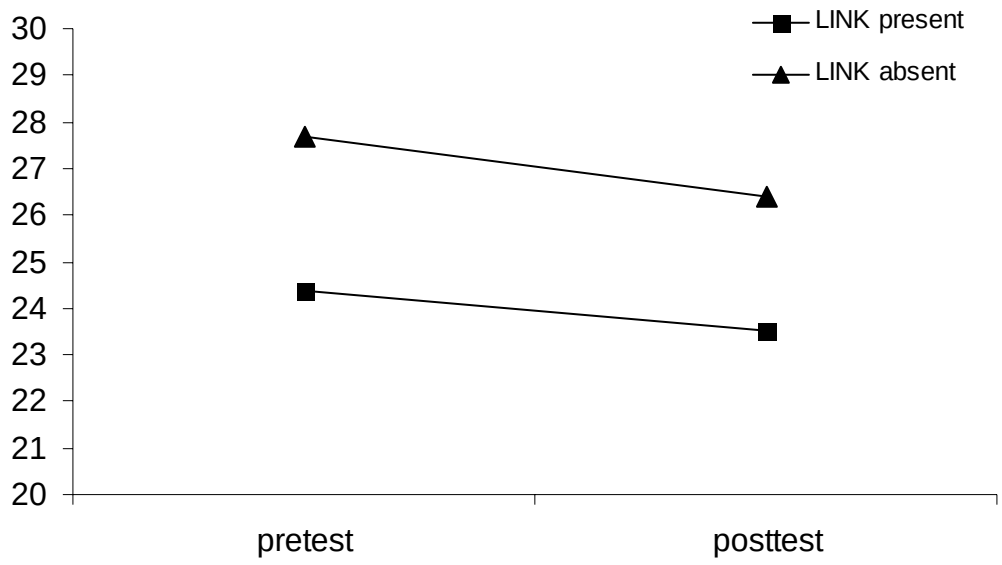


Fig. 8. Nonsignificant Interaction for Feelings of Support

There is no evidence the LINK program is related to changes between the pretest and posttest scores as illustrated by the non-intersecting lines in Figure 8. Therefore hypothesis 3, which states the LINK program has an effect on the level of feelings of support as perceived by freshmen from their school in their first year of high school, is not supported.

Exploratory Analysis:

As noted in the primary analysis reported thus far in this study, there was no support for any of the three main hypotheses. When looking at the reliability of the questions used to obtain responses for the level of positivity perceived by students (Questions 14 – 28) in the survey, as measured by the Cronbach's alpha, all scores except one of the fifteen questions fell below .8. A 2 by 2 by 2 ANOVA was calculated on each

of the positivity questions. Once again, there was no significance reported (all p's > .05), except for one item – Question No. 23. This question asked students to respond to, "I think I'm pretty smart in school." The two-way interaction between the time of the testing and the presence or absence of the LINK program was marginally significant ($F(1, 311) = 3.089$, $p = .08$). Figure 9 shows the pretest mean was 3.0 for the LINK students and 3.38 for students in the other schools, with the posttest mean scores of 3.08 for both groups of students.

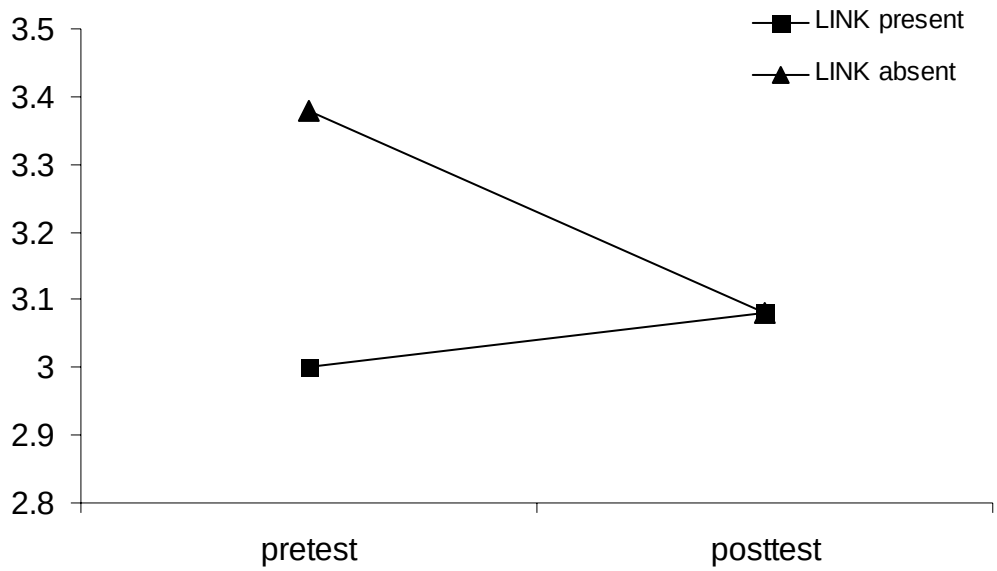


Fig. 9. Marginal Significant Interaction for Positivity

Figure 9 suggests that the average rating for students in the LINK program did not change appreciably while the average rating decreased for students not in the LINK program.

