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The Importance of Developing Leadership Skills in Grades 6-8 Middle School Students From the Perspective of Administrators, Teachers, and Students

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Abstract

Leadership is integral to all aspects of life, including educational institutions. Schools are charged with providing middle school students with the knowledge and skills needed to orient them to high school and beyond and to build future leaders in the global society of this 21st century. The job market demands leaders to fill positions such as technology executive, communication specialist, and leadership training and development specialist. However, schools, and most especially middle schools, focus on meeting the standards set forth by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which dictate what teachers must teach and thwarts the teaching of leadership skills development. Therefore, this study, from the perspective of administrators, teachers, and students, seeks to identify the importance of developing leadership skills of middle school students in grades 6-8. Through focus groups and individual interviews, data were gathered to determine the what, where, how, and why of leadership development for adolescents. The three stakeholder groups shared their perceptions of how leadership development is taught, what are the qualities of perceived leadership in adolescence, what barriers exist in the development of leadership, and what can be done to enhance leadership development in one middle school in Brooklyn, New York. The outcomes of the study will provide results that will positively influence the leadership skills developmental growth of middle school students. The findings may guide stakeholders to providing avenues that will aid students in unfolding their leadership skills potential in the classroom that will equip them with the tools to meet and supersede twenty-first century demands for leadership

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The Importance of Developing Leadership Skills in Grades 6-8 Middle School Students

From the Perspective of Administrators, Teachers, and Students

By

Esther Haynes Tross

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

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Dedication

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To my late parents, Cecil and Elaine Haynes, who instilled in me the importance of education and the joy of living life with purpose and meaning through service to others. To my brothers, Cecil "Gabby" Haynes and Lennox Jeffrey Haynes, thanks for your support and encouragement. Special thanks to Ms. Coral Barnett and L. Rickie Tulloch. To Dr. Rachel Albone-Bushnell, thank you for your commitment to see me through my dissertation journey. To my extended family, friends, and Cohort 4 colleagues, thank you.

Biographical Sketch

Esther Haynes Tross is currently a consultant working in various fields in business and the not-for-profit sector. She also works in the field of community development, youth leadership development, public relations, fundraising, events, and strategic planning.

Ms. Haynes Tross is a graduate of the CUNY system. She graduated from New York City Technical College (NYC College of Technology) with a degree in Legal Assistant Studies in 1993. There she received the Dean's List Award, Legal Assistant Studies Scholarship Award, and the Father Joachin Anile Award for Outstanding Achievement in Legal Assistant Studies. She received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from Thomas A. Edison State College in 1994. She then attended New York Institute of Technology and received her Master of Arts degree in Communication Arts with distinction in 1995. She attended St. John Fisher College beginning in 2012 to pursue her doctoral studies in Executive Leadership. Ms. Haynes Tross concentrated her research on The Importance of Developing Leadership Skills in Grades 6-8 Middle School Students under the leadership of Dr. Jennifer Schulman and Dr. Byron Hargrove. Ms. Haynes Tross received her Doctorate (Ed.D.) in 2015.

Abstract

Leadership is integral to all aspects of life, including educational institutions. Schools are charged with providing middle school students with the knowledge and skills needed to orient them to high school and beyond and to build future leaders in the global society of this 21st century. The job market demands leaders to fill positions such as technology executive, communication specialist, and leadership training and development specialist. However, schools, and most especially middle schools, focus on meeting the standards set forth by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which dictate what teachers must teach and thwarts the teaching of leadership skills development. Therefore, this study, from the perspective of administrators, teachers, and students, seeks to identify the importance of developing leadership skills of middle school students in grades 6-8. Through focus groups and individual interviews, data were gathered to determine the what, where, how, and why of leadership development for adolescents. The three stakeholder groups shared their perceptions of how leadership development is taught, what are the qualities of perceived leadership in adolescence, what barriers exist in the development of leadership, and what can be done to enhance leadership development in one middle school in Brooklyn, New York. The outcomes of the study will provide results that will positively influence the leadership skills developmental growth of middle school students. The findings may guide stakeholders to providing avenues that will aid students in unfolding their leadership skills potential in the classroom that will equip them with the tools to meet and supersede twenty-first century demands for leadership.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

Leadership, from the earliest days of civilization to modern times, has been essential in all aspects of life, including educational institutions (Bolman & Deal, 1992a; Jago, 1992; Stogdill, 1948). The educational institution leaders serving middle school students are charged with providing them with the knowledge and leadership skills needed to orient them for high school, college, and career readiness (Gardner, 1987; Scheer & Safrit, 2001). With the growing job market demand for leaders to fill positions, such as technology executive, communication specialist, and leadership training and development specialist, schools are faced with the arduous but rewarding task of growing effective leaders for these 21st century roles (Sacks, 2009; Scheer & Safrit, 2001).

Research shows that 85% of Americans believe that a serious leadership gap exists in the United States (Rosenthal, Purin, & Montoya, 2008). Parker and Begnaud (2004) urged leaders of the educational system to prepare adolescents to fill future leadership roles and to meet what they described as a "leadership gap" in the job market. This leadership gap is perpetuated and perhaps widened by new demands of New York State (NYS) implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in public schools that consume classroom instructional time in testing student mastery of the CCSS in English Language Arts and Mathematics (Ornstein, Levine, Gutek, & Vocke, 2011), leaving less time for activities such as leadership development. However, the leadership gap can create serious consequences for the economic viability and security of this

country and should be address sooner, rather than later, if the United States is to retain superpower status in the global economy (Scheer & Safrit, 2001).

Gardner (1987) stated that school administrators at the federal, state, and city levels should adopt bold measures to address the leadership crisis by incorporating leadership skills development into classroom instructions. However, in order to address the leadership crisis, leadership in its historical context should first be defined. Rost (1991) conducted a meta-analysis of leadership definitions that revealed more than 200. Practitioners and scholars in world affairs, politics, and education developed these leadership definitions. Adding to the complexity are the theories and various approaches used to define leadership (Day & Antonakis, 2012; Hickman, 2009; Moore, 1927; Roth, 1991). Some of the theories and leadership approaches that relate to this study include trait theory (Jago, 1992); leadership skills approach (Katz, 1955; Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000); and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Downton, 1973). Trait theory outlines the innate qualities and traits that individuals with greatness possess, such as height, intelligence, fluency, and an outgoing personality (Bryman, 1992; Derue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011; Galton, 1869; Mann, 1959). Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) agreed with trait theory but noted six traits and characteristics that differentiate leaders from non-leaders based on their qualitative synthesis research study. The six traits are drive, motivation, integrity, confidence, cognitive ability, and task knowledge.

Trait theory. Stogdill (1948) challenged trait theory by conducting an analysis of 124 trait studies performed between 1904 and 1947. He found no definable traits that distinguished a leader from a non-leader. He suggested that the sole determinant of a

leader is not a collection of traits but the ability to execute assigned tasks effectively. His approach sought to define the leader based on adaptability to situational factors rather than aspects of personality. However, his second study, in 1974, found that personality was a critical element of leadership, in addition to situational adaptability, hence validating some elements of trait theory (Jago, 1992).

For the purpose of this study, leadership trait and characteristics are defined as drive, motivation, integrity, confidence, cognitive ability, and task knowledge (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). In addition, Northouse (2013) believed that intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability are identifiable traits and characteristics that contribute to a person's ability to become a leader. For the purpose of this study, the traits, such as intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability, are leadership characteristics identifiable in middle school students. In addition, for the purpose of this study, leadership traits and characteristics are used only in the context of student-perceived leadership, which is identified by the teachers through the Renzulli-Hartman Leadership Characteristic Scale (RHLCS) (Renzulli & Hartman, 1998). The Renzulli-Hartman scale was the instrument used by the teachers to rate the students' leadership characteristics with higher or lower scores. Based on the students' scores, they were placed in one of the two assigned student focus groups.

Leadership skills approach. Since researchers have established that traits and characteristics are innate and not transferable, Katz (1955) developed the leadership skills approach to inculcate leadership skills through teaching and learning. He identified three basic skills that are important to leadership skills development in adolescent students: (a) technical skills, (b) human skills, and (c) conceptual skills. First, technical skills provide

individuals with the knowledge to obtain competency and proficiency of a task or activity. For example, Katz (1955) posited that competency and proficiency in computer literacy could expand the skills of middle school students. Second, human skills provide individuals with the people skills and abilities to communicate effectively with others, and third, conceptual skills, help individuals to work with various concepts and ideas that align with middle school classroom projects and academic workloads (Katz, 1955). For the purpose of this study, leadership skills are technical, human, and conceptual skills developed in middle school students. In addition, the research of Mumford et al. (2000) is used with Katz's skills approach model to expand the development of leadership skills of middle school students into high school as a continuum in the process of academic growth to spark college and career readiness.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is used extensively to motivate and improve the lives of individuals. While Downton (1973) first coined the term transformational leadership, other researchers expanded and enhanced the concept (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Researchers note that Burns (1978) propelled TL by linking its effectiveness to leadership (Lowe & Gardner, 2001). Burns believed that a leader engages with a follower to create a bond that raises their joint level of motivation and morality in order to accomplish a goal. Burns' leader-and-follower approach is exemplified in the leadership of Martin Luther King, who helped empower his followers to compel systemic change during the civil rights struggle, and Mahatma Gandhi, whose campaign of non-violent resistance transformed the lives of millions of his followers as they struggled for India's independence (Northouse, 2013). According to Bass and Avolio (1994), the four factors that transformational leaders (TLs) can employ to

motivate followers are: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. According to Antonakis (2012), TLs become idealized influencers because they dedicate and commit themselves to improving the lives of their followers by providing a direction for their growth. The second factor, according to Antonakis (2012), Avolio and Gibbons (1988), is that TLs desire to endow followers with inspirational motivation to propel them to meet individual and shared goals through teamwork. The third factor, intellectual stimulation from the TL, gives followers autonomy to examine and challenge their own values through intellectual growth that the TL has inspired. The fourth factor, individual consideration, allows the TL to be supportive of the follower and, at times, coach him or her through a process to address personal challenges. Yukl (2001) added that transformational leaders empower followers through training and skills development by providing access to information that builds a culture of encouragement and support.

Transformational leadership used in classroom instruction. Although transformational leadership, as practiced today, is aligned with developing employee skills in the workplace, research indicates that it can apply in an educational setting, given the similarities between the two situations (Avolio & Bass, 1988; vanLinden & Fertman, 1998). Transformational leadership allows teachers, as leaders, to engage in teaching that provides the students—their followers—with the knowledge to maximize their learning potential (Rosebrough & Leverett, 2011; vanLinden & Fertman 1998). Through transformational leadership, teachers can motivate students to rise above their own expectations (Avolio, 1999; Rosebrough & Leverett, 2011).

Rosebrough and Leverett (2011) argued that teachers, as transformational leaders, could employ teaching methods designed to change students academically and socially by engaging them in problem solving, which builds their critical thinking skills. The authors believed that motivating students during classroom instruction to think through assigned problems or scenarios related to leadership development inspire them cognitively, encourage creative explorations, and expand their inquiry. The authors proposed that if classroom instructions were more inspirationally infused, rather than merely information-driven, students would better acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitude to overcome academic and social challenges, and those skills would assist them with leadership development (Rosebrough & Leverett, 2011).

In addition, teachers can promote growth through meaningful teacher-student and peer (student-student) leadership discussions in the classroom that will also help to develop the social and cognitive skills of the adolescents (Bass & Riccio, 2006; Piaget, 1965; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; van Linden & Fertman, 1998). Through such discussions, teachers trigger the learning-related attitudes, values, and beliefs that enhance the students' leadership skills alongside their academic development (Northouse, 2013; Rosebrough & Leverett, 2011; Slavich 2006a). Slavich (2006a) indicated that students' self-esteem and self-confidence improve when teachers acknowledge their academic growth and progress, which inspires them to further achievement beyond their previous expectations.

While leadership development for middle school students continues to be less of a priority than for high school and college students, research has shown that developing their leadership potential enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence, which drives

them to accept leadership roles in the middle school environment (Des Marais, Yang, & Farzanehkia, 2000). However, despite such findings, most researchers have argued that middle school students pride themselves on being followers of groups during their adolescent social growth process (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Tajfel and Turner (1979), developers of social identity theory, noted that during adolescence, a period of social discovery, children seek to find and define themselves through group identity, typically choosing to become followers instead of leaders in the group. Tajfel and Turner (1979) further stated that adolescents social growth is facilitated by the continuous in-group dynamics, which serve to satisfy their sense of belonging and justify their membership in their social enclave. Piaget and Inhelder (1969) indicated that the adolescent social-growth continuum dictates that peer leader-follower relationships play an integral role in the construction and development of their identities. That said, these social exposures during adolescence could become positive or negative growth because they are vulnerable during this process and seek out guidance from peers and adults to shape their lives. This can put them at risk, especially given that they gravitate toward followership rather than leadership (Havighurst, 1987; Kandel, 1985). Sternberg (2005) argued that middle school is the best time to develop the leadership skills of students as they are exposed to varied social environments that can make them susceptible to social risks. Sternberg indicated that developing adolescent leadership skills in Midde School could prepare adolescents to embrace and understand their developmental stage, as they seek for and experience the challenges of independence and align themselves with new peer groups.

Leadership and adolescence. Only in the late 20th century has the topic of leadership and adolescence gained popularity as a research area of study. Researchers indiate that in the past, adults in the United States did not think of adolescents as leaders, hence, developing their leadership skills was not a priority (MacNeil, 2006). According to Wade (1997), family was traditionally the arena in which leadership skills were first introduced and taught to adolescents and youth. Wade stated that leadership at home for adolescents took the form of learned responsibilities such as cleaning their rooms, setting the table, or taking out the trash. He wrote that despite the reality of home-related tasks as a way to develop leadership, adolescents are able to develop leadership traits and emerge into leadership roles through membership in organizations like the Boys and Girls Scout programs, 4-H Clubs, and other after-school programs. In addition, Wade (1997) and MacNeil (2006) also noted that teenagers need additional training and support in decision making to help them develop leadership characteristics in public-school settings. The researchers argued that with the growing global challenges, it is critical to allocate classroom resources toward developing adolescent leadership to ensure efforts to transform our youth into productive and skilled adults.

Zimmerman (2006) supported MacNeil's (2006) opinions and wrote that adolescents need classroom instruction in varied skills to self-regulate, set goals, learn time-manage, stay organized, and develop good study habits. Zimmerman claimed that mastering these skills alleviates the pressure of middle school social dynamics. He believed that with mastering leadership skills, students would achieve better academic results and teachers would be able to produce future generations of leaders and higher-education scholars. Sacks (2009) likewise indicated that teachers could prepare middle

school students with a foundation of knowledge and skills that would build the confidence and self-esteem needed to accept leadership roles in the adult workforce. Some researchers believe it is school principals' responsibility to foster leadership development in their schools, while others believe that the school environment must support a culture for developing leaders (Burton, 2003; Gardner, 1987; Sternberg, 2008). Lavery and Hine (2013) conducted a study whose results indicate that the role of the principal is central to student leadership skills development. Burton (2003) revealed that society recognizes the need to develop leadership skills beginning in early adolescents, as this will secure a future of leaders prepared to address the complexities of this century.

Leadership development in middle schools. For the purpose of this study, middle school, according to Shiner and DeYoung (2009) involves a period of emotional, behavioral, and social growth for adolescents as they transition from childhood to early adulthood and from elementary school to middle school. These major life changes in adolescents' biological and social lives, as well as their cognitive development, increase their ability to comprehend complex situations. This time in life, in turn, prompts adolescents' desire to become independent individuals. Sternberg (2005) wrote that as cognitive skills develop in adolescents, they are eager to learn in their school environment and to find their own identity that is distinct from their parents. He observed that as they enter adolescence, children are forming their own groups. Some are becoming leaders as they are pulling away from their parents, and they are increasingly making their own choices.

Gardner (1987) noted that during the adolescent development stage, their need to socialize with peers increase because this helps them to shape their identity. Steinberg

(2007) indicated that adolescents' heightened desire to understand their peers could be attributed to the increased amount of time they spend with their peers. He noted that most adolescents' time is spent with peers in social cliques and group involvement, choosing not to stand out and accept leadership roles. He further stated that exposing adolescents to leadership skills development in the classroom through theory and practical application would motivate adolescents to become peer leaders and seek out positive group affiliations. Group and clique bonding vary based on the adolescents' age, which influences their psychological and cognitive growth process (Stang & Story, 2005). Piaget (1965) stated that a cognitive growth spurt begins at ages 11-14 in adolescence, which allows them to experience new emotions and develop new social skills during what Piaget termed the "abstract thinking stage."

