

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

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TITLE Qualitative Exploration of the Influence a Simulated Virtual Team had on Business School Students' Leadership Competencies

RESEARCHER Kristy S. Smith
School of Advanced Studies
University of Phoenix
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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the influence a simulated virtual team learning experience had on business school students' leadership competencies.

METHODOLOGY The participants in this study completed a bachelor's of business administration degree through a university in the northwest United States from December 2004 through May 2007. Electronic interviews, with open-ended questions, were conducted with 11 graduates of the program. Six (55%) participants were female and five (45%) participants were male. The range of ages was 24 to 47 with a mean age of 35 years. Only two (18%) of the participants had no leadership experience prior to completing the simulation portion of the Capstone Course. The researcher developed an open-ended interview script based on the Leadership Practices Inventory – Self (LPI), asking 11 graduates of a bachelor's of business administration degree the questions. Based on the literature, the questions focused on the four leadership competencies identified by Martin (2007) with a relational tie to the Five Exemplary Practices of Exemplary Leadership.

KEY FINDINGS

The answers to all seven interview questions provided support for the use of the predetermined leadership competencies. Participant responses yielded a total of 180 occurrences of the predetermined categories and subcategories codes which provided support for the presence of a relationship between filling the leadership role in the simulated virtual environment and the development of leadership competencies with 52 percent dealing with participative management, 26 percent relating to building relationships, 15 percent dealing with leadership employees and seven percent relating to change management.

The author concludes that:

Leaders of today need to understand leadership is a mutual activity between leaders and followers, and leadership can happen within any level of the organization... Every team member in a virtual team must be involved in the leadership role. The participants' answers reflected a balanced approach to leading the team with each team member filling a role that he or she was comfortable in. The responses also reflected an understanding that leadership is an activity that requires leaders and followers exchange the leadership role within the virtual environment" (p. 118).