Summary:

The results produced from the calculations of this study did not provide support for any of the three hypotheses. The presence of the LINK program did not have a significant effect (at the .05 level) on the level of positivity, participation and involvement, and feelings of support perceived by freshmen over a period of one year. However, marginal significance was found in the analysis from one question (23) where an unappreciable change occurred regarding how students felt they were smart. This effect occurred over a period of time (one year) where the LINK program was present at Ottawa High School.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine if the LINK program, a freshman transition program (FTP) with a leadership component, had a significant effect on freshmen having a successful experience in their first year of high school. To accomplish this, data was collected, analyzed, and compared from different high schools over a period of one year. The schools included Ottawa High School, where the LINK program was present, and Pomona and Williamsburg High Schools, where the LINK program was absent. The freshman year experience was defined by three dependent variables – freshmen's perceived level of positivity, participation and involvement, and feelings of support from their school.

The findings of this study showed the LINK program did not have a significant effect on the freshman year experience at Ottawa High School when compared to the two other high schools in the same area – Franklin County. These comparisons included changes in measurements of the perceived level of positivity, participation, and feelings of support by freshmen. The following is an interpretation of the findings, recommendations for subsequent research, and concluding thoughts regarding freshmen transition programs (FTPs) in the high school.

Demographics:

The three schools chosen for this study were located in the western part of Franklin County and were within 15 miles of each other – Ottawa, Pomona, and Williamsburg. Ottawa High School is approximately three times larger than the other two schools (Pomona and Williamsburg) combined. This created a considerable

difference between the sizes of the treatment group (120 freshmen) where the LINK program existed (Ottawa) compared to the control group (40 freshmen), which included the two high schools where the LINK program was absent (Pomona and Williamsburg).

The response rate for the number of surveys completed was acceptable for the study, having a range of 56 – 71% among the three schools. The response was higher from Ottawa (71%) and Pomona (71%) compared to Williamsburg (56%). As a result, the number of freshmen students participating from Williamsburg was limited in this study.

When comparing the demographic characteristics of the treatment and control groups of the study, it appears there were differences between the two groups initially, which could have led to the results as reported. This overall effect could have been prominent in Williamsburg where only 10 freshmen out of 18 in the class participated in the study. A school counselor or teacher from each of the schools was in charge of administering the surveys. The lower response rate from Williamsburg may have been caused by a lack of not following through with personal contacts with students who did not return the parent permission form.

Another factor possibly affecting the return rate of the surveys could have been caused by the relocation and consolidation of students from Williamsburg High School to Pomona High School. Some citizens from the Williamsburg community were very vocal in expressing their deep concerns regarding the consolidation measure from 2006 through 2007 (Hoyt). These concerns may have influenced some parents to not see a need to give permission for their students to complete a survey for their school.

Positivity Perceived by Freshmen:

Hypothesis 1 stated the LINK program had a significant effect ($\alpha = .05$) on the level of positivity perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school. There were no interaction effects found on the level of positivity when looking at the effects of time, the presence or absence of the LINK program, and the effect of gender. The results indicate the presence or absence of the LINK program did not influence a change in the perceived level of positivity by freshmen.

The mean score of the students at Pomona and Williamsburg was significantly higher than the mean score of the students at Ottawa. As illustrated in Figure 4 (page 45), the freshmen at Pomona and Williamsburg, where the LINK program was absent, were experiencing a higher level of positivity than the Ottawa freshmen, where the LINK program was present. This higher level of positivity perceived by freshmen at Pomona and Williamsburg was true at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year. However, the freshmen at Pomona and Williamsburg could have been more positive than the Ottawa students from the very beginning of the year, even though the level of positivity decreased at comparable levels for freshmen at all three of the schools towards the end of the school year.

The higher level of positivity from Williamsburg and Pomona High School could be explained by the size of these schools in comparison to Ottawa High School. Both Pomona and Williamsburg are approximately one-third the size of Ottawa. Students in a smaller school setting may perceive themselves as having a closer and more personal connection with their peers, teachers, and school staff. As noted by Kathleen Cotton

from the School Improvement Research Series (SIRS), research shows students in a small high school experience a more positive attitude about their school (5).

Another factor having a potential affect on the higher level of positivity perceived by freshmen at Pomona and Williamsburg High Schools could be influenced by the use of a new FTP beginning the year before this study was conducted in 2005. This program, called "Freshman Success," was created to help freshmen feel more welcomed and be oriented to their new school. In the program, upperclassmen honor students are assigned to freshmen to serve as mentors throughout their first year of high school. The mentoring activity could have contributed to the freshmen's perceived level of positivity, along with their participation in school, involvement in the community, and their feelings of support from their school.

Additionally, the graph in Figure 4 (page 45) shows freshmen at all of the schools perceiving a higher level of positivity at the beginning of the year than at the end of the year. This indicates it may be difficult for all freshmen to maintain their level of positivity in the three high schools as the year comes to an end. This drop in positivity for all of the freshmen suggests there may be other aspects of school life needing improvement. For instance, there may be trust issues between students; some students may not feel close to their teachers, and some students may continue to fall short of being academically-oriented in their school. Therefore, upperclassmen and designated sponsors involved in their school's respective FTP may be having a positive effect with transitioning freshmen in their first year of high school, yet other elements within the school culture could be negating the overall effect on fostering positive student attitudes.