Developing the leadership skills of adolescents equip them with the tools needed to become a valuable resource in both their schools and their communities as they learn to problem-solve and become mentors and role models (Rose-Krasnor, Busseri, Willoughby, & Chalmers, 2006). Rose-Krasnor et al. (2006) claimed that educational achievement and a major decrease in disruptive and risky behaviors are evident when leadership development is taught to this population. Youth participants receiving youth leadership education have also been more likely to stay in school, attend college, and set career goals (Rose-Krasnor et al., 2006). In addition, the researchers noted that leadership development has been linked to adolescent engagement in extracurricular activities which allow them to master the ability to develop healthy interpersonal connections, peer support, social integration, community ties and a commitment to a culture of helping others (Rose-Krasnor et al., 2006). Sacks (2009) agreed and added that

research shows students achieve better outcomes in academics, attendance, and behavior when their leadership skills are developed in the classroom. She postulated that classroom-based leadership development of students is critical and that teachers should focus on empowering society's future leaders.

Ingold (2010) conducted a comparative study of in-school programs that promoted leadership development. The purpose of Ingold's research was to compare and contrast two types of programs and their effectiveness among adolescents. In the study, the researcher noted that participation in Student Council in middle school allows students to learn effective leadership skills. He said Student Council leaders are elected to be the voice of the students; they are trained in various leadership capacities, such as how to write meeting agendas, and how to conduct meetings, through the basic rules of parliamentary procedure. In addition, they are taught how to delegate and follow up on task assignments to council members, how to assist teachers in conducting school assemblies, and how to create special announcement bulletin boards for the cafeteria and offices. Ingold (2010) further indicated that students are learning critical thinking and problem-solving skills with guidance from their teachers, which also helps to expand their knowledge base to understand the dynamics of leadership.

Changing the face of education in middle schools. Over 54 million students attend middle schools in the United States (US Department of Commerce, 2010). Currently, the public school system is facing new demands, forcing leadership skills development to become less of a priority, especially in the middle schools (Gardner 1990; Ornstein et al., 2011). Yet middle schools are still faced with the challenge of successfully preparing students for college and careers. With the onset of Race to the Top

(RTT, 2010), many states including New York State, receive additional federal funding for education (Ornstein et al., 2011). However, if schools receive RTT monies, there are specific requirements they have to fulfill. This includes the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards and the adoption of the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). The CCSS are a list of rigorous standards intended to prepare students for college and careers. The APPR is a new system used to evaluate teachers and principals. It comprises observations (60%) and a Measure of Student Learning (40%). The Measure of Student Learning is derived from student performance on state assessments (20%) and local city assessments (20%). Thus, teacher, principal, and school ratings rely heavily upon the successful implementation of the CCSS and APPR. With such heightened accountability, schools are searching for ways to increase student outcomes. Specifically, middle schools must adopt strategies that will improve academic performance while decreasing high-school dropout rates and absenteeism. These indicators can have a negative impact on student, teacher, and school evaluation, and they have inhibited the ability of schools to teach leadership development (Rosebrough & Leverett, 2011).

More specifically, the CCSS (2011) is an educational initiative that details what students in K-12 should know at the end of each grade level in the common core subject areas of English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. The focus of the CCSS is knowledge and skills students should gain during their climb up the educational ladder so that, by the time they graduate high school, they will be able to succeed in academic college courses (Ornstein et al., 2011).

While the CCSS are now an integral part of the educational curriculum, one problem continues to exist, the lack of focus on developing leadership skills (Gardner, 1987; Rosebrough & Leverett, 2011). The research indicates that leadership should be developed through an active-learning approach, which requires that teachers engage students in such skills as public speaking, writing, discussions, problem solving, event planning, conflict resolution, teamwork activities, and classroom debates on relevant issues (Gardner, 1990; Rosebrough & Leverett, 2011; Sacks, 2009; Steinberg, 2005; Zimmerman, 2006). In addition, the authors believed that teachers should delegate tasks that increase students' intellectual and leadership growth potential, such as having one student each day announce homework assignments to the class (Rosebrough & Leverett, 2011; Steinberg, 2005). This helps the student develop public speaking and communications skills in an environment consisting of peers and authority (the teacher). In addition, the researchers indicated that teachers could assign small tasks and chores that include interactions and communication between the site administration office and the teacher. This helps the student to interact with authority in a leadership capacity that develops self-worth. The assignment of small classroom humanitarian projects can also develop the leadership skills of students, as students are utilizing and developing their team-work dynamics, communication, time management, planning, logical, and multi-tasking skills (Svinivki & McKeachie, 2011). Schroder, Noble, Christie, Davidson, Genovese, Goodman, and Rogers (2001) noted that while some leadership topics are highlighted in middle school curricula through social sciences, there are few opportunities for teachers to embed leadership development within the set curriculum or their pedagogy. The researchers stated that leadership skills development is primarily

accessible to students with a high IQ, which qualifies them for participation in gifted education programs—where these are available.

The decision to recognize and further develop the abilities of gifted students through the creation of gifted programs in schools began after Terman (1925) and Hollingworth (1939) conducted a study on the intelligence quotient (IQ) of students. Terman's study inspired him to create the Stanford-Binet IQ test, and Hollingworth's study increased public awareness of exceptional scholars, which prompted legislators to enact policies for talented and gifted students. These policies fostered the development of "gifted" education programs in public schools and became the focus point of developing leadership skills in school-aged students (Gladwell, 2008; Jolly & Kettler, 2004; VanTassel-Baska, 2005).

Harris and Miller (2005) stated that gifted education became a focus in the United States when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, creating widespread public concern that science and mathematics education in the Unites States was "falling behind" that in the USSR. They noted that Congressional approval allowed the United States government to pass the United States National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, which contained 10 titles designed to improve the nation's schools; the addition of gifted education was believed to enhance learning for future achievers. However, each state was allowed to design its own educational programs for gifted students, with no set national guidelines (Harris & Miller 2005; Jolly & Kettler, 2004; Marland, 1972).

The gifted and talented programs have been in the forefront of developing leadership skills of students who have been identified as having an above-average IQ and/or demonstrated exceptional talent in the arts or sciences (Manning, 2005). Gifted

and talented programs are intended to provide these students with curriculum that will enhance their abilities in critical thinking and problem solving (Manning, 2005). A report entitled, *The National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (1993), released by the federal government, provides criteria for identifying and evaluating gifted students in the public school system in an effort to develop their leadership skills.

Manning (2005) supported programs that encouraged students who demonstrate leadership skills and cognitive abilities to become involved in the process. He argued that the gifted student is motivated, has the ability to problem solve, is an effective communicator, and can think through complex issues. He further argued that providing opportunities and programs in the school setting, geared specifically to develop the leadership potential of the gifted and talented student population, should be continued over the long run (Manning, 2005). However, according to Gardner (1987) and Riccio (2006), the general student population is not the beneficiary of leadership skills development, as only a minute percentage of students qualify for the gifted and talented program and thereby only the gifted benefit from curriculum and task assignments developed specifically for the purpose of growing them into gifted and talented leaders.

Assessment tools to identify leadership skills. Various tools designed by scholars to identify the leadership characteristics of students are used globally. Some of the tools are the Roets Rating Scale for Leadership (RRSL) (Roets, 1997), the Leadership Skills Inventory (LSI), (Karnes & Chauvin, 1985); and the Renzulli-Hartmann Scale (Purcell & Renzulli, 1998; Renzulli, Smith, White, Callahan, Hartman, Westberg, Gavin, Reis, Siegle, & Sytsma Reed, 2010). The RRSL is a 26-item, self-rating scale that measures leadership, ambition, and desire in students ages 10–18. Roets developed the

scale to assist in identifying students who might benefit from her leadership skills training program. The scale is used in 38 schools within 37 states in the United States.

The LSI, by Karnes and Chauvin (1985), is a 125-item scale requiring 45 minutes to complete. It assesses nine dimensions of leadership, including written and speech communication skills, personal and planning skills, character-building and decision-making skills, group dynamics, problem solving, and fundamentals of leadership skills. This self-rating scale was designed for students to rate and score their leadership skills rather than to identify their leadership abilities. It provides teachers with a gauge from which to develop personalized instructional programs to address the leadership skill needs of students (Edmunds, 1998).

The Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS-R) is also identified as the Renzulli-Hartman Scale (Renzulli et al., 2010). It was designed to measure students' characteristics in the following areas: creativity, learning, motivation, leadership, musical, artistic ability, dramatics, communication (precision and expressiveness), planning, science, technology, mathematics, and reading. The leadership section (used in this study) comprises 10 questions measuring leadership characteristics, such as self-confidence, adaptability, popularity, reliability, social skills, articulateness, athletic ability, and communication skills. Teachers use the scale to rate their students, scoring the questions according to a 6-point Likert-type format.

As noted, for this study the Renzulli Hartman Leadership Characteristics Scale was used to provide the teachers with an instrument with which to score the leadership skills of their students (Renzulli et al., 2010). Students were placed into two groups: those who received a score of 35 and higher, and those who scored 34 and below. The data

information gathered from the student focus groups was used for the study, which is further discussed in Chapter 3.

The leadership questionnaire developed by Renzulli-Hartman (Renzulli, Smith, White, Callahan & Hartman, 1976) was tested for validity and reliability, and it is a teacher-scored leadership measure scale. The Renzulli-Hartman Scale was used for this study because of its proven record of accomplishment for the selection of leadership potential of students in the general-education population who show potential for giftedness. The rating scales continue to be the most widely used instrument for this type of assessment in schools (Jolly & Kettler, 2004). However, as previously noted, in this study, only the leadership characteristics portion of the study was used.

Adolescent leadership development curricula. While public schools provide some leadership development classes through the social sciences programs mandated by the CCSS, other schools and programs provide leadership-focused curricula aim at developing the leadership skills of their adolescent students (Riggio, 2008). Two examples of leadership development-centered curricula worth mentioning are those developed by the Virginia Board of Education (2001) and the To Aspire (also known as ASPIRA) organization (1961). These curricula address youth empowerment and leadership development. Some of the topics discussed in the curriculum guide include personal, social and group enhancement, time-management skills, accountability, test-taking strategies, developing self-esteem though role-playing, working with community organization projects, self-empowerment, teamwork exercises, and public speaking.

The Virginia Board of Education (2001) report states that their leadership development curriculum model prepares their adolescent students for individual and

group leadership skills development. The report indicates that the leadership development curriculum identifies important processes, skills, and opportunities that promote leadership in all students. The program provides a framework that allows teachers to embed leadership development into existing instruction.

The ASPIRA Youth Leadership Development Curriculum was developed in 1961 by Puerto Rican educators to stem the high dropout rate and low educational attainment of Puerto Rican youth. According to the report, these educators developed their leadership curriculum to teach adolescents how to become self-motivated, goal-oriented, and accountable. The coursework includes developing resiliency, asset building, self-esteem, cultural competency, and community service learning through active participation in organized service experiences that meet community needs.

Problem Statement

As earlier noted, the CCSS (2013) require middle schools to focus on common content learning grade by grade. Schroder et al. (2001) wrote that, because CCSS's focus is test taking and data collection, adolescent leadership skills development, which they said actually improves test-taking skills, are not enhanced in the classroom. They expanded on this by saying that developing the leadership skills in adolescents will help to improve test scores and enrich the student's academic growth, self-esteem, and self-worth, allowing them to develop priorities of importance into their lives (Stephens & Kerns, 2000).

Middle school students who qualify for the gifted and talented programs in assigned schools are among the only beneficiaries of leadership skills development (Boxtel & Monk, 1992). Steinberg (2008) stated that middle-school gifted and talented

programs foster leadership development in the small subgroup of enrollees but generally do not enhance these abilities in typical students within the state system. Ironically, Stephens and Karnes (2000) wrote that the federal definitions of the gifted and talented student consistently reflect leadership abilities. They argued that all students should have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, which demonstrably aid in the student's cognitive growth and the development. These researchers discussed the importance of further research on leadership development with the general-education population.

Des Marais et al. (2000) indicated that adolescents whose leadership skills are developed exhibit higher self-esteem and tend to have good cooperation skills, are more willing to learn, and accept responsibility for their success and failures. The authors also indicated that adolescents could bring new perspectives to classroom and extracurricular activities such as sharing their knowledge of new technologies, mentoring peers, and working on school club projects. Compounding the problem, leadership skills development in the general-education, middle-school population lacks emphasis in teamwork classroom projects and public speaking to develop confidence, problem solving techniques, and age-appropriate social and leadership development skills (Riccio, 2006). Researchers who have been critics for over a decade, Gardner (1987) and Lerner (1995), argued that the problem with the educational system is the lack of leadership training in the classroom to teach all students. Hence, students mostly align themselves with a group, becoming followers of peer leaders, which inhibits their ability to develop their social and leadership skills (Gardner, 1987; Piaget, 1965; Riccio, 2006; Steinberg, 2007). Steinberg (2005) and Riccio (2006) found that participating adolescents see alliance in social cliques and groups as an opportunity for social growth and interactions.

The authors posited that this is common in middle schools, and they suggested that leadership development should include peer-followership dynamics by educating students about the positive and negative aspects of followership. They further argued that this would help teachers educate students with an understanding of how peer leadership behaviors attract peer followers.

Theoretical Rationale

For the purpose of this study, two theories support the research. Social identity theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), was discovered during the Kandinsky and Klee Experiment in 1971. SIT conceptualizes why the adolescent follower chooses to belong to a group instead of becoming a leader. The adolescent follower believes that their in-group provides a social benefit that improves their self-concept, self-esteem, and well-being that no out-group can provide (Hogg 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In adolescent group-membership dynamics, their roles may be follower or leader. Carlo and Randall (2002) found that adolescents often choose the role of follower in their in-group because it shapes their attitudes and behaviors as to how they view and respond to the larger society. This study sought to investigate how middle school educational institutions, through leadership classroom instructions, theoretical approaches, focus groups, and interviews, can transform peer followers into leaders. To address the research problem, the researcher elaborates further in Chapter 2 on SIT relating to in-groups and out-groups and the impact of adolescent social conditioning (Gardner, 1987; Sacks, 2009; Steinberg, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Zimmerman, 2006).

The second theory used to support the research in this study is transformational leadership theory (TL) (Downton, 1973). Downton coined the term "transformational

leadership," focusing on charisma. He said that leaders transform and attract followers by being committed, and they utilize their charisma to influence their followers to adapt and support their causes. However, Burns (1978) built on Downton's idea and expanded TL to include the leader and follower, working together, to achieve the goals of both. Research further notes that Bass (1985) extended the work of Burns by further developing the meaning of TL. Bass argued that TL inspired followers to reach their full potential by (a) assisting followers to become aware of the values and limitations of goals, (b) guiding followers to become caring and compassionate toward others, and (c) helping followers develop the confidence to excel and achieve their goals.

Transformational leadership theory is used because followers (the students) are supported and encouraged to maximize their full potential by developing their intellectual growth, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills through leaders (the teachers) (Burns, 1978). According to Boyd (2009), teachers, as transformational leaders, can transform the academic and social lives of adolescents by developing behaviors that conform to the teacher's academic instructions (2009). According to Beauchamp and Morton (2011), who conducted a study to determine teacher influence on students, teachers do influence the behaviors of students.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to seek to understand the importance of enhancing student leadership skills within the middle school setting. Through the integration of two theoretical frameworks of SIT (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and TL (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Downton, 1973), this study sought to gain insight and clarity from teachers, students, and administrators pertaining to the what, why, and how of leadership development that exists currently in school settings and what needs to occur to enhance it. When collecting the data from the student focus groups, this researcher sought to understand, from the students, what leadership skills attract middle school students to their peer leaders, and why there is more followership than leadership at this adolescent stage, as well as what they perceive to be integral aspects of leadership development in their school.

This qualitative study sought to discover findings through analysis of the data from focus groups consisting of teachers and students. The student focus groups consisted of two distinct groups. One group comprised students who received a score of 34 or below on their Renzulli-Hartman LCS (1998), and the other group consisted of students whose scores were 35 and above. The teachers determined which students in their class were higher and lower scorers on the LCS. Interviews with administrators were also conducted at a middle school in Brooklyn, New York. The results of this study informs stakeholders, parents, teachers, students, and administrator about how middle schools can enhance the development of the leadership skills of their students and children in order to promote more future leaders in the middle school setting.

Research Questions

The following research questions are the basis of this study:

1. Why is it important to enhance leadership development in the middle school curriculum?

2. How is leadership development enhanced in the middle school setting?

3. What methods can be used to enhance leadership skills in adolescents?

4. What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders, and why do you think those skills are apparent in some students and not in others?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is to help fill the gap in the research literature on the importance of developing the leadership skills of middle school students. The findings of the study can be a source of benefit to teachers, administrators, parents, students, and other stakeholders by highlighting what is learned about leadership skills development, peer leadership and followership, as well as group involvement (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Gardner, 1990; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Rosenthal et al., (2008) found that 85% of Americans believe that a serious leadership gap exists in the United States. Providing opportunities for middle school students to gain skills through leadership development prepares them to explore the idea of higher education and future careers. The results of this study can help provide educators with a course of action to implement leadership skills development in middle schools.