Participation and Involvement Perceived by Freshmen:

The second hypothesis of the study stated the LINK program had an effect on the level of participation and involvement perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school. There were no interaction effects found on the level of planned participation, participation in school, or community involvement when looking at the effects of time, the presence or absence of the LINK program, and the effect of gender. There was a significant difference found in planned participation and participation when comparing the pretest and posttest mean scores of the group. The mean score of the students for planned participation and participation at Pomona and Williamsburg was significantly higher than the mean score of the students at Ottawa. However, a difference did not exist between the groups for community involvement.

The results showed the level of planned participation and participation in school, or involvement in the community by freshmen was not influenced by the presence or absence of the LINK program. Yet, all students reported to have more planned participation and participation in the earlier part of their school year than at the end, as illustrated in the graphs in Figures 5 (page 47) and 6 (page 49). Like positivity, the interest or attitude of all freshmen participating in the three high schools may diminish as the end of the school year approaches.

Furthermore, the graphs in Figures 5 and 6 show the students at Pomona and Williamsburg (LINK absent) indicated a higher level of planned participation and participation than students at Ottawa, where the LINK program was present. However, as indicated by the graph in Figure 7 (page 50), all freshmen perceived no decrease in their level of community involvement over the one year period of the study, as reflected

with no appreciable change in the pretest and posttest scores for both groups. In appears the interest in being involved in the community is maintained by freshmen, but not as much for their participation in school.

More participation experienced in smaller schools may also be explained in the same way positivity and student attitudes exist in schools of different size. Research has also shown students are more involved and participate more at smaller schools than larger schools (Cotton 6). Students in larger schools may have more opportunity and a wider range of activities from which to choose. Additionally, in smaller schools, fewer students are found not to participate, and the ones choosing to be involved tend to derive more satisfaction from their participation (Cotton qtd. Hamilton 6). Although LINK Leaders (upperclassmen) in the LINK program are involved with the freshmen in many social-type activities, this may not necessarily influence freshmen to participate more in their school or be more involved in their community.

Feelings of Support Perceived by Freshmen:

The third hypothesis stated the LINK program had a significant effect on the level of support perceived by freshmen in their first year of high school. There were no interaction effects on perceived level of feelings of support by freshmen when looking at the effects of time, the presence or absence of the LINK program, and the effect of gender. However, there was significant difference in the pretest and posttest mean scores of the group for feelings of support. As illustrated in Figure 8 (page 52), the mean score of the students at Pomona and Williamsburg was significantly higher than the mean score of the students at Ottawa. Again, these results indicate there is a higher level of

perceived support by students who are not exposed to the LINK program compared to students where the LINK program is present.

Williamsburg and Pomona schools are not using an FTP with a leadership component like the LINK program, but they were using a freshman transition program called "Freshmen Success." This program contained basic orientation and mentoring activities to transition freshmen into their new setting. With these two schools being smaller, the faculty and staff at Williamsburg and Pomona could have had a more personal approach and contributed more to the level of feelings of support to their students than the LINK program sponsors could provide to their freshmen at Ottawa High School.

Although the LINK program did not show itself to have a greater effect on the perceived level of positivity, participation, involvement, and feelings of support by freshmen compared to other schools where the program was absent, a nominal effect was discovered. When doing an exploratory analysis on one survey question – No. 23, where students responded to how smart they felt in school, freshmen in the LINK program perceived themselves to think they were smarter at the end of the year than at the beginning of the year. In contrast, the freshmen at the schools where the LINK program was absent felt they were not as smart at the end of the year than at the beginning of the year.

As illustrated in Figure 9 (page 53), the rate of increase was not appreciable for the LINK freshmen feeling smarter in their first year. However, the rate of decrease was more noticeable from freshmen where the program was absent. This finding suggests it

may be worth looking further at how the LINK program has an effect on self-efficacy issues of freshmen in their first year of high school.

Recommendations for Further Research:

Based on the findings of this study, the LINK program did not have an effect on the freshman year experience at Ottawa High School in comparison to Pomona or Williamsburg High School. The freshman year experience was defined by three dependent variables – positivity, participation, and feelings of support perceived by freshmen in the first year of their high school experience. From the results collected over a period of one school year (September 2006 – April 2007), this study suggests the following recommendations for future research.

First, educational leaders should take a close look at their overall school environment before considering how a new program will improve their school culture, including the use of an FTP to improve the freshman year experience. This study confirmed the presence of the LINK program did not have a more significant effect on the success of the freshman year experience compared to another school where the program was absent within a one year period of time. Therefore, a school might benefit by taking time to see if an FTP is considered a necessary or adequate response to their ultimate goal of improving the freshmen year experience in their school.

Regarding the decision of implementing an FTP, school leaders could designate a program evaluator to help determine if an FTP would be an effective and integral part of improving the overall experience for their freshmen. This evaluation process is an important measure for school administrators when making decisions on the use of school programs (McNeil et al. 179). If the program is adopted, the evaluation should be

realistic and on-going in order to determine if it was an effective intervention in improving the targeted range of negative outcomes existing in the freshman year of the school's learning environment.

Furthermore, an evaluation of the school environment could take on a more holistic approach by taking a broader look at several functional aspects of the school environment. For instance, the "Schools as Communities" framework is built on the following characteristics: equality, fairness, respect, caring, belonging, cooperation, trust, recognition, and shared beliefs and values (DeWit et al. 2). Each of these characteristics may have an effect on students' feelings and attitudes, their attachment, and feelings of acceptance with their school (DeWit et al. 2). This suggests a need for schools to look at various issues existing in their school environment where FTPs may only serve a partial role in having an effect.

Secondly, FTPs may have a long-term effect on school improvement (school culture, learning, student performance, measures of success, and broader connectivity of students and other members of their learning community). The use of a longitudinal study could help determine if there is an ameliorative effect of FTPs and verify if there could be an effect on positivity, participation, involvement, and feelings about school beyond the freshman year experience.

A longer time frame for the study would allow more time to collect data pertaining to students' level of success throughout their high school experience. As noted in a report on the LINK program from the University of Colorado at Denver Health Sciences Center (UCDHSC), additional surveys for each year in the high school could help produce a "clearer picture of the impact of the program" beyond its short term

effects (Diggs and Walters 31). Over a period of time educators would have more data to detect trends in student achievement, social involvement, and student attitudes throughout their high school experience.

Next, a better designed testing instrument and alternative approaches for evaluation could improve the measure of the desired constructs for positivity, participation and involvement, and feelings of support. This study found low Cronbach's alpha scores on two questions, creating the potential of affecting the results of the study. Testing instruments containing questions with acceptable reliability and validity coefficients can do better at measuring the desired constructs. The use of well-proven testing instruments could contain questions that more accurately measure the variables or behavior being tested.

Also, when designing testing instruments for determining the effect of an FTP, student achievement should be considered as one of the most important aspects of measuring student success. According to the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA, the attitudes of students, their social adjustment, and the way they feel about their school is thought to have an impact on their academic performance (4). Appropriate testing instruments could help educators determine if their school's FTP should focus on certain issues including:

- Helping freshmen feel more welcomed and socially supported.
- Addressing discipline problems occurring in the freshman year.
- Fostering positive attitudes throughout the school culture.
- Placing a high value on the academic performance of all students (4).

By schools focusing on the above elements in their FTPs, the CMHS at UCLA believes schools could do a better job in meeting the goals of No Child Left Behind (4).

One way to measure the effect of a freshman transition program on the 9th grade experience would be the use of a relationship model. This model could describe the three perceptions (or outcomes of the study) – level of positivity, participation and involvement, and feelings of support freshmen experience with school. The relationship model could be used in relationship studies, or prediction studies, for two purposes: "1) to explore the nature of the relationship between variables of interest to educators, and 2) to determine variables that can be used to predict important educational or personal characteristics of individuals that will not occur until later" (Gall et al. 226). A relationship model could reflect how levels of positivity, participation, feelings of support and other variables exist in the school environment where FTPs are used.

For example, Stoltz found in her study that the LINK program did not appear to have a "direct effect" on some similar constructs found in the freshman year experience, as she measured discipline, attendance, activities (The Relationship 41). Her proposed model could not support her analysis of the LINK program contributing to positive school outcomes. However, Stoltz believed the LINK program was able to show itself to be a "promising step" to contributing to the success of students in their freshmen year (The Relationship 41). To do this, she suggested an "alternate model" for future study which could show how the LINK program demonstrated an "indirect effect" on how students experienced their school (40). In other words, an indirect effect may potentially exist on students' perceived level of positivity, participation, and feelings of support beyond a short term analysis in the freshman year. This indirect effect my be more

visible in students after experiencing an FTP and become more apparent later in the high school.

There was a considerable difference between the size of the treatment group (120) and the control group (40) in this study. The large difference between the sizes of the sample groups could have potentially affected the results of the study, based on the different types of social experiences, personal interactions, class size, and ability to compete or participate in school activities. Therefore, a comparable number of participants in the treatment group and the control group is recommended.

A pilot study on the homogeneity of the group was not conducted prior to this study. Performing a pilot study might prove beneficial to rule out such differences in the groups and allow for better comparisons in subsequent studies. For instance, Pomona and Williamsburg High Schools were not only smaller, but may have been more rural in their make-up than Ottawa High School, thus having a difference in the socio-economic status (SES) of their respective student populations. Research has shown that attitudes of students from low-SES are particularly sensitive to the size of their school because better performance is typically achieved at smaller schools (Cotton 6).

It would also be beneficial to make sure the participants of the study are not located in schools which are experiencing major changes or intense issues. This would include a consolidation or closing of a school, which was being experienced at Williamsburg High school. Issues like this might be very emotional for individuals in this type of setting and create unwanted influences on participants in the study.

When exploring the significance of gender in the analysis, there were differences found between the responses provided by the female and male freshmen in the entire

group. Female students reported consistently higher scores than males, indicating they perceived themselves as being more positive, participating more, and feeling more supported by their school. It would be interesting to know why female students would perceive higher levels of positivity than males and to see how this level of positivity would continue throughout the high school experience. Again, when educators are deciding which FTP to use in their schools, they may find it helpful to administer the FTP in a manner that addresses the attitudes of males in a different way in order to help them perceive a more positive connection with their school.

DeFour and Eaker believe a supportive learning environment should not be restricted to school personnel or in isolated programs. They believe educators should discover new ways to conduct their business, including the help from students as one of their many valuable resources (68). It is possible for upperclassmen in high schools to be seen as an important resource in helping guide freshmen in their first year of high school. Yet, an FTP, such as the LINK program, may not be needed in order to help freshmen have positive attitudes, become involved in their school and community, and feel supported by their school.