Definitions of Terms

Administration – middle school principals and assistant principals.

Leadership Skills – adolescent leadership skills development taught through the middle school curriculum.

Leadership Traits/Characteristics – the characteristics of leadership perceived by the teachers through the Renzulli-Hartmann Leadership Scale (1976).

Middle School Student – preadolescents and adolescents ages 11 to 14 or in enrolled middle school grades 6-8.

Teacher – middle school teachers, grades 6-8.

Chapter Summary

This chapter surveyed past scholarly work in the existing field of adolescent leadership development. It found strong support for the view that leadership development of students in middle school has been de-emphasized by the Common Core State Standards. This lack of emphasis has shifted the focus from leadership building to testing and data collection on student knowledge in the "core" areas defined by the CCSS and has concomitantly lessened the opportunity for the type of pedagogy that has been shown to enhance leadership development in the middle school age group. This is particularly problematic given the developmental tendency of early adolescents—the middle-school population—to seek out peer groups and cliques that give them a sense of belonging, inspiring followership rather than leadership. The gap in the literature validates the exigency to research how adolescent social engagement, school policy and its implementation, and teacher leadership practices either impede or enhance leadership growth in students. This study sought to add to the body of knowledge by investigating, from the perspectives of teachers, administrators, and students, the importance of

developing leadership skills in this population, what skills are believed to be most

important, and how those skills might be developed.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

This study examined the importance of developing leadership skills in grades 6-8 middle school students from the perspective of administrators, teachers, and students. Empirical research demonstrates that policy mandates and social behaviors within the public school culture pose a problem and stymy the leadership skills growth and development of middle school students (Kress, 2006). The recent mandate of the New York State Common Core State Standards that emphasize testing and assessment as a priority in schools continues to be a barrier to the leadership development of all students in middle schools (Rosebrough & Leverett, 2011). In addition, this dissertation, through the review of literature, addresses the social behaviors of adolescents regarding leadership versus peer followership, adolescents' social identity development, and the reluctance of adults to assign leadership tasks to adolescents, which further inhibits the growth of leadership development in adolescence (Piaget, 1965; Sacks, 2009; Steinberg, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979;).

This chapter discusses the scholars' research that represents their findings pertaining to the benefits middle school students can derive when their leadership skills are developed. Two key researchers in this study noted the importance of leadership development. First, Sacks (2009) stated that leadership enhancement in a school environment directly affects student achievement scores, as well as the idea that students believe that the outcome of their leadership opportunities and growth occurs when they

earn the trust of adults. Second, Steinberg (2005) revealed that adolescents seek social conformity with their peers through group affiliation and the interactions with peers are important during the adolescent developmental stage.

In order to contribute to the educational institutions on leadership skills development of adolescents in middle school, the empirical research relates to leadership skills development of adolescents and supports frameworks, which examine an avenue to support the researcher's study. In reviewing the literature pertaining to leadership and adolescence, a large volume of literature discussed adult leadership development, as well as leadership development in high schools and post high schools and leadership with gifted students (Klau, 2006; MacGregor, 2007). However, studies specifically tailored toward leadership and adolescents in middle schools were limited. Thus, this study provides more research where a gap exists.

Rosebrough and Leverett (2011) stated that schools must identify and implement effective strategies in order to improve student academic performance, dropout rates, and absenteeism, in addition to the common state standards. Research on the New York State Common Core State Standards (2013) indicates that students in grade 6 and above are required to gain expertise in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. Moreover, the students are also required to understand social matters and physical development inherent in learning (CCSS, 2013). Many states implement these standards in their schools, which form teacher academic guidelines for measuring test scores and skills of students (Schroder et al., 2001).

Within the public school systems in New York State, teachers must utilize the curriculum of the Common Core State Standards. This requires administrators and

teachers to focus on assessment through test taking and data collection (CCSS, 2013). However, the common core curricula for teachers in middle schools does not clearly define how leadership is taught, except for a minor amount of information in the social studies curriculum of civic responsibility (Ornstein et al., 2011; Schroder et al., 2011).

Research indicates that school principals play a vital role in the promotion and development of leadership skills of adolescent students. In a qualitative study conducted by Lavery and Haine (2013) in Perth, Western Australia, the researchers set out to determine the role and function of secondary school principals in developing student leadership. Eight secondary Catholic school principals participated in the study at each principal's school site. The researcher, in an attempt to maximize the variation of the sampling, selected principals from three coeducational schools, two boys' schools, and three girls' schools. Selected principals were studied who actively engaged directly or indirectly with established student leadership programs within their school communities. The researcher, as the instrument in data collection, used three open-ended questions for gathering the data. The principals were asked about the concept of their understanding of student leadership in a Catholic school and what they believed to be the most appropriate form of student leadership. They were also asked how they envisioned the teaching of leadership in their schools.

The theme findings revealed that the principals unanimously believed that student leadership was an integral component of their schools and that fostering leadership was their responsibility. The principals also took a purposeful role in the application of student leadership at their school. They unanimously agreed with involving themselves directly with student leaders and planning events that directly promoted student

leadership, such as the planning and running of the school assembly by student leaders. One principal indicated that meetings with student leaders "Give student leaders a voice and the opportunity to stand in front of their peers and deliver a key message" (Lavery & Hine, 2013). Findings also revealed that principals believed that student leadership is a vital component of the cultural identity of the school and leadership programs should be available to all students. The researchers discovered that some ways these principals helped establish student leaders was by helping the students to acquire, develop, and exercise leadership skills. These skills included organizational skills, public speaking skills, confidence and charisma. In addition, the data identified that students were expected to speak out and do what is right rather than what is popular, as well as becoming a role model within the community, which was identified as representing servant leadership.

Findings also revealed that the principals unanimously agreed that teachers should be actively involved in the student leadership programs, which includes mentorship roles with student leaders, instilling a sense of advocacy within the student leader and remaining committed to the holistic development of the students. Some principals said they considered working with students in elected leadership positions, so they could be models of exemplary leadership for peers to see and emulate. Some principals indicated that, "They need a school culture in which every student feels he or she is a leader and in which servant leadership is prized" (Lavery & Hine, 2013, p. 53). The findings indicate that the school leadership said that leadership programs should be available to all students, so all students can feel that they can be leaders.

The findings also revealed that the eight principals believed that their role with student leadership was to provide them with opportunities such as school and community-based activities that instill a sense of purpose and pride and give them a voice to express themselves with the support and supervision of adults. Additional findings revealed that the principals viewed student leadership as a major value to the students' personal academic growth and development and to the positive cultivation of school culture. The principals believed that instilling a culture of service to others through servant leadership, and providing opportunities for students to administer these services through advocacy was vital. The principals also believed that leadership programs give students the opportunity to acquire, develop, and exercise leadership skills. One principal noted that school culture dictates that her role is to have an expectation of excellence in her students, that every student attending the school is a potential leader, that developing leadership qualities in each student is a priority, so she works to create opportunities for the students to demonstrate their leadership qualities (Lavery & Hine, 2013).

However, Gray (2002) and Hawkes (1999) stressed concern that meaningful leadership tasks may not be available in schools for students to practice their leadership skills once they are developed, and they feared that students would become disillusioned, which could lead to student distrust and depletion of leadership interest. Researchers and scholars, Lavery and Hine (2013) and vanLinden & Fertman (1998) believed that their studies had relevance for both public and private school educators globally, as all middle school students possess leadership potential and can experience leadership opportunities for growth at all schools.

Sacks (2009) research study explored the leadership skills development of middle school students. She conducted a mixed-method qualitative and quantitative research study where she sought to explore leadership and leadership development from children and adolescents' perspectives to create a model for leadership development in classroom instructions. This research was conducted in Canada, using the same grade configuration used in this study (grades 4-8).

Sacks (2009) conducted a study in Canada that consisted of a total sample size of 42 students. Phase 1 of the focus groups consisted of 11 schools, comprising six elementary and five secondary schools of six to eight students in each group, from each of the 11 schools. The principals, through the assistance of the guidance counselors and teachers, selected students based on their school involvement and leadership. The research team made the decision to consult the principals to select the students, as they believed the principals were familiar with the students' leadership skills capacity. The research goal was to have a selection of students that represented various levels of leadership development, such as an outgoing class president to a shy student. The research team did not want to have students self-select for the focus group because they felt that their sample would be heavily weighted in favor of the "popular students," as indicated in Coie and Dodge (1983). These researchers indicated that a significant role in peer selection of leadership was related to popularity.

The participants were asked eight open-ended questions, which were designed to allow students to speak candidly about their school leadership pertaining to what they know, the opportunities they were given, and their own leadership abilities. Sample questions for the study included the students' definition of leadership, role models of

those they perceived as leaders, and when did they identified themselves as a leader. In addition, students were asked to answer questions related to their general understanding of leadership and leaders, leadership identity, leadership development, and the outcome of leadership opportunities.

Sacks (2009) noted that her study revealed that some students believed that anyone can be a leader while others believed that leadership is about inherent traits and qualities and not necessarily related to building leadership skills. Students felt that teachers, principals, family, and friends inspired them and were a contributing factor to their leadership development.

The male and female students varied in their understanding of leadership. Female students indicated that male students refused to be identified as leaders when engaging in such activities as fundraising projects that attract mainly female students. The researcher also noted that female students in the study embraced leadership projects, such as fundraising, and that "if boys assist the girls, they are less respected and laughed at by their peers" (Sacks, 2009, p. 38).

Other findings by Sacks (2009) revealed that grade 6 students were happy about their leadership roles. Teachers would assign students as the leader of committees or fundraising, and the students were satisfied with the roles assigned them. Findings noted that shy and insecure students became confident leaders as the result of teacher encouragement and leadership training. Students sought out teachers for encouragement, opportunities, and inspiration.

However, some students in the study believed that leaders emerged through inherent traits, while other students believed that roles and responsibilities make one a

leader rather than personal characteristics. The data further concluded that students, whose confidence were enhanced, became more self-aware, thus developing their leadership identity. Sacks (2009) recommended that students learn and apply leadership-related skills such as organizational skills, project planning, leading a meeting, and in evaluating a project. She indicated that her findings reveal that when students are actively engaged in leadership skills development in their school and the external community, it gave them a sense of meaningful personal accomplishment. She also found that gender and age played a factor in the perceptions of students in the study. She noted for example, many of the female students believed that they were leaders because they set an example in the classroom by doing their class work and working hard to succeed academically. She also found in her study that grade 7 and grade 8 students were assigned roles with greater responsibility and less teacher supervision.

Sacks (2009) concluded that middle school student participants understood the dynamics of influence and authority in relation to their personal leadership experiences. She believed that students in grades 6-9 are at the right age to instill civic engagement, which is a key experience in leadership development.

This researcher found similar answers to questions pertaining to leadership in Sacks (2009) study. For example, students in both studies believed that they were leaders and shared the same enthusiasm about their teacher-assigned tasks pertaining to their leadership chores. In addition, the need to provide opportunities for middle school students to develop their self-confidence was evident in both Sacks (2009) study and this researcher's study. According to Steinberg (2005) confidence is a major factor that leads to motivating students to become leaders rather than followers. In addition, this research

finding revealed that the majority of male and female student participants were passionate about becoming a leader and believed that being a leader was an ultimate goal to accomplish, whereas Sacks (2009) study did not have the same results.

The ambivalence of adults to assign leadership tasks to adolescents is a problem in the work force environment (Kress, 2006). Kress indicated that the culture of the adult world views adolescents only as consumers who are incapable of performing leadership tasks. Kress believed that this cultural stigma could negatively affect adolescents who demonstrate leadership skills potential in the classroom and among their peers. Des Marais et al., (2000) posited that adolescents need to be trained in assigned tasks to demonstrate active learning skills, but adults' ambivalence to assign tasks and power roles to students is a continuous problem. The researchers indicated that adults should have renewed confidence in adolescents, as many are positively involved in successful leadership projects in their school and community, which demonstrate their leadership competencies, renewed energy, and desire to complete task assignments.

Social identity theory. The first theory used in this study is social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This theory expounds the notion that group affiliation and peer attachment denies peer followers with the opportunity to become leaders. Group affiliation and peer attachment continue to be critical turning points for adolescents as they seek to define themselves through their developmental growth process (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 2003; Kim, 2009). Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory (1971) describes the impact of adolescent social conditioning through groups. They indicated that group formations were characterized as "in-group" and "out-group." The in-group is the individual's inner circle of associates that shape the life of the individual. Individuals

belonging to a group or assigned randomly to a group see themselves as part of the inner dynamics of the in-group. The out-group is the formation and affiliation of others.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), the consequences of individual affiliation demonstrate and lead to in-group favoritism and signs of discrimination against the out-group. The researchers stated that the categorization and separation of the social groups result in the "us" against "them" mindset, as shown in an experimental study known as the "Kandinsky and Klee Experiment" (Billing, Bundy, Flament, & Tajfel, 1971). This study lead Tajfel & Turner (1979) to their SIT. In their study, Billing et al. (1971) set out to investigate the minimal conditions under which discrimination and favoritism between social groups could result through peer involvement. They also sought to demonstrate whether the placing of individuals into groups (categorization) is sufficient for people to harness favoritism of their own group against members of other groups. The participants were 48 adolescent boys, ages 14-15 years. The experimenters divided the boys into the two groups, the Kandinsky group and the Klee group, by randomly selecting 24 boys for each group. The boys were shown 12 slides of a painting drawn by each artist, Kandinsky and Klee and were asked to identify which paintings they liked and disliked. The findings revealed that each of the boys in the Kandinsky group liked the paintings drawn by their artist and disliked the paintings that were drawn by Klee. The Klee group also selected their artist's paintings over the Kandinsky paintings. The researchers' findings revealed that group decision suggested an underlying effect on favoritism and conformity pertaining to adolescent involvement in their group of affiliation, which also demonstrated the power of a united force through group affiliation.

This experiment created the foundation for social identity theory in adolescence (Billing et al., 1971). This is especially crucial given that peer group affiliation through social identity shapes the behavior of the developing adolescent (Piaget, 1965). Building on the SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Tarrant (2002) conducted a study in the United Kingdom to investigate the process by which adolescents form positive evaluations of their peer groups. One hundred and fifteen 14 to 15-year-old male and female adolescent students were recruited from a geographic location where the household income was below the national average. The participants responded to questionnaires by answering a series of questions relating to the comparisons between their peer group and a non-affiliated group.

The findings concluded that conformity to a peer group was a direct effect of the self-esteem of the individual and the group from which the adolescent forms positive assessments and alignments to support their peer group actions (Tajfel, 1970). Cuseo (2002) agreed with this research and indicated that peer friendship provides the adolescent with a variety of opportunities for learning and development as well as providing a sense of companionship, social development skills, the ability to manage conflict and competition, and an opportunity to use problem solving skills among the group.

Transformational leadership. The second theory used in this study is transformational leadership (TL) (Bass, 1985; Beauchamp and Morton 2011; Burns, 1978; Downton, 1973). It describes how leaders guide followers to attain their full potential by employing several leadership essentials (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978 & Downton, 1973). These essentials are idealized influence, inspirational motivation,

intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In reviewing the theory of TL, Beauchamp and Morton (2011) conducted a study to examine whether physical-education teachers' transformational leadership teaching behavior affected the students' behaviors, their personal physical activity behavior, and their leisure time physical activities behaviors. The study was conducted at a school located in British Columbia, Canada. The participants were 2,948 adolescents in grades 8-10.

The researchers examined the extent to which the teacher's transformational teachings about physical activities in the classroom affected the adolescents' attitudes toward physical activities and whether the teachers' transformational leadership behaviors contributed to a change in the adolescents' physical activity responses. The researchers used the Multilevel Structural Equation Modeling (MSEM) as a prospective observational tool. MSEM is a cluster sampling method used only if the target population has an hierarchical structure, such as educational departments, and when the target population (students) is located within specific schools (Joreskog & Sorbom, 2006).

The students rated their physical education teachers' behaviors during the halfway point of the school year and completed measures of their effective attitudes two months later. Beauchamp, Barling, and Morton (2011) indicated that the findings the study suggested that the teachers' transformational leadership behaviors, such as inspirational and active classroom engagement with students during classroom instructions, motivated the students to change behaviors. The findings also suggested that the teachers motivated the students to enjoy physical education as well as health-enhancing physical activity involvement within and outside of school by the engagement of fitness exercises. The study indicated that the transformational leadership used by the teachers during

classroom instructions could change behaviors, increase student motivation and self-efficacy, and move them to continue their physical activities (Beauchamp et al., 2011). The study revealed that teachers, as leaders in the classroom, could influence their students' behavior to mirror or to exceed their expectations (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Gardner, 1990).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides the reader with an understanding of the empirical research by noted scholars that speaks to leadership and adolescence and the theoretical framework that align the connectedness between the theory and practice to support their perspectives. In addition, the review of literature outlined the importance of developing the leadership skills of middle school students from the perspective of administration, teachers, and students within the middle school system.