This study confirmed that the use of one FTP, the LINK program, did not have a significant effect on the freshman year experience with respect to freshmen's level of positivity, participation, and feelings of support from their high school. Freshman may need more than the support from their peers and an improved social atmosphere, key elements of the LINK program, to ensure a successful transition to high school. Research findings indicate schools must look at other aspects of improving their environment, including school governance (practices, parental involvement, equal treatment) and the

school's style of learning (task and ability orientation, evaluation of student performance) in order to have a significant impact on student success (DeWit et al. 6). Only with changes in various aspects of the school environment may FTPs have a potential impact on the way freshmen feel positive, participate in their school, are involved in their community, and feel supported by others in their school.

Conclusion:

Freshmen transition programs have evolved to the point where they now appear in many high schools throughout the country. Educators using FTPs in their schools expect to see a positive effect on the way freshmen transition into and experience success during their first year. The value of this one-year study confirmed the LINK program was no more effective on the freshmen year experience at Ottawa High School than the freshman year experience at two other high schools (Pomona and Williamsburg) where the LINK program did not exist. The freshman year experience was defined by three variables – the level of positivity, participation, and feelings of support perceived by freshmen with their school.

Stoltz also found the LINK program did not have a direct effect on the constructs she used for measuring the success of freshmen, including GPA, discipline, attendance, and activities. However, she stated how freshmen chose to connect with their school was important to keep exploring because of the perceived effect of FTPs, particularly those with mentoring programs, on the success of students in their first year of high school (The Relationship 41).

The outcome of this study should encourage educators to take time to choose an FTP that fits the unique needs of their learning environment. To make this choice, one

must collect and document data relating to the perceived effect of FTPs on student achievement and then choose evaluation methods that are most effective. Additionally, a reporting of the results over a period of time will help educators make the necessary revisions within their school environment to determine if and how an FTP program may contribute to the success of the freshman year experience.

Students' perception of support from their school may be one of the most important variables worth investigating. The review of the literature revealed there were many schools using various types of FTPs throughout the country. This is because of the key role schools have for developing young people towards success in their high school experience. FTPs have been shown in other studies to successfully address the content and complexity of issues found in the freshmen year experience. Additional studies could help evaluate and confirm the level of effect FTPs have in helping freshmen transcend a potential atmosphere of fear. This is because it is worthwhile for educators to know if freshmen perceive themselves as being supported by their school and if they perceive all members of their environment as providing them with a sense of fraternity in the first year of high school.

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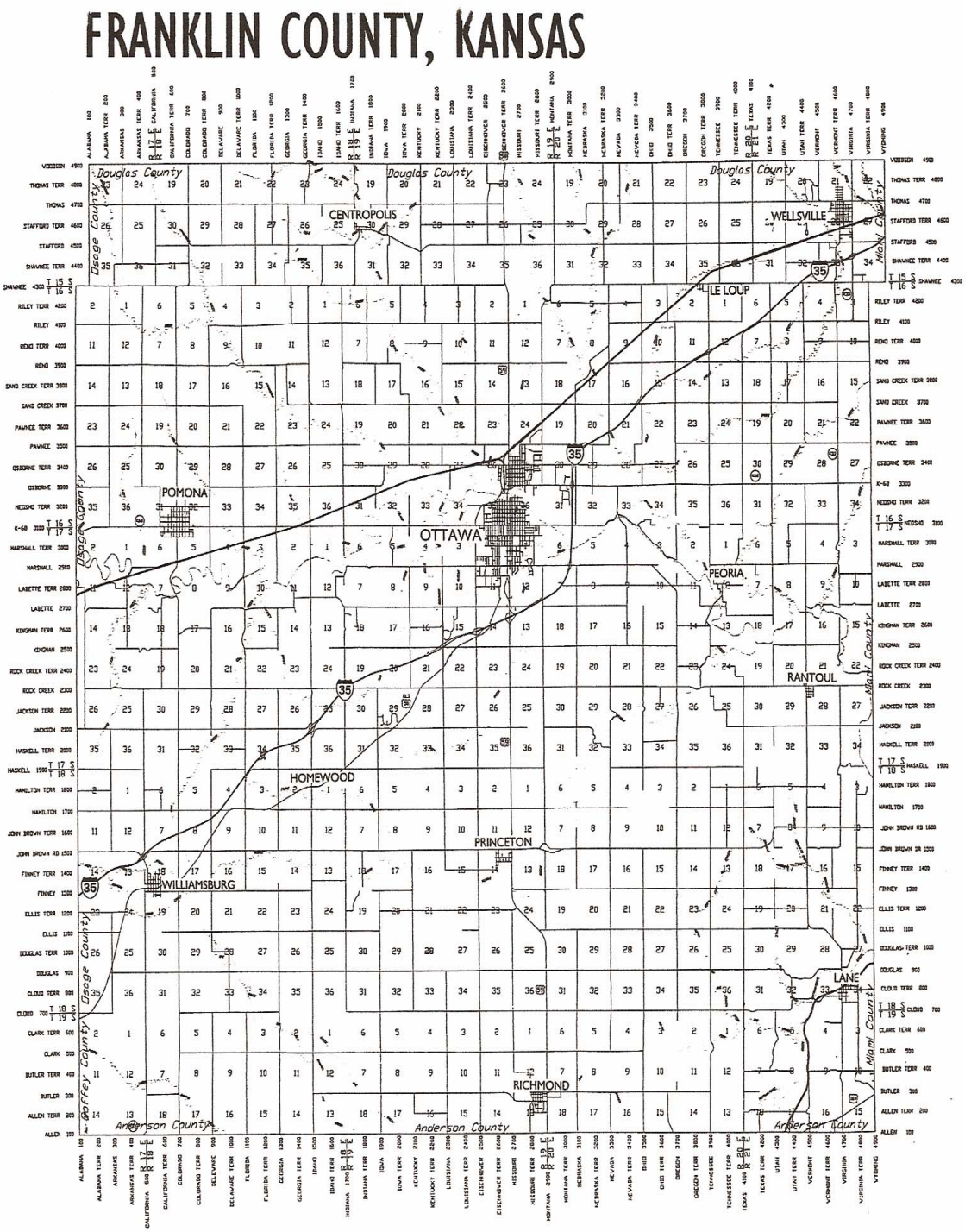
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LOCATION OF HIGH SCHOOLS IN FRANKLIN COUNTY, KANSAS