The review of the literature pertaining to the research studies of school administrators who foster leadership skills development of students in a school setting were outlined to inform the study's focus (Lavery & Hine, 2012; Sacks, 2009). The literature on the two theoretical frameworks that guide this study, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1971) and transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Downton, 1973), addressed adolescent group, peer affiliation and conformity, and outlined the role that teachers play in transforming students in the classroom setting, respectively (Beauchamp et al.).

However, the literature review demonstrated a gap in leadership skills development of middle school students in the classroom setting. It is the goal of this

study to note the importance of leadership skills development in middle schools to springboard young leaders for the 21st century global workforce.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative study examined the importance of leadership development of middle school students in grades 6 through 8 from the perspective of teachers, students, and administrators. Sacks (2009) wrote that leadership enhancement in a school environment directly affects student achievement scores. She stated that it is important to develop leadership skills in adolescents because it is a prerequisite to higher academic performance. Ornstein et al. (2011) and Riggio (2009) also stated that leadership skills development of students improve their self development that results in an increase in their self-confidence and academic growth.

Day and Antonakis (2012) and Scheer and Safrit (2001) wrote that when leadership skills are developed in students, their test scores increase, maladaptive behaviors decrease, and absenteesm decreases, thus improving the dropout rate. However, several problems continue to impede the leadership skills development of middle school students. These problems are the lack of leadership skills development in classroom instructions, due to the mandate of common core standards to increase academic growth. This mandate forces teachers to prompt students to improve their test scores of the common core required subjects, providing no room for leadership development growth, which is due to the emphasis in instruction on test-taking strategies (CCSS, 2013).

With the New York State demand for teachers to improve students' academic performance, Sternberg (2005) wrote that leadership development of middle school students should be a priority in classroom instructions. However, the majority of the priorities rest with the State Standards, which have limited the focus on leadership development. Further, the ambivalence of teachers to assign leadership tasks to non-gifted students impedes the students' leadership growth process. According to Manning (2005) and Marland (1972), only gifted students are seen as potential leaders and should be given all accommodations to develop their leadership skills. However, this exclusion policy need to be reviewed to include non-gifted students who do not have the required IQ to qualify but who have the potential for leadership skills development, which can lead to improving their academic growth (Goodman & Rogers, 2001). This inclusion to develop the leadership potential of all students may build renewed confidence to the high percentage of middle school students who choose to follow instead of lead (Riggio, 2009; vanLinden & Fertman, 1998).

The social development growth of many middle school students is fortified through peer group leadership as adolescents seek to discover, define, and identify themselves through the group process (Tajfel & Turner, 1974). According Tajfel and Turner, many adolescents during this group process choose to become followers, adapting the social, intellectual, and emotional behaviors of their group leaders and conforming to the social identity of the group. They go on to say that the adolescents' compliance to the group leaders' directives impede their leadership growth process. It is the hope that addressing the hindrance of the leadership development of middle school

students during their social development stage will become a phenomenon of leadership development growth of all middle school students globally (Tajfel & Turner, 1974).

A qualitative phenomenological design was used for this study. A phenomenological research study emphasizes the individual's experiences on a given topic (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell, a phenomenological study allows the individuals to share their lived experiences through interviews and focus groups. This phenomenological study, the perspective of administrators, teachers, and students articulated their lived experiences pertaining to the importance of developing the leadership skills of middle school students in grades 6 through 8 (Creswell, 2005; Patton 2001).

Creswell (2005) indicated that in order to maximize the data, broad, open-ended, general questions are applicable. Interviews and focus groups provided full investigation of the subject as it included follow-up questions that allowed the participants to expand on their shared experiences. Qualitative research guided the researcher to answer questions that required clarification, justification, and further knowledge about the given topic being explored (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2011). The following research questions guided the dissertation study:

1. Why is it important to enhance leadership development in the middle school curriculum?

2. How is leadership development enhanced in the middle school setting?

3. What methods can be used to enhance leadership skills in adolescents?

4. What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders, and why do you think those skills are apparent in some students and not in others?

Research Context

This study took place in Brooklyn, New York in a middle school located in the Flatbush/East Flatbush community. The school, built in 1938, served a predominately White, middle-class population until 1950, when southern African-American populations moved North (http://schools.nyc.gov, 2014). An annex constructed in 1980 accommodated the overcrowding due to the influx of the Caribbean Americans and other immigrant population. The school is a four-story brick building that houses 36 classrooms and serves the student population, which consistes of a general student population, English as a Second Language (ESL) students, and special education students. There are three music rooms, three computer labs, a science lab, two gymnasium, two auditoriums, a library, a student cafeteria, and teachers' cafeteria.

Over 30 teachers are assigned to this school, which is where the data was collected. Some of the teachers teach grades 6-8 students, while others teach ESL and special education students. The first floor houses five regular classrooms, a computer lab room, a large auditorium, a parents' room, a conference room, a teachers' room, two nurse/medical suites, two ESL rooms, the principal's office, an academic intervention services room, three music rooms, five school-based support team rooms, and four Department of Education organization rooms. The second floor houses five regular classrooms, 10 classrooms for grades 6-8 and the special education students, a science lab, a teachers' room, a library, four special-education classrooms, the assistant principal's office, and a guidance counselor's office. The third floors house a gymnasium, computer lab, and grade 6-8 classrooms, a resource room, guidance office, a dean's office, special-education classrooms, and staff development rooms. The fourth

floor houses the media center, a gymnasium, and private space. The basement houses a teachers' cafeteria and general building support rooms.

The current school population comprises mainly Caribbean immigrants with the largest percent of Haitian-American decent. The current school population is 98% minority, with 60% of the children coming from single-parent households with low socio-economic status. Eighty-two percent of the students are eligible for a free lunch, while 8% are eligible for a reduced-price lunch (http://schools.nyc.gov, 2014). The school serves 636 students, with 150 are English-language learners, and 200 are bilingual. Many of the students are immigrants from Africa, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, various Middle Eastern countries, and South America.

According to the 2012-13 enrollment data from the New York State Education Department's Student Information Repository System (SIRS), the general student population comprised 52% male and 48% female. The ethnic breakdown of the student population is 86% Black/African American, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 1% Asian or Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, and 2% White (http://schools.nyc.gov, 2014). In addition, one-third of the student population (202 students) has been retained at least once in a grade. Currently, there are 176 students classified as special-education students. Last, the attendance rate for the school year 2011-12 was 92%.

Research Participants

The participants for the study were middle school teachers of grades 6-8, middle school students from grades 6-8, which were comprised of male and female students, and the middle school administrators. Ten English Language Arts (ELA) and Math teachers volunteered to participate in the focus group. In order to streamline the sample pool, only

the ELA and Math teachers were asked to participate in the focus group. Since the standardized tests in New York State include ELA and Math, selection from this group of teachers, rather than from all of the core subject areas, was aligned with the study.

Twenty-two students volunteered to participate in the research study. Three classrooms, each, were randomly selected from the grade 6-8 classes. The total student population in the three randomly selected grade 6-8 classes were 75-80 students. Details of this process are further explained in the data collection section of this chapter. In addition to teachers and student focus group participants, the administrator and/assistant principal were participants in the interview process.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher filed an application in October 2014 to seek approval from St. John Fisher College (SJFC) Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the study for which approval was granted. The New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) granted the researcher IRB approval to conduct a study in a middle school in the Flatbush/East Flatbush neighborhood (see Appendix K for the study timeline). The researcher complied with the two final stages set forth by the NYCDOE Guidelines for Conducting Research in New York City Public Schools (2014), which required that the researcher submit to a background check (fingerprinting) and receive clearance before entering the school to conduct research. A background check of the researcher was on file at the DOE site. In addition, the principal granted approval for the researcher to conduct the study at the school site. The researcher began the research study in the latter part of January 2015 by meeting with the principal.

The researcher met with the principal and requested his permission to facilitate the following:

1. Begin the recruitment process for data collection by providing grades 6-8 class lists to the researcher and to facilitate a meeting with the teachers.

2. Provide time for ELA and math teachers to complete a Leadership Scale for student selection at the teacher meeting.

3. Begin the recruitment process for students by allowing the researcher to briefly speak to each ELA and Math class to inform the students about the study (after the teacher meeting).

4. Have a staff member available outside of the room where the student focus groups will take place in the event any student chose to leave before the end of the focus group session.

According to Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005), focus groups provide several perspectives on a given topic, enriching the dialogue. Since the researcher was interested in the point of view from the perspective of administrators, teachers, and students regarding leadership skills development of students, the focus group sessions provided results from three perspectives of the constituent groups (Kitzinger, 1994).

ELA and math teachers. The researcher met with the ELA and Math teachers to discuss the study and request their participation and explained the process for student selection for the two student focus groups. ELA and Math classes, through random selection were used to develop the student focus groups. The researcher distributed the Renzulli Hartman Leadership Scale to the ELA and math teachers who were responsible for the grade 6-8 classes. The researcher explained that their perceived rated leadership

characteristics scores of the students were to determine the assignment of the focus groups. The researcher created identified names for the two focus groups, which were "Higher Rated Perceived Student Leaders" and "Lower Rated Perceived Student Leaders." A student who received a rated score of 34 and below was placed in the lower rated student leader Focus Group 1, and students with a rated score of 35 and above were placed in the higher rated student leader Focus Group 2. The Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS), also known as the Renzulli Hartman Scale- Leadership Characteristics Scale (Purcell & Renzulli, 1998), is used by schools to rate students for the gifted and talented program. The leadership characteristics scale was used for this study to measure the leadership characteristics of the students. Leadership can be taught, and all middle school students have the capacity to learn and apply leadership skills (Gardner, 1987; Piaget, 1965; Steinberg, 2008).

At that meeting, the researcher distributed consent forms for teachers to sign if they chose to participate in the study. Ten teachers volunteered to participate in the study. They signed and returned their consent forms to the researcher. Teachers were informed that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time during the focus group session. While teacher names appeared on the initial documents that were completed, they did not appear on any documents in the study, as names were replaced by codes. In addition, all information obtained from the focus groups and interviews will be destroyed three years after the study.

Student participants. As stated earlier, the researcher began the process of student selection by first, randomly selecting the three classes (ELA and math) from grades 6-8 class lists provided by the administrator. The researcher met with the students

in the grade 6-8 classes within the week and provided information about the study, read and explained the assent form content, explained the parent consent form content, solicited questions for clarification, and explained that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw from the focus group at any time. Assent forms were given to students who volunteered to participate in the focus group sessions. The students were also given the parent consent form to deliver to parents and return as a signed document to the teacher. The researcher arranged to pick up the forms from an assigned teacher during free time. After the student participants' signed parent consent forms were received by the researcher, the researcher began the process of student placement in Focus Group 1 or Focus Group 2. While the student names appeared on the initial form that the teachers completed, as well as the forms parents and students completed, codes were assigned, and no names appeared on any documents in the study. In addition, all student information obtained from the focus groups will be destroyed three years after the study completion date.

The researcher and the principal agreed that the researcher would conduct the student focus group session within a timeframe of the last week in February and the first two weeks in March. It was agreed that student instructional time could not be compromised as a result of their participation in the focus group session. The student focus groups lasted 20-30 minutes in length.

Administrators interview session. The researcher met with the principal and assistant principal to inform them of the study and to request their participation. At that meeting, the researcher distributed consent forms for them to sign if they chose to participate in the study. The principal and assistant principal volunteered to participate in

the study. The consent forms were signed and returned to the researcher. The principal and assistant principal were informed that their participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time during the interview session. While the names of the principal and the assistant principal appeared on the initial documents that they completed, codes were assigned to their names, and no names appeared on any documents in the study. In addition, all information obtained from the interviews will be destroyed three years after the study.

As previously noted and further explained here, in order to create the two student focus groups, ELA and Math teachers (one from each of the grade 6-8 classes) were asked to assess the leadership characteristics of their middle school students by completing the SRBCSS-R/Leadership Scale (Purcell & Renzulli, 1998). The teachers indicated whether the students always or never demonstrated leadership behaviors by rating the seven questions using the 6-point scale (Appendix A). The Leadership Scale was distributed to the teachers at their meeting and they were asked to complete it for each student during the meeting.

The scale is widely used in schools to determine which students could be candidates for a gifted and/or enrichment program and it was tested for reliability and validity. The SRBCSS was used for this study to determine the potential leadership skills of the students in grades 6-8 middle school students. According to (Purcell & Renzulli, 1998) there are no national norms for the instrument, so individuals can determine what scores are relevant and useful based on the grade level of students. The students whose scale total scores were 35 and above exhibited high leadership behaviors in the classroom. Students who demonstrated lower leadership behaviors in the classroom

scored 34 and below. The teachers rated seven questions pertaining to the students'

leadership behaviors demonstrated in the classroom. The areas the teachers rated were

perceived leadership in: (a) Responsible Behaviors; (b) Respected by Others; (c) Self-

confidence with Peers; (d) Articulate; Strong Communicator; (e) Organized; Can Bring

Structure to People/Situations; (f) Cooperative Behaviors; and (g) Directs Activities in a

Group Setting. The answers were rated and scored with a number in the following

categories:

1. Never

2. Very rarely

3. Rarely

4. Occasionally

5. Frequently

6. Always

Students who received ratings in the Frequently (5) and Always (6) column

received higher scores. In calculating the higher scorers, this meant that seven questions

times a score of six equals a score of 42; seven questions times a score of five, equals a

score of 35. Thus, those students who scored 35 or above were noted to be higher scorers

on the Leadership Scale. The researcher used a digital recorder to capture the data for

accuracy during the focus group and interview sessions. The interviews and focus groups

were conducted at the researcher's middle school study site. All data transcriptions were

completed in mid-March 2015.

In addition to the three focus groups, (one teacher, two students) the final stage of

the data collection process was the administrator interviews. According to Fontana and

Frey (1994), qualitative interviews provide an opportunity to learn about ourselves as we learn from others through the construct of the subject and the insightful way it is interpreted. The researcher used a series of open-ended questions that guided the interviewees to answer the questions in depth, providing clarity, detail, and vividness, and for giving substantive data for the study. The researcher briefed the administrators of the process and used the research questions as a guide to the study. The interviews were conducted with the principal and his assistant principal in early March 2015. As with all other participants (teachers and students), the administrator participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that anonymity and confidentiality were used and maintained through a coding process so that no names appeared on any documents. In addition, all participants provided background data about themselves (Appendix B & C) by completing a Demographic Fact Sheet.

The study was conducted in a public school in Brooklyn, New York. The middle school serves students in grades 6-8. The school is located in New York City, School District 17. The study commenced in early late January 2015 and concluded in early March 2015. Data analysis began mid-March 2015. The researcher was the main instrument in data collection for this study.

Data Analysis

The qualitative study entailed transcription, coding, and analysis of sets of data from the focus groups and interview. Coding is the assignment of codes to the reviewed, unedited, qualitative data captured in words, sentences, phrases, and paragraph during the focus groups and interviews conducted by the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). These authors identified two types of coding, the open and axial codings. Open coding allows

for the transcriber to code words and phrases found in the transcript or text, while axial coding identifies the relationships between the codes and creates emerging themes (1990). While the researcher originally intended to complete the qualitative analyses by using NVivo the researcher elected to code all transcripts by hand instead. This allowed the researcher to maintain close proximity to the data. An alternate coder was used to promote reliability of the findings. Emerging themes from the in-depth interview and the data from the focus groups were determined through the coding process. For the purpose of this study, open and axial coding was used for the transcription of the data. The data was transcribed, coded, and analyzed in early March 2015. Results of the data provided the knowledge needed to determine the importance of developing the leadership skills of middle school students from the perspective of teachers, students, and administration.

Summary of the Methodology

The researcher used qualitative research for the method of investigation. Upon approval of the St. John Fisher College IRB and the NYC Board of Education's IRB, the researcher met with the principal of the middle school where the research was to be conducted to discuss the process and procedures. The principal and assistant principal assisted the researcher within the scope of their jurisdiction. The researcher requested to speak to the ELA and Math teachers at a faculty meeting to inform them about the study, the instruments to be used in the study, and to request their participation in the focus group. Then, once a list was generated of teachers who agreed to participate, they were randomly selected from a list so that there were no more that 10-12 teachers in the focus group. After the teachers volunteered to participate, the actual number in the teacher focus group consisted of 10 teachers.

The researcher requested student participation by having their parents sign and return the consent forms, which permitted their child to participate in the study. The students delivered the information to their parents and returned the signed consent forms to the researcher. Students, whose signed consent forms were received, were randomly selected to participate in the study. The students were then assigned to either of the two focus groups based on the score they received on the RHS Leadership Characteristics Scale. Finally, students who participated in the study received a $10 gift certificate for their voluntary participation. In addition to the teacher and student focus groups, the researcher interviewed two members of the administration as part of the data-collection process.

The data was transcribed and coded for the identification of emergent themes and patterns that related to the study. Chapter 4 explains the findings with the support of various graphs and charts that further explains the data findings. The findings revealed the importance of developing leadership skills of middle school students in grades 6-8.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

This qualitative study was to determine, through the voices of administration, teachers, and students, the importance of developing leadership skills of middle school students in grades 6-8. In addition, this phenomenological study highlighted the obstacles or benefits about leadership development of middle school students. The findings of this study, followed by an analysis, outlined the bases from the findings that determined the linkage to the theoretical approach and the problem statement described in Chapter 1. The researcher used interview questions to gather data from participants in administrator interviews and focus groups of teachers and students to find answers to the research questions that guided the study.

Research Questions

Responses to the research questions by the teacher and student focus groups and the administrators' interviews were outlined in the data analysis and findings section. The questions that guided the study were the following:

1. Why is it important to enhance leadership development in the middle school curriculum?

2. How is leadership development enhanced in the middle school setting?

3. What methods can be used (or do you use) to enhance leadership skills in adolescents?

4. What characteristics are inherent in middle school student leaders, and why are they apparent in some students and not in others?

Demographic information of participants. The administrators' interviews were conducted in early March 2015. Two administrators participated in separate interviews. The researcher gave the administrators a demographic fact sheets to be completed and returned to the researcher prior to their interviews.

The administrators were males in the age range of 50-59 years (see Table 4.1). One administrator had been employed for nine years in the administrative field while the other administrator had 14 years of experience in the field. Both administrators acquired their master's degrees. The researcher informed the participants that participation in the study was strictly voluntary and there were no consequences for non-participation or withdrawal at any time during the study. The researcher received signed consent forms from both administrators to participate and to be audio recorded during the interview session. The participants were assigned code names of "A1" and "A2" for the purpose of anonymity.

Table 4.1

Administrators Demographic Information

Participant Code	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Title	Year in Profession	Years in Position	Level of Education
A1	50-59	M	African American	Principal	9	9	MA
A2	50-59	M	Indian	Asst. Principal	14	14	MA

The teachers' focus group consisted of 10 ELA and Math teacher participants who volunteered, signed the forms to grant consent to be audio recorded during the focus

group session. The participants and researcher met in a conference room that provided an atmosphere for open discussion and dialogue. The researcher distributed the demographic information form for the teachers to complete before the focus group session began. The demographic information included the name of the participant, age, gender, ethnicity, number of years in position at middle school, title, level of education, and country of origin. From a global perspective, the researcher used the country of origin data in the teacher demographics to determine differing points of view for those teachers born in the U.S. and those who were foreign born.

The participants in the teacher focus group were seven female teachers between the ages of 30-49 years of which six were African Americans and one teacher was of Asian descent. The three male teachers were between the ages of 20-59 years and were of Caucasian descent. All of the participants acquired their master's degree. The number of years in the position at the middle school ranged from one year to 17 years (Table 4.2). The researcher informed the participants that their participation was strictly voluntary and that there were no consequences for non-participation or withdrawal at any time during the study.

Student participants in this study were assigned to either of two focus groups - Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 based on their Leadership Characteristic scores (higher/lower scores) as stated earlier (Tables 4.3 and 4.4). The parents signed consent forms and the students signed assent forms were given to the researcher prior to the study. The researcher informed the student participants that their participation was strictly voluntary and that there were no consequences for non-participation or withdrawal at any

time during the study. The researcher gave a $10.00 gift certificate to students who

voluntary participated in the study.

Table 4.2

Teachers Demographic Information

Teacher Participant	Gender	Ethnicity	Years in Position	Title	Level of Education	Country of Origin	Age Range			
							20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
B1	F	African American	13	Math teacher	MA	Jamaica			X	
B2	F	African American	2	ELA teacher	MA	USA		X		
B3	M	Caucasian	1	ELA teacher	MA	USA	X			
B4	F	African American	8	Math teacher	MA	USA		X		
B5	F	African American	17	ELA teacher	MA	USA			X	
B6	F	African American	8	ELA teacher	MA	Jamaica			X	
B7	M	Caucasian	11	ELA teacher	MA	USA		X		
B8	F	African American	14	Math teacher	MA	Jamaica			X	
B9	M	Caucasian	8.5	Math teacher	MA	USA				X
B10	F	Asian	10	ELA teacher	MA	Philippines			X	

Table 4.3

Student Demographic Focus Group 1 – Leadership Scale Lower Scoring Students

Student Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade	Age	Years at School	Siblings	Participant Rank in the Family	Lives With
C1	M	African American	6	11	1 year 7 months	2	Middle	Mom/dad grandfather/siblings
C2	M	African American	6	12	1	1	Oldest	Mom/dad/brother
C3	F	African American	6	12	3	0	Only child	Mom/dad/grandfather
C4	F	African American	6	10	1	4	Youngest	Mom/dad
C5	F	African American	6	11	1	2	Middle	Mom/dad/ siblings
C6	F	African American	6	11	1	3	Youngest	Mom/dad/siblings
C7	M	Hispanic	7	12	1	1	Oldest	Grandparents aunt, uncle, sister
C8	M	African American	8	13	2	5	Oldest	Dad/brother/cousins/ grandmother/aunt
C9	M	African American	6	11	6 months	1	Oldest	Mom
C10	F	African American	8	13	3	1	Youngest	Dad/stepmother

Table 4.4

Student Demographic Focus Group 2 – Leadership Scale Higher Scoring Students

Student Participants	Gender	Ethnicity	Grade	Age	Years at School	Siblings	Participants Rank in the Family	Lives With
C11	F	African American	7	13	2	4	Second	Mom/dad/siblings
C12	M	Hispanic	8	13	1	2	Middle	Mom/siblings
C13	M	African American	8	14	2	1	Oldest	Mom/dad/siblings
C14	F	African American	7	13	2	2	Middle	Grandmother/aunt
C15	F	Indian	7	12	2	2	Youngest	Mom/dad/siblings/ grandparents
C16	F	African American	6	11	1	3	Second	Mom/dad
C17	M	African American	8	13	2	5	Middle	Mom/siblings
C18	F	African American	7	13	2	2	Middle	Mom/dad/siblings
C19	F	Hispanic	7	12	2	6	Middle	Mom/stepfather/ siblings
C20	F	African American	7	13	2	0	Only child	Mom
C21	F	African American	7	13	2	2	Middle	Mom/dad/siblings
C22	M	African American	6	11	1	3	Youngest	Mom/dad

Twenty-two students participated in the focus groups. In the focus group of

students with lower scores on the Leadership Scale (34 and below), there were 10

students (Table 4.3). There were 12 students in the focus group of students with higher

scores on the Leadership Scale (35 and above). The age range of the student participants

were 10-14 years old (Tables 4.3and 4.4). The students were of diverse backgrounds,

which reflected the school's population and location. Of the total number of students, 15

were African American with Caribbean and South-American parentage, six students were

Hispanic, and one student was of Indian background. In birth order, the data showed that

eight students were the middle child, five were the oldest, five were the youngest, two

were the second, and two had no siblings. The number of students' siblings ranged from

zero to six years in age. Students noted their birth order and number of siblings on the

demographic data. This information was requested to determine whether there was a

relationship between birth order and perceived leadership skills, which is discussed

further in the analysis section of this chapter. Many of the students resided with both

parents and siblings, while some resided with a single parent and siblings. Other students

resided with family members that included a stepmother or stepfather, grandparent/s,

aunt, cousins, or uncle.

Interviews and focus groups data. In order to document the responses, the

researcher used a digital recorder to capture the data for accuracy during the focus group

and interview sessions. The interviews and focus groups were conducted at the

researcher's middle school study site. All data transcriptions were completed in mid-

March 2015. The researcher's first choice was to utilize NVivo software to code the data.

However, the desire to work closely with the data provided added meaning to the study.

The researcher worked with an alternate coder as a backup for the reliability of the findings. Hence, the researcher coded the data for themes by hand.

The three focus groups and two interviews were conducted from mid-February 2015 to early March 2015. There was one focus group of ELA and Math teachers and two student focus groups. As previously noted, students were placed in one of two focus groups based on their teachers' perceived Leadership Characteristics Scale scores. The SRBCSS, also known as the Renzulli-Hartman Scale, which includes a portion called Leadership Characteristics Scale was completed by the head teachers to score the potential leadership characteristics of their students in their grade 6-8 classes.

According to Purcell and Renzulli (1998), there are no national norms for the instrument so individuals can determine what scores are relevant and useful, based on the grade level of the students. The students whose total scores were 35 and above exhibited high leadership behaviors in the classroom (Table 4.3). Students who demonstrated lower leadership behaviors in the classroom scored 34 and below (Table 4.4).

The teachers rated the students by using seven questions pertaining to the students' leadership behaviors demonstrated in their classrooms. In summary, the areas the teachers rated with regard to perceived leadership were (a) Responsible Behaviors; (b) Respected by Others; (c) Self-Confidence with Peers; (d) Articulate; Strong Communicator; (e) Organized; Can Bring Structure to People/Situations; (f) Cooperative Behaviors; and (g) Directs Activities in a Group Setting. The answers were rated and scored with a number in the following categories:

1. Never

2. Very rarely

3. Rarely

4. Occasionally

5. Frequently

6. Always

Students who received ratings in the frequently (5) and always (6) column received higher scores. In calculating the higher scorers, this meant that seven questions times a score of six equals a score of 42; seven questions times a score of five, equals a score of 35. Thus, those who scored 35 or above were noted to be higher scorers on the Leadership Scale.

Data Analysis and Findings

A review of the data gave the researcher in-depth knowledge and insights on the importance of leadership development of students in the middle school setting. The researcher highlighted key components from the interviews and focus group sessions that demonstrated the importance of developing leadership skills of middle school students from the perspective of administrators, teachers, and students. The research questions were used to outline the information gathered during the data collection.

Research question 1. Why is it important to enhance leadership development in middle school curriculum? The interviews and focus groups transcripts revealed three themes that were expressed by the administrators, teachers, and students pertaining to why leadership development of students was important. Table 4.5 indicates the themes and sub-themes that were generated from the administrators' interviews and the three

focus groups (teacher and two student focus groups). For the purpose of clarification, the letter "A" in the tables refers to answers generated from the administrators. The letter "B" indicates answers generated from the teacher focus group, and the letter "C" indicates answers generated from the student focus groups.

The findings revealed (Table 4.5) that administrators, teachers, and students believe that leadership skills development should be added to the middle school curriculum for various reasons. Participant A2 indicated,

> Leadership is important and students should not just be taught academics but to be leaders in their own right, so that other students around them can see and learn from that leadership. When you look at the students who will be the future of tomorrow, you think of them as being leaders, so it is very important to develop that leadership skill here in the middle school so that it goes on with them in the adult life. Student participants also see the long-term effects of the development of leadership skills in middle school.

Participant C12 said,

> I think leaders should be developed in middle school because then those leaders could pass it down to maybe to their younger siblings if they have some and also the dropout rate decreases because now more people will be going to high school and thinking about their future.

Participant C8 concurred and said, "Because it gets us ready for college and life ahead of us."

Participant C1 said, "Middle school is when you now start to become a young adult so if you become a leader at this age then you will do better in life."

Participant C7 saw the enhancement of leadership skills in middle school as positive for their school environment. Participant C7 said, "So that we can make the school better, the more good leaders they are, the better the school will be."

Participant C9 concurred but added that academic growth and structure as benefits to leadership development, "It will help us to be more focused and educated and middle school, um, is like a new fresh start kind a like getting things together." Although the teacher participants believed that the classroom and school environment should be the focal point in the enhancement of the students' leadership development, they saw parental involvement and external environments as a challenge. Participant B1 indicated,

Some of our students are really coming from challenging environments. Some may be reserved while others may be explosive, right. We have some students coming from backgrounds where parents instill leadership within them so they try to display the same type of character, and in other students, there are no form of exposure, no push, no encouragement, no positive feedback. There is no one to push them into that role so we try to work with them to develop their leadership skills that will give them self-confidence to move forward."

Participant B8 agreed and stated that,

I see self-confidence in those students who take on leadership roles. Apparently, the environment in which they grow up in, they are allowed a certain amount of freedom to speak, they are commended, they are always given positive feedback as appose to those who are shy and reserved. For example, I spoke to a student who was really shy and uncomfortable with even speaking and I realized that he has been told that, listen, you are not worth much, and you can't do anything. So,

he became withdrawn and as a result unsure of himself and is unable to even

speak or answer questions in class because of the lack of self-confidence.

Participant C17 said,

It is important to develop leadership skills in middle school because some

students probably do not have a person at home to motivate them that will make

them more persistent if they want to have leadership skills and don't want to be a

follower.

Participant C18 noted that, "Leadership skills development gets us ready for our

future so that we can reach our goals that we planned." Students articulated their life

visions as a way to sum up the importance of developing leadership in their middle

school years that expressed the goals of the educational system. Participant C14 said,

"Leadership skills will develop better leaders in middle school because we need to have a

better world." Participant C8 indicated, "Because it gets us ready for college and life

ahead of us.

Table 4.5

Factors That Influenced Administrators, Teachers, and Students' Perspectives on the

Importance of Enhancing Leadership

Themes	Sub-Themes	Supporting Response
Desire to succeed	C: All students want to feel successful academically. C: All students want to feel successful socially. A/B: Teachers and administrators want the students to succeed and be productive in life and community.	C: Want to get good grades in level 3 and 4. C: Do more math and reading. C: Consistent in ELA. C: Motivated to do homework. C: Help classmates to reach their full potential and become good role model. C: Influence others to do good academically and socially. B: We help students to become more accountable and responsible by giving them ownership.
Confidence and self-esteem	B: Students want the attention from teachers. If they cannot get it positively they turn to acceptance from peers socially	B: Teach students to be responsible for their own academic success. C: Teachers are mainly the ones in the students' lives and help students to develop better character traits. A: Students are recognized and acknowledge for their hard work by being placed in the college pipeline program. Teacher sees the self-confidence level of students increase when they are assigned leadership roles.
Hunger for opportunity	B: Student want the opportunity to prove themselves as leaders B:Students residing in negative home-life situations see school as the only opportunity to prove themselves as positive leaders and role models	A: Students are assigned to special projects, like decorating the doors for Black History Month or helping with bulletin boards. B: Some students are coming from challenging environmental backgrounds, such as unstable family and social issues. B: Some of our students do not have anyone to model for them at home. A: We allow the students who come in and really want to lead to take ownership of the projects we assign to them.

Note: A = Administrators; B = Teachers; (C) = Students

In analyzing the data gathered from research question 1, the researcher found that although the themes derived from the findings outlined in Table 4.5 speak to the need to develop leadership skills in middle school, the findings revealed there are barriers, obstacles, and limited scope in how student leadership skills are developed in middle school (Table 4.6). The core curriculum is a priority in middle schools and must be adhered to, based on the New York State Common Core Standards. This core curriculum provides limited leadership skills development topics, practical applications, and materials to teach middle school students. According to participant A1,

Middle school is a specialized school transitioning from elementary school, which was a generalized school; therefore, we have to adhere to the New York State Standards. We have to adhere to the core curriculum and teachers must prepare students for the proficiency test.

Students are faced with other deterrents such as the students' own inhibited social behaviors which styme their leadership skills development growth process. Participant B 6 said,

Students are hung up on who likes them, um, what's the main craze, who is wearing what, the hair dos, and it is not only the girls, these might sound like a gender issue but the boys have their own issues.

Students are also faced with the social problem of negative peer following in and out of the school environment. Participant C17 said, "Some student followers will change themselves for others and just do anything to fit in and if someone tells them to do something, they will do it even though they know the negative consequences." Participant B3 indicated that,

Middle school is where a lot of students tend to fit in with the peer group or be what they perceived as whatever idea of *cool* is, where the leader emerges as the people who are confident in themselves and of their choices and others tend to follow that confidence and kind of rally behind it.

Participant C13 gave an opinion based on observation:

A lot of students and people that I know are easily affected by others because they believe they are *cool*, like they are a part of the crowd and they want to be part of that crowd so they go out and do things that they would not normally do. Maybe skipping school, doing drugs, things like that, um, different, different things, that goes on in the school that not a lot of people think will happen because it is like, people that are twelve years maybe fifteen and that stuff that should not be happening. Not doing their homework and little stuff like that leads to you getting into trouble and going to jail and stuff like that because you are not good at listening to your parents and following the wrong people instead of trying to follow the right people.