Location of High Schools in Franklin County, Kansas



APPENDIX B: LINK CREW SURVEY

Link Crew Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey to help us learn how Link Crew affects 9th grade students at Valley High School. Remember that you do not have to participate and you may stop at any time. You may use a pencil or pen, but take care to clearly mark in the boxes provided.

Please check only one box *except* where indicated.

First, some questions about you.

1. What is your gender?
   - ❑ Female
   - ❑ Male

2. What is your age?
   - ❑ 13
   - ❑ 14
   - ❑ 15
   - ❑ 16
   - ❑ 17

3. Which ethnic category best describes you?
   *Check **all** that apply.*
   - ❑ Caucasian/Non-Hispanic
   - ❑ African American
   - ❑ Hispanic
   - ❑ Native American
   - ❑ East Indian
   - ❑ Middle Eastern
   - ❑ Asian/Pacific Islander
   - ❑ Other (Please Specify):_____

4. Check ***each*** of the school activities that you participated in for at least a month during the past school year.
   - ❑ Sports team
   - ❑ Student council
   - ❑ Band/orchestra/chorus
   - ❑ Cheer/Drill Team/Dance
   - ❑ School club such as Spanish Club, Key Club, etc.
     How many club(s) _____
   - ❑ Other_____
   - ❑ I do not participate in any school activities

5. Check ***each*** of the school activities that you attended during the past year.
   - ❑ Link Crew activities (tailgate party, movie night etc.)
   - ❑ School dance
   - ❑ Sport event (football, basketball, baseball games)
   - ❑ School play or concert
   - ❑ Other _____
   - ❑ I did not attend any school activities

6. Check ***each*** of the community activities (activities outside of school) that you participated in for at least a month during the past school year (church, sports)?
   - ❑ Sports team
   - ❑ Youth group at a religious institution
   - ❑ Youth program such as Scouts, 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs
   - ❑ Community service
   - ❑ I do not participate in any community activities.

Next, some questions about your experiences with Link Crew and your Link.

7. Did you attend the Link Crew Orientation at the beginning of the year?
   - ❑ Yes, I did attend the Link Crew Orientation.
   - ❑ No, I did NOT attend the Link Crew Orientation.

8. How helpful was the Link Crew Orientation to you?
   - ❑ Extremely helpful
   - ❑ Moderately helpful
   - ❑ Slightly helpful
   - ❑ Not at all help
   - ❑ I did not attend the Link Crew Orientation

9. When you see your Link around school, how often does your Link greet you (such as by smiling, saying "Hi," or saying "What's up")?
   - ❑ All or almost all the time
   - ❑ More than half the time
   - ❑ Half the time
   - ❑ Less than half the time
   - ❑ None or almost none of the time

10. How often do you talk with your Link?
   - ❑ About once a week or more.
   - ❑ About once a month
   - ❑ Less than once a month
   - ❑ Never or almost never

11. Check each of the Link Crew activities that you attended during the past school year?
   - ❑ Orientation dance
   - ❑ Movie night
   - ❑ Tailgate party
   - ❑ Other_____
   - ❑ I did not attend any Link Crew activities

12. My Link contacts me outside school (such as by e-mail or phone).
   - ❑ Once a week
   - ❑ Once a month
   - ❑ Once a semester
   - ❑ Never

13. How strong is the relationship between you and your link?
   - ❑ Very strong
   - ❑ Moderately strong
   - ❑ Not very strong
   - ❑ Not strong

For the following statements, indicate how much you agree with each one.

	Strongly Agree	Mostly Agree	Neutral	Mostly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. I look forward to getting together. with my Link	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I talk with my Link about things that are important to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Strongly Agree	Mostly Agree	Neutral	Mostly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16. My Link and I have a close relationship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. I wish my Link knew me better.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. I wish that I could have had a different Link.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. Having a Link has been helpful to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. My Link cares about me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. My Link listens to what I have to say.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. My Link supports me when I have a problem.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. My Link encourages me to do my best.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. My Link believes that I will succeed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. My Link sees my strengths.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. My Link encourages me to be involved in school activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

For the following statements about your school, indicate how much you agree with each.