Table 4.6

Barriers That Hinder Leadership Skills Development

Themes	Sub-Themes	Supporting Responses
Restraints on school leaders that pose limitation to the leadership skills development of students	A: Middle school must focus and adhere to the New York State Common Core Standards and core curriculum	A: Adhere to the NYS Standards test so that students can pass the test.
Student personal appearance insecurities	B: Personal image: clothing, personal appearance, etc.	B: Adolescence is a fragile stage where students are developing and they are very self-conscious, self-aware of the way they look physically
Social and group affiliation	B: Student followers desire to fit in, want to be popular and famous. Followers need to be accepted into groups. B: The *cool* kid syndrome	B: Some students are intimidated or want to fit in with their friends and join a group while others think it would make them *cooler*

Note: A = Administrators; B = Teachers; C = Students

Research question 2. How is leadership enhanced in the middle school

setting? The themes that emerged were responsibility and teachable moments

(Table 4.6). Teachers' observation of students showed that when students were assigned

to various tasks, they were eager to demonstrate leadership responsibilities by following

through on assignment. Participant B10 proudly said, "We have a media internal

television station and the students are asked to say something about a topic and for the

most part, you know, they are able to express themselves." Students are asked to assist

their peers in the classroom who are slower at learning. Participant A1 believed that

through group work and through engagement, those students could increase their vocabulary, and their conversation skills could be enhanced. This would help and encourage the students. We asked the teachers to arrange the seating to mix the students who are ahead with those who need some extra assistance with their work. Seating arrangement in classrooms is critical to learning.

Another way leadership skills were enhanced in the students was by resolving their issues through conflict resolution and problem-solving skill sessions with the guidance counselor. Participant A2 said,

> We allow students to talk and voice their opinions and in doing so, the others are able to hear and engage in the dialogue by commenting on what the students are saying especially in our guidance setting. Students will sit in groups and talk about what is happening to them and others and they try to resolve that, and the guidance counselor is more of a facilitator listing and allowing the students to really solve their problems.

Teachers also used opportune moments to teach leadership when issues arose in the classroom. Participant B9 said assertively that,

> Teachers have helped students in their classrooms through discussions to see the importance of taking responsibility for their schoolwork and for those who are receptive to that kind of development their leadership can be a positive force on other students.

Table 4.7

Factors that Influenced Student, Teacher, and Administrators' Perspectives on

Leadership Skills Enhancement in the Middle School Setting

Themes	Sub-Themes	Supporting Response
Responsibility	B: Students need and want a chance to show and demonstrate that they are responsible and can be accountable	B: Students are assigned to host various educational segments on the school's internal television network station in the school A: Students are assigned roles as table team leaders during lunch in cafeteria
Teachable moment	A: Guidance counselors provide an opportunity for conflict resolution through group discussion. B: Teachers use classroom discussions as problem solving solutions A: Administrators provide a platform for students to meet guest speakers who are professionals A: Administrators plan field trips for students to learn and grow	A: Students are given opportunities to resolve disputes through peer-to-peer interactions. B: Teachers use the classroom for teachable moment to instill leadership dynamics through dialogue to resolve issues in the classroom. A: Guest speakers from Colleges speak to students to motivate them for college and career readiness A: Field trips provide students the opportunity to expand beyond community

Note: A = Administrators; B = Teachers; C = Students

Research question 3. What methods can be used to enhance leadership skills in adolescents? Some focus group participants, as well as interview participants, believed that demonstrating exemplary leadership skills in the classroom and school environment are important as it gives the students an opportunity to emulate those skills. Participant C1 said, "Because, since the teachers should know how leadership is supposed to be, so they lead the class to success so they spend more time with the

students so that the students can be like them as a leader." Some teachers used implied teaching of leadership in the classroom by using examples from textbooks. Participant B7, in a crisp tone stated,

> I don't believe that we explicitly instruct that we teach leadership skills in an ELA sense. We sort of imply it through the curriculum. We read a book in 7th grade: *A Long Walk to Water.* It's about a boy who grew up in the Sudanese civil war and he winds up leading groups of thousands of other children involved and plan and play together demonstrating volunteerism and heroism. The curriculum sort of uses it as an example of how a child who seem typical and very average by any other means um, and then wind up as somebody who is an extraordinary leader and embody qualities that I guess, um, we know that teachers would like to see in our students. For example, perseverance, compassion, and a kind of dedication that protagonist infuses or embodies and transfers over to our kids.

Participant A1 said,

> We invite our graduates back to speak to the students to help them to be motivated and sometimes we have leaders and professionals from Colleges to speak to the students to encourage them so we expose them to environments that allow them to see professionals in the real world.

Table 4.8

Methods Used to Enhance Leadership Skills in Adolescents

Themes	Sub-Themes	Supporting Response
Academic materials/people used as a catalyst	Academically – the book, *Long Walk to Water*. A: Guidance counselor interventions with students- problem solving skills	B: Young leader that embodies the qualities of great leadership qualities A: Students learn how to resolve conflicts
Provide opportunities for ownership and accountability	A: Guest speaker: motivational and inspirational sessions C: Students expect teachers to be a good example and support system. A: Assigning leadership roles to students – cafeteria and media Peer group support.	C: Students are empowered through examples of action
Student acknowledgement	B: Middle school students thrive on praise. C: Students feel a good leader helps others.	B: Recognize and acknowledge the students' efforts in and out of classroom setting

Note: A = Administrators; B = Teachers; C = Students

Research question 4. What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders and why do you think those skills are apparent in some students and not in others? In answering the question (Table 4.9), Participant A2 said,

What I have noticed that those students who are capable leaders come in and really want to lead. We can see that in them and you allow them to really take ownership of what they are doing, and the other students will see this and they will apply themselves also.

Table 4.9

Characteristics Inherent in Middle School Leaders That Are Apparent in Some Students and Not in Others

Themes	Sub-Themes	Supporting Response
Confidence Level	C: Good grades raise confidence Bad grades decreases confidence and self-worth B: Home life environment - parent engagement A: Administration provide avenue for parent engagement	C:Students will not feel ashamed to answer questions in the classroom A: The school is parent friendly and parents are informed of various meetings. A: Working to increase parent participation.
Natural abilities Intrinsic	C: Student ability to think for self B: Teacher and administration have an easier time teaching leadership to these students C: Students who do not feel they have leadership skills want to learn them	C: Want to make smart decisions C: Students focused on learning C: Student is motivated and consistent C: Will help other students to be focused
Incentive/Rewards	Teachers and administrators try to provide them for students C: Students need the attention B: Teachers vocalize praise and give support to students for trying	A: Students are recognized for their good work by administrators and teachers at various activities
Leadership skills in some and not in others	C: Student want to fit in a group	B: Teachable moments to help students differentiate positive and negative peer followership
Low self-esteem and self confidence	C: Student focus on personal appearance	
Negative peer involvement	B/C: Cool Kids syndrome	B: Rewarding students with responsibility and praise to keep them focused on doing what is right.

Note: A = Administrators; B = Teachers; C = Students

Participant B6 interjected that there are positive and negative leaders in the school environment. B6 said,

> The leaders that are not positive, these are the ones who influence the students to do negative things, encourage kids to cut out of um, their classes, roam the hallway. They are the *cool* kids and for them learning is not *cool*, and being smart is not *cool*. Having the latest sneakers is *cool*, speaking your mind and being disrespectful to an adult is *cool*, and so for so many kids they want to be *cool*, so they do the things they think make them *cool*. These negative leaders are very charismatic, they are well liked, some are outright bullies, but they are a mixed group and, you are finding that they are very vocal, they are not self-conscious, they have high levels of self-confidence and so it's just being used for the wrong thing, but it is present here."

Appearance of students can play a role in their desire to engage in leadership activities as participant B8 said,

> Adolescence is a fragile stage where students are developing and they are very self-conscious, self-aware of the way they look physically, and I think that may be a deterrent to some students when it comes to them taking on leadership roles. They are conscious . . . the girls are conscious of how their hair look, they are conscious about the clothes they wear, the sneakers on their feet, so they are really aware of the way they look at this age. Sometimes, I believe that if they don't think that they are wearing what is most fashionable, they will just be hiding somewhere in the corner. They are afraid that others may probably laugh at them and so that could be a deterrent to some students who really want to get involve,

lead and be part of. So that stage where they are developing, I think, has a significant effect on them taking on these roles. Because, the student who believes that they are nicely dressed and in the latest pair of sneakers and the nice clothes, they are going to get up there and do it because they want to show off what they are wearing. So that could enhance the physical appearance and could enhance leadership qualities, leadership roles whatever they do in public as well as it could be a deterrent from them taking on these leadership roles.

Students focus groups. As indicated earlier in this chapter, the researcher used two student focus groups for data collection, student Focus Group 1, the lower scoring group and student Focus Group 2 the higher scoring group (Tables 4.3 and 4.4). The researcher compared and contrasted student responses to research question 4 to determine the similarities and difference of their responses to research questions based on their leadership scale scores. The two-part research question was used to compare and contrast the students findings relating to their answers to the question, "What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders, and why do you think those skills are apparent in some students and not in others?" The findings revealed that there were differences in students' responses to the question. Focus Group 1 saw consistency, good grades, and being focused as their overall themes. While the Focus Group 2 themes were: independently driven, focused, study, and challenging themselves more, to work harder and to become successful. Additionally, Focus Group 1 understood leadership skills to be the achievement of good grades. They saw themselves as leaders and understood leaders to be benevolent, to help others to be successful, and to lead by example. Focus Group 2 saw themselves as leaders and followers but made a distinction about followership,

indicating that it is not bad if you choose good role models to follow. In reviewing the findings further, there were some significant differences in how leadership was perceived by the students who received higher scores in the focus group. The findings also revealed that participants in Focus Group 2 were able to fully define the characteristics of a leader as being a motivator, a team player, peer mentor, independently driven, and focused. Focus Group 1 defined leadership as helping and leading their team to success, to be focused, to be academically successful, and a team player.

Students in Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 viewed teachers as valuable sources in their lives academically and for their future goals (Table 4.11). The findings revealed that students view teachers as experts in leadership development who can help them to become successful. Participant C8 said, "I think teachers should take time building our leadership skills because some kids follow other students so that when the teacher teaches them about leadership they lead and can be better in life." Participant C18 said, "Teachers get us ready for our future so that we can reach our goals that we planned." Participant C 21 said that teachers have to deal with all types of students even the students who are going in the wrong direction:

> It is most likely there is at least one in their class so that person if you had developed leadership skills it would be a chance that they would not be there, they would most likely be one of their good student."

However, one student believed teachers should guide students to be leaders but within limits. Participant C 12 said,

> I do and don't believe that teachers should help students become leaders. I do, because they will need that push to finish their grades and to improve. But I also

don't think they should help too much because after you are over 18 and you

move out or go to college, you are not going to have that help with you and you

going to have to learn to do the stuff on your own. I want to develop leadership

skills independently but with not too much help from the teacher.

Table 4.10

Student Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 Responses to Characteristics Inherent in

Some Students and Not in Others

Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2
Helps their team to success.	Someone that takes charge and does the right thing without having to be told.
Leads their class to success.	Somebody that shows other students the right way to act and how to do their schoolwork.
Helps their fellow classmates reach their full potential and get through with what they need to get through.	A person who doesn't follow in anyone's footsteps but makes their own path.
Helps their fellow students with anything they need help with.	Someone who does not follow the wrong crowd.
Somebody who sets goals for themselves.	Someone that is in charge of something and is a leader not a follower.
Someone that gets good grades and level 3 and 4.	Someone that does not follow someone else.
Someone who helps someone to get better at what they do.	Someone who is able to show others what they are supposed to do, who is able to give an example to show people the right direction.
Somebody who corrects their classmates if they are slacking off and gets 3 and 4.	A particular person, and probably in an educational setting, that leads a group of children to a successful path or something that is productive and beneficial.
A person that leads the class to victory.	Is like a child that don't do what others do and follow themselves.
A person who leads others.	A person who follow what they want to do.
	Someone who is a very confident person who helps others and make sure they understand what they need to do.
	A person who takes leadership skills, for example, they guide people and they do good things to develop the people around them.

Participant C 13 vehemently disagreed with B12 and voiced his concern assertively. Participant C13 said,

I disagree with C12 because he is saying that we do not need someone to help us develop our leadership skills, which I believe is not right because everyone always need someone to teach them the way, to teach them what is wrong from right. Even some students especially in our school don't have parents or guardians that like care, like given up on them just because, like they made a few mistakes. But everyone makes mistakes at the same time they need someone that can teach us the proper way of doing things instead of getting in trouble and basically just leaving them alone.The findings show that teachers believed that through teachable moments they could guide students to leadership development by working with them various ways (Table 4.12).

In addition, as mentioned earlier, birth order of a child was not explored further in this research to determine significance. Based on further review of data, the researcher concluded that only a small percentage of higher scoring student participants were the oldest child in the family, which did not constitute a significant factor to be investigated further. A review of the demographic findings indicated that only one student participant in Focus Group 2 (higher scoring students) was the eldest child as compared to four students in Focus Group 1(lower scoring students). The researcher concluded that the sample was significantly small to determine a comparison. The researcher would recommend that further study be conducted to determine whether birth order plays a role in leadership skills development. Participant B4 in the teacher focus group indicated that birth order was a significant factor in her students who demonstrate leadership skills in

Table 4.11

Student Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 Perceptions of the Importance of Teachers in

Developing Leadership Skills

Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2
Since the teachers know how leadership is supposed to be, they lead the class to success.	I feel like teachers should spend time helping us develop our leadership skills to help us reach our highest goals and to help us see how far we can go in life. It also helps in other categories of life and stuff like that.
So the teacher can spend more time with the students so that the student can be like them as a leader.	I think because we need to develop a better character trait.
Teachers can teach leadership to improve students' grades and when they grow up, they will use those leadership skills with their children.	Teachers should spend time developing our leadership skills potential is because, like it is their job, and they are good at it, and they want the students to be great and be a leader.
Teachers can teach us leadership to help us to be successful in life.	So that the students cannot feel ashamed when they ask a question and they could like, they could like feel more confident in themselves.
Teachers are the ones who are mainly in the students' lives and without the teachers or anyone teaching the students their leadership, they can become a follower and end up on the wrong path.	Some people probably do not have a person to teach them leadership, so with teachers teaching them, they will be motivated and that will make them more persistent if they want to have leadership skills and don't want to be a follower.
Without teachers, students will not know what they will be able to do in the real world.	So people can learn lessons in life, later on in life the teacher can be proud of us, say hey that was my student, and maybe see us on TV one day and we will be a lawyer or something.
Teachers can help us with leadership so that we can improve and do better at what we want to become in life.	Teachers think that the students have leadership potential in them and they try to bring it out.
The teachers want to be closer to us and teach us more, because they see that we can do our work as some students do not do the work, and when we do succeed, then when the teachers meet us again, they will see that we have gone far to get there.	So that kids can act right when they go in other classes and they don't behave like animals, and they can do better work when they move on to the next school.
	Anyone can work up to their potential, but they want to work beyond their potential so that they can be successful in life and teachers help us to do that.

the classroom as opposed to those who do not exhibit leadership behaviors. This was the

teacher's observation based on experience in the classroom. Participant B4 said,

In reference to the dynamics of the family, you have some students who are the eldest child so they have a lot of responsibility. So being able to delegate things and handle things almost like a demi teacher or adult they bring these same skills into school and the classroom so I can trust certain students with a lot of responsibility because they do that at home so that is something that we have here, too.

Summary of Results

The findings revealed that students believed strongly that teachers played a significant role in their lives and the students relied heavily on the teachers daily to develop their leadership skills and academic growth and to show them the way of life. The findings also showed that efforts were made by administrators and teachers at this middle school to assign as many students to leadership tasks in the school setting in an effort to develop their leadership skills. However, additional findings revealed that not enough tasks are created or available to accommodate the many students who are eager to accept leadership assignments in and out of the classroom environment to develop their leadership skills.

The findings from the interviews with the administrators and the focus groups with the teachers revealed that all parties have a desire to develop the leadership skills of their students, but restraints on school leaders limit their ability to inject leadership development into classroom instructions more frequently. The findings also reveal that teachers used teachable moments to develop the leadership skills of their students since leadership skills development was not part of the curriculum.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This study examined the importance of developing leadership skills in grades 6-8 middle school students from the perspective of administrators, teachers, and students. In addition, the study explored the obstacles that impede the implementation of leadership skills development and the social and emotional challenges that students encounter during their early adolescent growth years. This chapter examines the implications of the findings, the limitations, recommendations for future research or actions based on the findings, and conclusions on the analysis and results of the study. A review of the data validates the study's dissertation problem statement. In addition, the theories that guided the study, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Downton, 1973) validate the results of the findings.