	Strongly Agree	Mostly Agree	Neutral	Mostly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
27. I feel close to people at my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. I feel like I am part of my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. I am happy to be at my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. The teachers at my school treat students fairly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. I feel safe in my school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

32. In the last school year, how often did you have trouble getting along with one or more of your teachers?

- ❑ Never
- ❑ Less than once a month
- ❑ Once or twice a month
- ❑ Once or twice a week
- ❑ Everyday

33. In the last school year, how often did you have trouble getting along with other students?

- ❑ Never
- ❑ Less than once a month
- ❑ Once or twice a month
- ❑ Once or twice a week
- ❑ Everyday

34. In the last school year, how much did you feel that one or more of your teachers cared about you?

- ❑ Not at all
- ❑ A little bit
- ❑ Not sure
- ❑ Pretty much
- ❑ Very much

For the next section, indicate how *true* the following statements are about you.

	Not at all True	**A little True**	**Mostly True**	**Very True**
38 When I am in class, I can work hard.	☐	☐	☐	☐
39. I can get good grades in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐
40. I am unlucky when it comes to schoolwork.	☐	☐	☐	☐
41. I'm not very smart when it comes to schoolwork.	☐	☐	☐	☐
42. I can do well in school if I want to.	☐	☐	☐	☐
43. I can't seem to try very hard in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐
44. I have trouble working hard in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐
45. I can't get good grades, no matter what I do.	☐	☐	☐	☐
46. When I do badly in school, I usually can't figure out why.	☐	☐	☐	☐
47. I can get along with my teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
48. I think I'm pretty smart in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐
49. I'm pretty lucky when it comes to getting good grades.	☐	☐	☐	☐
50. I'm just not able to get along with my teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐

51. When I do well in school, I usually can't figure out why.	☐	☐	☐	☐
52. If I decide to learn something difficult, I can.	☐	☐	☐	☐
53. I can accomplish almost anything if I try.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank You!

APPENDIX C: STUDENT SURVEY

Student Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. This exercise will assist us to learn how your school helps you with your freshmen year experience. Remember that you do not have to participate and you may stop at any time. You may use a pencil or pen, but take time and care to mark your answers honestly and clearly in the boxes provided. Your responses will be confidential and your privacy will be maintained.

1. Name of High School: □ Ottawa □ Pomona □ Williamsburg
   (Check all that apply)

2. Are you participating in a student leadership program at your school (including on-going contact and mentoring from a student leader)?
   □ Yes □ No

Please check only one box except where indicated.

3. What is your gender? □ Female □ Male

4. What is your age? □ 12 □ 13 □ 14 □15 □ 16 □ 17

5. Which ethnic category best describes you? (Check all that apply)

   □ African American
   □ Asian / Pacific Islander
   □ Caucasian/White
   □ East Indian
   □ Hispanic
   □ Middle Eastern
   □ Native American
   □ Other (Please Specify) _____

6. Check <u>each</u> of the school activities that you <u>plan to participate</u> in during this school year.

   □ Sports Team
   □ Student Council
   □ Band/orchestra/chorus
   □ Cheer/Drill Team/Dance
   □ School Club (ie. Key, FCCLA, Cultural International-CIA, etc.)
   How many clubs do you belong to? _____ (State total number)
   □ Other _____
   □ I do not plan to participate in any school activities.

7. Check <u>each</u> of the school activities that you are <u>currently involved</u> in.

   □ Sports Team
   □ Student Council
   □ Band/orchestra/chorus
   □ Cheer/Drill Team/Dance
   □ School Club (ie. Key, FCCLA, Cultural International-CIA, etc.)
   □ Other _____
   □ I do not plan to participate in any school activities.

8. Check each of the community activities outside of your school that you are or will soon be participating in for at least a month during this school year.

□ Sports team
□ Youth group at a church or religious organization
□ Youth program such as Scouts, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs
□ Community Service
□ I do not participate or plan to participate in any community activities

For the following statements about your school, indicate how much you <u>agree or disagree</u> with each.

	Strongly Agree	**Mostly Agree**	**Neutral**	**Mostly Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
9. I feel close to people at my school	□	□	□	□	□
10. I feel like I am part of my school	□	□	□	□	□
11. I am happy to be at my school	□	□	□	□	□
12. The teachers at my school treat students fairly.	□	□	□	□	□
13. I feel safe in my school.	□	□	□	□	□

For the next section indicate how <u>true</u> the following statements are about you.

	Not at all True	**A little True**	**Mostly True**	**Very True**
14. When I am in class, I can work hard	□	□	□	□
15. I can get good grades in school.	□	□	□	□
16. I am not very smart when it comes to schoolwork.	□	□	□	□
17. I can do well in school if I want to.	□	□	□	□
18. I cannot seem to try very hard in school.	□	□	□	□
19. I have trouble working hard in school.	□	□	□	□
20. I cannot get good grades, no matter what I do.	□	□	□	□
21. When I do badly in school, I usually can figure out why.	□	□	□	□
22. I can get along with my teachers.	□	□	□	□
23. I think I am pretty smart in school.	□	□	□	□
24. I am just not able to get along with my teachers.	□	□	□	□
25. If I decide to learn something difficult, I can.	□	□	□	□
26. I can accomplish almost anything if I try.	□	□	□	□

27. During this school year, how often have you been in trouble getting along with one or more of your teachers?

□ Never
□ Once or twice
□ Three to five times
□ More than five times
□ Everyday

28. During this school year, how often have you had trouble getting along with other students?

□ Never
□ Once or twice
□ Three to five times
□ More than five times
□ Everyday

29. During this school year, how much did you feel that one or more of your teachers cared about you?

□ Not at all
□ A little bit
□ Not sure
□ Pretty much
□ Very much

30. Overall, how would you rate your school?

□ Excellent
□ Good
□ Fair
□ Poor
□ Don't know

Note: The above questionnaire submitted for review in conjunction with the IRB, 30 August, 2006, by Mark Eldridge, Doctoral Student, Baker University.