The research study outlined valuable insight and information from administrators, teachers, and students as to how leadership skills development is currently viewed and taught in the classroom. The review of the study's findings shows a consistency to previous research by scholars Des Marais et al., (2000), vanLinden and Fertman (1998), and Stephen and Kerns (2000). The research has shown that developing the leadership potential of early adolescent students enhances their self-esteem and self-confidence, leading to academic growth that drives them to accept leadership roles in their school environment (Rose-Krasnor et al., 2006; Sacks 2009). Steinberg (2005) believed that middle school is the best time to develop the leadership skills of students as they are

exposed to varied social environments that can make them susceptible to social risks. Sternberg indicated that developing adolescent leadership skills could prepare middle school students to embrace and understand their developmental stage, since they seek for and experience the challenges of independence and align themselves with new peer groups.

The researcher chose this topic because of the vulnerability of the young adolescent developmental stage of life and the positive or negative impact of peer influences that can either nurture or derail the future of young adolescents. As a young adolescent growing up in Guyana, South America in a small town in Mackenzie now known as Linden, and the sixth child of thirteen children, my parents, devout Catholics, taught us to be responsible and assigned us tasks that would develop our leadership skills. I was thrust into leadership roles as a young adolescent at home and to help my parents build their clothing and transportation business. My assignments at home were to assist my younger siblings with their schoolwork, as well as assist my older siblings with chores at home. Teachers also saw my leadership potential and assigned me chores in the classroom. My leadership development helped me to differentiate negative and positive followership. In my neighborhood, I saw the effects of negative peer followership and made a commitment as a teenager to help my peers to become positive followers and leaders.

I became involved in the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) where my leadership skills were further developed. I helped young adolescents to stay in school and engaged them in positive after school activities such as sewing, involvement in sports such as field hockey and other preventative measures that would assist them in becoming

responsible and productive young adults. I worked with other members of the CYO to collaborate with businesses, community groups and schools to sponsor youth concerts and community activities that would motivate, build self-esteem and self-confidence in my peers. In addition, we taught our peers civic responsibilities, time management, public speaking skills and the importance of staying in school.

My interactions with my peers provided them with the tools that positively transformed them into productive young adolescents. It is with this experience that I committed myself to become a leadership skills development coach for young adolescents. I continued on the path of leadership skills development of adolescents when I immigrated to the United States in 1974. Hence, my continued passion led me to conduct this study to add knowledge to the current field of leadership and adolescence in an effort to help the many young adolescent students who seek academic growth, leadership skills development and guidance.

Implications of Findings

Demographic information: birth order. As indicated earlier, the researcher's intent was to investigate the findings in the study to determine whether there was a direct correlation between first-born and perceived leadership potential. However, the sample of first-born students in this study was small and not significant enough to make a determination as to whether birth order made a difference in leadership behaviors. This researcher recommends that further study be conducted to determine the relationship between first-born children and leadership skills development.

Barriers to the development of leadership skills. The research problem statement in Chapter 1 outlined four barriers to the importance of leadership development

of middle school students. These barriers are: (a) New York State Common Core State Standards, (b) the teaching of leadership mainly through gifted and talented programs, (c) peer followership, and (d) the ambivalence of adults to assign tasks to adolescents for them to acquire leadership skills. A review of the data indicates that the barriers to the development of leadership skills related to the CCSS and peer followership were validated as barriers. However, information about the teaching of leadership to all students through the gifted and talented program and the ambivalence of adults to assign leadership tasks to adolescents were not evident as barriers in this study.

As discussed earlier, the first barrier that inhibits the enhancement of developing leadership skills in the middle school where the study was conducted is the New York State Common Core State Standards. The findings show that the NYS CCSS poses a barrier to the leadership skills development of students because teachers must focus on students' test scores. The findings in this study show that administrators and teachers must adhere to the New York CCSS and the core curriculum and prepare students for the standardized test. As participant A1 indicated, "Middle school must focus and adhere to the New York State Common Core Standards and core curriculum." According to the National Education Association (2015) the time spent coaching and proctoring students for the tests and revising the standardize test results consumes over 25% of the teachers' time.

Teachers indicated, through this study's research, that there is no leadership skills development curriculum in classroom instructions. However, students, at times, are exposed to leadership through task assignments from teachers and administrators— teachable moments, when applicable, during classroom instructions; motivational guest

speakers, when scheduled; classroom group discussion, when assigned; and the ELA curriculum where limited time is spent with teaching examples of leadership from various books used for the curriculum. Despite these limited efforts to develop student leadership skills, a concentrated leadership skills development classroom instructional time, encompassing theory and practical elements that include project development proficiencies and competencies in planning and development, and humanitarian projects that include people skills, can transfer to greater academic achievement. Although the findings indicate that students are assigned various leadership roles in the middle school, the barriers still provide a hurdle to the students' leadership skills development in the classroom. As participant B3 indicated,

> The biggest thing in leadership and adolescence, I think is if they don't get a chance to be leaders in adolescence, I think the odds of them becoming a leader in adulthood probably diminishes if they do not get to be a leader as they are growing up.

As stated earlier and warrants repeating in this chapter, the research shows that developing the leadership skills in adolescents helps improve their test scores and enriches students' academic growth, self-esteem, and self-worth, allowing them to develop priorities of importance into their lives (Stephens & Kerns, 2000). The implications in the findings show that student participants have a desire to succeed, and they want to be academically successful. Findings also reveal that students want good grades and want to achieve a Level 3 or a Level 4 on the Common Core State Standards exam. Students desire to be consistent in ELA, and many are motivated to do their

homework. In addition, teachers and administrators want the students to succeed and be productive in life; they want to help the students meet their full potential.

The second barrier, not corroborated by the sample participants in this study, inhibits the development of leadership skills of all middle school students. This barrier relates to gifted and talented programs in schools. According to Steinberg (2008), the gifted and talented program in middle school provides leadership skills development only to a small sub-group of students. However, if leadership is developed on a larger scale, then the general population of students should be provided with the necessary leadership skills needed to become future leaders. The findings in this study show that students who demonstrate leadership skills are in the college pipeline program. As Stephen and Kerns (2000) indicated, the federal definition of the gifted and talented student consistently reflects leadership abilities. The authors purported that leadership skills development demonstrably aids in the student's cognitive growth and in their development (Stephen & Kerns). It is hoped that efforts to open additional opportunities to all students to grow and develop their leadership skills will be implemented through the assignment of leadership tasks for all students. This will motivate students to improve their academic standing as indicated by the research. If efforts occur to develop leadership in students in the general population, then their cognitive skills competencies, social human skills growth, and problem-solving skills will develop so that they can become future leaders. In addition, as noted in the research, leadership skills development in full classroom instruction should be reviewed for consideration (Gardner, 1990; Katz, 1955; Mumford et al., 2000).

The third barrier to the development of leadership in middle schools is the followership syndrome. Self-imposed social barriers of middle school students through

peer followership inhibit the potential growth of students to become leaders. As stated in Chapters 1 and 2, Piaget (1965) indicated that during the adolescent growth period, the peer leader-follower relationship intensifies as many adolescents choose to follow their leadership peers for guidance and for the shaping of their lives, which, at times, put many peer followers at risk. Findings in this study reveal that peer followers are heavily influenced by the "cool kids syndrome." Many students want to be affiliated with the cool kids. However, data in this study indicate that the cool kids, according to participant B6,

Encourages kids to cut out of um, their classes, and cut out of school, roam the hallway and for them learning is not cool. Being smart is not cool. Being liked is cool, having on the latest sneakers is cool, um, speaking your mind and being really disrespectful to an adult is cool, and so for some kids they want to be cool, so they do the things they think make them cool.

This directly relates to the theory used in this study by Tajfel and Turner (1979), developers of social identity theory. As they noted, adolescents choose to become followers instead of leaders due to their desire for social discovery, and they define themselves through group identity.

According to the findings, teachers encourage leadership rather than followership with their students, by using what teachers call, "teachable moments" to help students who are seen as potential risks. Teacher participant B6 said,

There is no easy way out, you going to have to be tough, but more importantly you going to show them consistently that you really care about their success. Giving those disruptive students more leadership roles in the classroom and

allowing them to practice more positive things, you know, they are the ones that

you really build a bond with, and eventually if you remain consistent and patient,

you will see that kid turn around. It is not an overnight fix, it is a lot of emotional

investment and really, that is how I have seen for myself and proven that it can

turn some of them around. Some kids are far-gone, and then that is a whole other

issue but the most part the majority can be turned around.

The findings revealed that teachers in this study mirror examples of transformational

leadership theory when teachers show students, by example, their dedication and

commitment to transforming students in the middle school.

As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, transformational leaders (teachers, in this case)

guide followers through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual

stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Beauchamp & Morton, 2011;

Burns, 1978; Downton, 1973). Transformational leadership guides their followers to meet

or exceed their potential. The findings also reveal that students view teachers as

transformational leaders.

The implications address the need for teachers, as transformational leaders, to

emphasize the creation of a culture of positive peer followership to counteract or

eradicate the *cool* culture syndrome in the school environment. Scholars indicate that

student delinquent behaviors are spurred by students' lack of interest in school and

academics. Once forced into the school environment, they feel disconnected, prompting

them to seek out groups or individuals who share their commonality. Continual

assignment of leadership skills tasks to all students, to include at-risk students (*cool* kids)

will help them to legitimize a sense of self-worth among their peers and adults. This can

be the initial stage for the at-risk population to develop a culture of positive leadership and followership, which can ignite their interest in academics and school.

The fourth barrier to the development of leadership skills in the middle schools is the reluctance to assign substantive task to middle school students. Although this is not validated in the study, Gardner (1990) and Lerner (1995) concurred and argued that the educational system needs to provide leadership skills training in classroom instructions to teach all students. Resources should be directed toward the development of leadership skills of middle school students in an effort to transform them into productive, focused college and career ready leaders.

Research question 1. Why is it important to enhance leadership development in the middle school curriculum? Themes that emerged from this question were:

1. students' desire to succeed academically and socially, and teachers want them to be productive citizens

2. confidence and self-confidence

3. hunger for opportunity to develop through role models

Steinberg (2005) believed that middle school students are exposed to varied social environments and can be susceptible to social risks. He noted that preparing students to understand their alignment with peers would prepare them to embrace and understand the adolescent world. Tajfel and Turner (1971) indicated that peer followership and the desire for acceptance by peers is a journey of discovery of self. Adolescents are physically, socially, cognitively, and emotionally challenged during this stage of adolescent development. Middle school and its structure can provide the avenue for shaping students' behaviors through leadership and academic growth.

The findings also indicate that students are hungry for the opportunity to accept and complete tasks, become role models by helping their team to success, to "do good" in Math and ELA, to study harder, and to stay focused. Students are ready for the challenge to develop their leadership skills. The findings also note that teachers are transformational leaders in the students' lives. Students believe that without teachers, students would not know what to do in the real world. As the findings in this study reveal, some students feel that teachers are the only positive role model in their lives. As stated in Chapters 1 and 2 and demonstrated in the findings, transformational leadership through teaching and learning are vital for the emotional and academic growth of students. With the support of the administration, teachers work to improve the student academic performance and develop students to their maximum potential. The students value teachers and see them as role models to be emulated; teachers inspire and motivate students to do better, as is evident in the findings. Teachers provide a supportive and nurturing environment for their students. Teachers stimulate their students to become creative and innovative, leading them to expand and improve their value systems (Bass, 1998; Burns, 1978; Antonakis, 2012).

Research question 2. How is leadership development enhanced in the middle school setting? Two themes emerged from the findings related to this question. Participants believed that leadership in the middle school setting is enhanced when there are opportunities for students to develop responsible behaviors and when teachers utilize what they call, a "teachable moment." As indicated earlier, the teachable moments occur when teaching the curriculum and by using particular stories, or it occurs during times of conflict with social issues related to adolescence and their development. According to

Lerner (1995), in an effort to transform youth into productive, skilled adult leaders, the educational system needs to provide tasks assignment and leadership skills training in classroom instructions.

Research question 3. What methods can be used to enhance leadership skills in adolescents? From the data collection, three themes emerged. First, teachers felt that using academic material as a catalyst to enhance leadership development is one way leadership skills occur. Teachers believed that their only means of leadership skills development in the curriculum is the specific novels and stories that they read. In this instance, they discussed the characteristics of the character in the story who exemplified traits and skills of heroism and volunteerism that lead them to be effective, positive leaders.

In addition, according to the findings, teachers were seen as positive role models for the students. As one teacher participant indicated, middle school students thrive on praise, and it is vital that students are rewarded whenever a student does anything "leadership worthy," such as taking initiative and taking risks or sacrificing their personal reputation in the class by speaking up on issues that are not unanimously agreed upon. According to Stephen and Kerns (2000) and Hill (1980), young adolescents need avenues to be successful and to be recognized for their accomplishments.

Research question 4. What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders and why do you think those skill are apparent in some students and not in others? The themes that emerged from the interviews and the focus groups for this question included:

1. the importance of the confidence level of the students, which can be enhanced when they feel academically successful;

2. the students' natural ability to lead (intrinsic), providing incentives or rewards to instill leadership characteristics; and

3. students' desire to be "part of the crowd," and the desire for adolescents to focus on personal appearance and other factors, rather than those characteristics not necessarily observable.

These themes directly relate to the social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1971) and Piaget's (1965) scholarly findings. Piaget indicated that the adolescents' need for socialization is the growth process by which they use their group affiliation to identify and grow socially through their developmental process. Tajfel and Turner (1971) indicated that the adolescents need for socialization through groups to find their identity, to discover themselves, and to feel a sense of tribal affiliation of bonding, is an important growth during their developement stage. This adolescent growth process can thus inhibit them from becoming leaders since their desire to become a follower takes precedence. Cuseo (2002) indicated that peer friendship provides the adolescent with an opportunity for learning and development as well as providing a sense of companionship through their social development process.

As mentioned earlier in Chapters 1 and 2 and restated here for clarity, the findings in this study conducted by Tarrant (2002) in the United Kingdom revealed that as the adolescents bond with peer groups, they develop self-confidence, which was a result of their peer group affiliation. This supports Tajfel and Turner (1971) social identity theory. However, some researchers believe that this leads the adolescent to develop a false sense

of dependency for peer group affiliation. However, findings in this study also revealed that the self- confidence levels of students improved when they excel academically.

Student focus group responses to question 4. What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders and why do you think those skills are apparent in some students and not in others? The researcher set out to determine whether there were marked differences in the responses to question 4 from the student focus groups of those with lower and higher scores.

In reviewing the responses to research question 4 (Table 4.10) of Focus Group 1 (lowers scorers) and Focus Group 2 (higher scorers) the findings denoted similarities and differences in their responses to this question. The students in Focus Group 1 overwhelmingly demonstrated humanitarian efforts of service to others by wanting to help their team. In addition, they believed that leaders were those who acquired good grades. On the other hand, the Focus Group 2 students saw themselves as making their own path for others to follow which demonstrated leadership behaviors. In addition, they saw leaders as those who show others the "right way to act" and "encourage their peers to do their homework," which was not evident in the responses from the students in Focus Group 1. This validated the teachers' perceived leadership scores of the students, which qualified the students to be placed in Focus Group 2 (higher scores).

In further reviewing the responses of the two focus groups, the higher scoring students showed a desire to claim their independence as they moved through late adolescence (seventh and eighth graders). It is important to note that Focus Group 1 was heavily weighted by grade 6 students, while Focus Group 2 had a dominant number of grades 7 and 8 students. This researcher could infer that the students in Focus Group 1

was in their developmental stage of early adolescent thinking while the older students in Focus Group 2, show that they are more eager to claim their independence (Piaget, 1965). Scholars have indicated that as the adolescents' cognitive skills develop, they find their own identity that is distinct from their parents; some are becoming leaders, making their own decisions, pulling away from their parents and are increasingly seeking out peer involvement (Piaget, 1965; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Steinberg, 2005; Sacks, 2009).

Student perceptions of the importance of teachers in developing their leadership potential. In reviewing the findings, students believe that teachers are the leaders who can guide them to achieving their goals because their teachers recognize their potential. This builds the students' self-esteem and self-confidence. As transformational leaders, teachers provide the intellectual stimulation that allows the students to challenge themselves. Teachers continue to develop creative and innovative ways to transform and motivate their students. Teachers coach the students into bringing out their true potential (Bass, 1998, Burns, 1978; Northouse 2013). The findings in this study imply that students value their teachers for their contributions as an academic leader and for some students, the only positive leader in their lives. Hence, leadership skills development of students through classroom instruction can become the value-added tool for teachers, which will improve the student's self-esteem and academic growth (Gardner, 1987; Steinberg, 2005).