APPENDIX D: PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH

BAKER UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
GRADUATE DEPARTMENT

Proposal for Research
Submitted to the Baker University Institutional Review Board

I. Research Investigator(s):

Department: School of Education: Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

Name	**Signature**	**(Note: X = faculty sponsor)**
1. Dr. Karl Krawitz, Chief Advisor	_____	X
2. Dr. Robert Flaherty, Assisting Advisor	_____	X
3. Mr. Mark Eldridge, Doctoral Student	_____	
4. Dr. Susan Myers, Assisting Advisor	_____	

Principal investigator or faculty sponsor contact information:

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Phone: 785 979 7788 (cell)

4. Dr. Susan Myers, Ph. D.
Superintendent, USD 287
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Pomona, KS 66076
Phone: 785 566 3396 (work)
Email: myerss@usd287.org
Phone: 785 448 2828 (home)

Expected Category of Review: __ Exempt __ Expedited _X_ Full

II. Protocol Title:

"From Fear to Fraternity: How Student Leadership Programs Affect the High School Freshman Experience in Franklin County, Kansas"

Summary:

The following summary must accompany the proposal. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience, and about the protections that have been included to safeguard participants from harm. Careful attention to the following may help facilitate the review process:

In a sentence or two, please describe the background and purpose of the research.

The purpose of the study is to research the effect of a student leadership program on the high school freshmen year experience, a program that is being utilized for the first time at Ottawa High School, USD 290 in Franklin County, Kansas. This will be a case study that will target student attitudes and behavior to see if there is a causal relationship between student leadership programs and specific constructs, such as the degree students become involved with their school, stay focused and engaged with their academic and social responsibilities, and how they generally feel about their school.

Briefly describe each condition or manipulation to be included within the study.

The condition of this study will involve collecting data from the freshmen students who are experiencing the student leadership program at Ottawa High School, as the "treatment" school, and comparing it to the data collected from the "control" group which includes the high school freshmen students at Pomona High School and Williamsburg High School, located in the West Franklin Unified School District No. 287.

What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaire or other instruments are used, provide a brief description and attach a copy.

Participants in the study will be asked to complete a questionnaire containing approximately 20 questions relating to their freshman high school experience, including the student leadership program. Questions will be selected and revised from a previously approved questionnaire which has been used across the country at schools previously using this particular student leadership program, called LINK, a program developed by the Boomerang Project, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.
See attached copy with this review.

Will the subjects encounter the risk of psychological, social, physical or legal risk? If so, please describe the nature of the risk and any measures designed to mitigate that risk.

No risks are perceived to be encountered by any participants of this study.

Will any stress to subjects be involved? If so, please describe.

No stress is perceived to be involved with the subjects of this study.

Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? If so, include an outline or script of the debriefing.

It is not the intent to deceive or mislead the participants of this study in any way, therefore no debriefing is planned or seen necessary.

Will there be a request for information which subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? If so, please include a description.

No requests for information of a personal or sensitive nature are planned in this study.

Will the subjects be presented with materials which might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? If so, please describe.

No material will be presented which might be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading.

Approximately how much time will be demanded of each subject?

A total of no more than 2-3 hours of time will be spent by each participant during the approximately one year of data collection in this study. This will include approximately 15-20 minutes for each questionnaire given twice within the academic year of 2006-2007, along with a couple of 15-20 minute interviews given 2-3 times within the same year.

Who will be the subjects in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted? Provide an outline or script of the information which will be provided to subjects prior to their volunteering to participate. Include a copy of any written solicitation as well as an outline of any oral solicitation.

All prior approved freshmen from the three high schools stated above. After permission is obtained from the students, the school, and the students' parents, they will be gathered as a group to be given the questionnaire contained in this review.

What steps will be taken to insure that each subject's participation is voluntary? What if any inducements will be offered to the subjects for their participation?

Prior permission with no inducements planned.

How will you insure that the subjects give their consent prior to participating? Will a written consent form be used? If so, include the form. If not, explain why not.

A letter will be sent prior to the questionnaire, acknowledging their written permission. A written consent form will also be a part of this written acknowledgement.

Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the subject? If so, please explain the necessity.

No aspect of the data will be made a part of a permanent record that will individually identify any subject participating in this study.

Will the fact that a subject did or did not participate in a specific experiment or study be made part of any permanent record available to a supervisor, teacher or employer? If so, explain.

No information pertaining to a subject's participation, or lack thereof, will be made a part of any permanent record that will be available to a supervisor, teacher or employer.

What steps will be taken to insure the confidentiality of the data?

No names of subjects will be included in the study or any other identifying aspects that reveal the privacy of said subject.

If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society?

No risks have been identified within the study pertaining to any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society.

Will any data from files or archival data be used? If so, please describe.

It is anticipated that certain data may be obtained from the administrative office(s) with the school districts, including records relating to attendance, participation in school-related activities, academic performance, and deviant behavior.

Respectfully submitted for your review this 30th day of August, 2006 by:

Mark Eldridge
Doctoral Student
Graduate School of Education