Limitations

There were a few limitations to this study. First, Focus Group 1 (Table 4.3) consisted of students from grade 6, which could have contributed to the results based on Piaget's Theory (1965); sixth graders are mainly concrete thinkers and are static in their

thought process. A more proportionate mix of students from seventh and eighth grades may have provided a different outcome. However, the findings still represent the voices of middle school students who speak honestly about the need for leadership skills development in classroom instructions and its impact on their growth and future lives.

A second limitation of the study was the sample size. As noted earlier, 22 students participated in two focus groups. One focus group consisted of 10 participants, and the second had 12 participants (Tables 4.3 and 4.4). Ten teachers participated in the teacher's focus group. In addition, two administrators were interviewed. The researcher used a stratified purposeful sampling, which focuses on individuals of specific subgroups of interest that require comparison. For example, Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 participants were placed in one of two focus groups based on high and low scores. This was an effort by the researcher to garner needed variations of thought from the participants so common themes could emerge. A larger sample size for this study may have reached saturation, leading to redundancy (Wolcott, 1990), or it could have provided different results.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations that can be gleaned from the data relating to the importance of developing leadership skills in grades 6-8 middle school students. The research shows that 85% of Americans believe that a serious leadership gap exists in the United States (Rosenthal et al., 2008). Parker and Begnaud (2004) urged the educational system to prepare adolescents to fill future leadership roles and to meet what they describe as a "leadership gap" in the job market. These recommendations include the following:

1. Develop a leadership curriculum that can be used with the general education population of students in middle schools. This can be used in conjunction with "teachable moments" that teachers say they use currently to enhance leadership in their students. Findings in this study revealed that teachers use teachable moments to expand the students' knowledge of leadership as well as an opportunity for teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers also believe that teachable moments help to deflect issues that can escalate in the classroom.

2. The implementation and development of a leadership curriculum for 21st century learners would give teachers an opportunity to fully plan lessons on leadership (practical and theoretical) for classroom instruction that can intensify the learning capabilities of the students' desire to learn and engage in their leadership skills development. Curricula such as these do exist, but many of them are used in gifted programs or in after-school programs.

3. Currently, the Virginia Board of Education has such a program that they use in their middle schools. They report that their adolescent students are being prepared for individual and group leadership skills development through the leadership development curriculum model they provide. The report notes that the leadership development curriculum identifies important processes, skills, and opportunities that promote leadership in all students. This framework allows teachers to embed leadership development into existing instruction.

4. Provide opportunities for students to enhance their self-esteem, thereby making them want to be leaders rather than followers. Low self-esteem is

often equated to bully behavior that is prevalent at the adolescent stage (National Association of School Psychologist, 2003). Presently in NYS, there are new laws and programs that schools must implement to ensure that "bully behavior" is not tolerated, and steps are in place to teach students how to make important decisions when faced with bullies. According to the American Medical Association (2002) a study of over 15,000 6th-10th graders indicate that around 3.7 million youths are involved in bully situations, and more than 3.2 million are victims of moderate or serious bullying every year.

5. Reports indicate that bullying thrives in an environment where students are likely to receive negative feedback and attention rather than in a positive school climate that promotes respect and sets high standards for interpersonal behavior. According to the report, some children become involved with a school or neighborhood peer group that advocates, supports, or promotes bullying behavior, and they want to join in order to "fit in," even if the group is not their peer group. The report further outline that children who are bullied or are victims of bullies are associated with school dropout, poor psychosocial adjustment, criminal activity, and other negative long-term consequences. Reports note that physical bullying peaks in middle school and declines in high school. Children who complain, appear physically or emotionally weak and who seek peer attention are usually targets of bullies (National Association of School Psychologist, 2003).

6. Through the review of findings in this study, this researcher discovered that many students spoke of and expressed a desire to emulate the "*cool* kids."

This can pose a threat to students and the school community. This researcher has highlighted the "*cool* kids" impact throughout this study to continue the enforcement and monitoring of student involvement. This researcher believes that additional leadership assignments to all students on a rotational basis and the development of their leadership skills to improve their self-worth and confidence can help to styme the students need to affiliate with the "*cool* kids." In addition, efforts to eliminate bullying through a no-nonsense policy at the school and through the encouragement of stakeholders and school leadership to forge a culture of respect, support and care for others should be continued.

7. Enhance leadership development through the CCSS. The findings in this study denote that, currently, teachable moments are teaching tools for developing leadership in students. In addition, students who are assigned roles by administrators or teachers are beneficiaries of leadership skill set development and improved self-esteem and confidence. Additional efforts to enhance student leadership can occur through creative planning through the assignment of tasks where all student strengths, talents, and skills are showcased and rewarded.

8. Enhance role models for middle school students. The findings indicate that at varied times, middle school students in this study meet positive peer role models (former students) who boost their moral and motivate to stay in school. In addition, adult guest speakers of varied professions visit the school to impart knowledge and support and prepare students for college and career

readiness. The findings reveal that students are eager to prove themselves through assigned tasks, and students want to be academically successful; they want to be leaders and positive peer followers. They want to help their peers do better academically. In addition, the findings showed that administrators and teachers want students to be successful. The continued positive peer interactions through avenues mentioned previously, the implementation of a leadership curriculum, and positive engagement of and with students can add to the enhancement of student academic and leadership growth and development through their adolescent developmental process (Bass, 1985; Beauchamp & Morton, 2011; Steinberg, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; vanLinden & Fertman, 1979).

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored the importance of developing the leadership skills of middle school students in grades 6-8 through the voices of administrators, teachers, and students. The findings highlighted the barriers to the teaching of leadership skills. The findings also clearly showed that it is the desire of all students to succeed academically and socially. Student confidence level increases with academic performance, building their self-esteem and motivating them to do more. The students strongly believed that teachers were their pillar of hope through their journey of academic excellence. Administrators and teachers wanted the students to succeed and provided avenues, within their jurisdiction, to fulfill their charge. The students wanted to prove that they were responsible and ready to take ownership of themselves. Some students were independent and motivated; others were followers who wanted to "fit in."

Scholars and research findings reveal that leadership skills development improves academic performance, builds self-esteem and self-confidence, and motivates students to continue on the upward spiral for college and career readiness. However, administrators and teachers are limited by the NYS Common Core State Standards that impose 25% of the teachers' time to prepare students for standardized testing.

The voices of the students tell the story of a readiness and thirst for leadership growth, for additional task assignments incorporated with academics, a thirst for students to prove themselves as responsible individuals through task assignments, and the need for leadership skills development to improve students' cognitive development, leading to academic success. In addition, stakeholders and policymakers can move steadfastly toward the implementation of a leadership skills development curriculum that can positively affect the lives of middle school students in grades 6-8.

All middle school students have the leadership skills potential that are eagerly awaiting an opportunity to be developed. It is only through a greater emphasis on this development that we, as a society, can make a marked improvement in our future, our students and for generations to come.

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Appendix A

Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students

(also known as: Renzulli Hartman Scale)

Students Name (or Assigned Code No.) _____
(Please fill in)

LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

The students demonstrate…	Never	Very Rarely	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
1. Responsible behavior, can be counted on to follow through on activities/projects						
2. A tendency to be respected by classmates						
3. The ability to articulate ideas and communicate well with others						
4. Self-confidence when interacting with age peers						
5. The ability to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations						
6. Cooperative behavior when working with others						
7. A tendency to direct an activity when he or she is involved with others						

Add Column Total:						
Multiply by Weight:	1	2	3	4	5	6
Add Weighted Column Totals:	✚	✚	✚	✚	✚	
Scale Total:						

Appendix B

Demographic Fact Sheet

Students

In order to gather data about each participant in the study, please check-off or write the information listed below about yourself. Although your name is on this document, it will not appear on any documents in the study.

Name_____

Age_____

Gender _____Male (Boy) _____Female (Girl)

Ethnicity _____African-American _____Hispanic _____Caucasian (White) _____Asian _____Indian ____Other (Specify)_____

Grade_____

Country Where You Were Born_____

Number of Years in the United States (if not born here)_____

Number of Years in this School_____

Number of Siblings
(Brothers/Sisters)_____
(write how many sisters and how many brothers)

Are you the oldest, youngest or in the middle in your birth order with your siblings?

_____

Who do you live with? _____Mother/Father and Siblings _____Other (Write who do you live with_____

Appendix C

Demographic Fact Sheet

Administrator/Teacher

In order to gather data about each participant in the study, please check-off or write the information listed below about yourself. Although your name is on this document, it will not appear on any documents in the study.

Name_____

Age   ____20-29   ____30-39   ____40-49   ____50-59   ____60-60
       ____+69

Present Position_____

Gender_____Male   _____Female

Marital Status ____Married ____Divorced _____Single ____Widowed

Number of Children_____

Ethnicity ____African-American ____Hispanic ____Caucasian ____Asian ____Indian
____Other(Specify)_____

Country Where You Were Born_____

Number   of   Years   in   the   United   States   (if   not   born   here)
_____

Number of Years in this Position_____

Number of Years in this School_____

Highest Level of Education_____ Bachelor's Degree _____Master's Degree
_____Doctoral Degree

Appendix H

Questions for Administrators' Interview

1. Why is it important to enhance leadership development in the middle school curriculum?

2. How is leadership development enhanced in the middle school setting?

3. What methods can be used to enhance leadership skills in adolescents?

4. What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders and why do you think those skills are apparent in some students and not in others?

5. How have you encouraged the development of leaders in your school?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about leadership skills related to adolescence?

Appendix I

Questions for Teacher Focus Group

1. What role does leadership skills development play in middle school curriculum and students' growth?

2. How is leadership development enhanced in the middle school setting?

3. What methods can be used (or do you use) to enhance leadership skills in adolescents?

4. What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders and why do you think those skills are apparent in some students and not in others?

5. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about leadership and adolescence?

Appendix J

Questions for Student Focus Groups

(High and Low scores)

1. What is a student leader?

2. What are the leadership qualities you like in a student leader?

3. What leadership skills would you like to develop in middle school that will help you
   to improve your test scores, motivate you, and enhance your self-confidence?

4. What leadership skills do you think makes someone a leader? Makes someone a
   follower rather than a leader?

5. Why do you think some students are influenced by others in the school to follow what
   they do?

6. Why do you think teachers should spend time developing your leadership potential?

7. Why do we need to develop leaders in middle school

8. Do you see yourself as a leader or as a follower? Why or Why not?

9. Do others see you as a leader or as a follower? Why or Why not and how do you
   know this?

Appendix K

Research Questions

The following research questions are the basis of this study:

1. Why is it important to enhance leadership development in the middle school curriculum?

2. How is leadership development enhanced in the middle school setting?

3. What methods can be used to enhance leadership skills in adolescents?

4. What characteristics are inherent in middle school leaders and why do you think those skills are apparent in some students and not in others?

Appendix L

Timeline For Dissertation Completion

PLAN OF ACTION	TIMELINE
Defend Dissertation Proposal	August 27, 2014
Complete IRB Forms	August 27, 2014
Obtain Approval from St. John Fisher	October 2014
Review NVivo Software	January 2015
Send Letters about Research to Teachers Administrators, Students/Parents	February/March 2015
Teachers Complete Renzulli Hartman Leadership Rating Scale	February 2015
Select Teacher and Student Participants For Study (Randomly Selected)	February/March 2015
Teachers and Students in Study Complete	February/March 2015
Demographic Questionnaire	February/March 2015
Arrange and Conduct Interview/Focus Groups	February/March 2015
Track Responses – Interview/ Focus Groups	February/March 2015
Compile and Analyze Data	March 2015
Complete Writing of Chapter 4 & 5	March/April 2015
Complete Writing Dissertation	April 2015
Defend Dissertation	April 2015

Appendix M

Student Assent Letter/Form

Dear Student in Grades 6, 7, and 8,

    I am a doctoral student in the Ed.D Program in Executive Leadership at St. John Fisher College. I am conducting a study at your school that will help teachers, administrators and your parents and peers understand the importance of developing leadership skills in Grades 6-8 middle schools students. Scholars say that developing leadership skills helps students improve their grades, develop their self- esteem and motivate them to stay focused in school.
This study is not a test and your answers are not right or wrong. You will be asked to voluntarily participate in a focus group at your school during school lunch hours. The focus group is not a school assignment and will not be graded by the teachers. The focus group will be audio recorded so that I can accurately reflect on what was discussed during the focus group. Your name will not be used in future writings. Your answers will be kept anonymous and confidential. You can refuse to participate at any time during the research because your decision to participate is voluntary.

    There is no consequence or risk involved with your decision not to participate. All participants will receive a $10 gift certificate to thank them for their voluntary participation.
The study involves asking questions in a small group of no more than 12 middle school students about their ideas about leadership development, who they perceive in their classes to be leaders and non-leaders and what kinds of activities they feel teachers could do to develop their leadership potential. Thank you for your assistance in helping to improve your grades and your school and in providing administrators, your parents and political leaders with your valuable answers to the questions.

    If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher at ▇▇▇
▇▇▇▇▇

Sincerely,
Esther Haynes Tross
Doctoral Candidate
St. John Fisher College

I read the above, received a copy of this letter, and agreed to participate in the focus group.

_____   _____
Signature (Participant)   Date

I also grant my permission to be audio recorded during the focus group. (Please print/ sign name and write date below)

_____   _____
Signature (Participant)   Date

St. John Fisher College
Institutional Review Board

Administrator/s and Teacher Consent Form

Title of study: The Importance of Developing Leadership Skills in Grades 6-8 Middle School Students

Name(s) of researcher(s): Esther Haynes Tross

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Josephine Moffett **Phone for further information:** ███
███

  Purpose of study: The purpose of this qualitative study seeks to understand the importance of enhancing leadership skills in students within the middle school setting. This study also seeks to gain insight and clarity from teachers, students and administrators pertaining to the what, why, and how of leadership development that exists currently and what needs to occur to enhance the middle school students' development to become leaders.

Place of study: ██████████████ Brooklyn

Length of participation: January 2015

Potential risks: There are no foreseeable risks anticipated by taking part in this study. Your child's name will be confidential and his/her identity will not be disclosed. Information you provided during the study will be stored in a safe place.

Potential benefits:
- The findings of the study will help teachers, other educators, researchers, students, and parents on how leadership skills development can make a positive difference in middle schools. Research shows that students whose leadership skills are developed achieve better grades, experience increased self-esteem and self- confidence, are motivated and focused, graduate from high school and are interested in pursuing higher education.

- Your opinion will be valued. The findings will disclose to educators, stakeholders, and policy makers the possibility for the enactment of leadership skills development in middle schools that will make a positive difference in the lives of students.

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: Your name will be coded with a number or letter to retain your confidentiality and anonymity. Information will be secured in a safe place.

Your rights:
As a research participant, you have the right to:
1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

Consent:

I, _____, consent to participation in the above named study. I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study. I understand that the results of this study may be shared at conferences, and published in journals and give my permission for use of any data collected from my participation to be included in such presentations and publications. I understand that my anonymity and confidentiality will be secured.

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Administrator/Teacher Participant)   Signature   Date

_____   _____   ____
Print name (Investigator)   Signature   Date

Permission to Audiotape my focus group/interview

I, the Administrator/teacher grant the researcher permission to audiotape the focus group/interview that I will attend.

_____   _____
_____
Print name (Administrator/teacher)   Signature   Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above at ████████████.

Thank you.

Appendix O

Parent Permission Letter
(For use with minors)

Dear Parent,

My name is Esther Haynes Tross. I am a doctoral candidate at St. John Fisher College. I am conducting a research study at Walt Whitman MS 246 as part of my requirement of my doctoral degree, and I would like to invite your child to participate.

The topic of my dissertation is the' Importance of Developing Leadership Skills of Grades 6th -8th Middle School Students'. In order to gather information on my topic, I will be conducting interviews with the administration (principal/assistant principals), a focus group with teachers, and more importantly, two focus groups with a randomly selected group of students to gain an understanding of their leadership perspectives. Scholars say that developing leadership skills helps students improve their grades, develops their self-esteem and motivates them to stay focused in school.

If you decide to allow your child to participate, your child will be asked to be part of a peer focus group discussion about leadership. In particular, they will be asked questions about student leadership and their thoughts on the characteristics of leadership. Your child will participate in the focus group at his/her school. The session will last about 30-45 minutes during the lunch period or if possible, after school (a unanimous choice to be made by the parents). The focus group will be audio recorded so that I can accurately reflect on what was discussed during the focus group. The researcher and transcriber will be reviewing the audio information. Your child's participation will be confidential. The study information will be kept in a secure location. The results of the study may be published and presented at professional meetings, and your child's identity will not be revealed. Privacy and confidentiality are respected and upheld.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have related to the study. If you need further information, please feel free to call me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or contact my Committee Chairperson, Dr. Jennifer Schulman at ▮▮▮▮▮▮

Thank you for your assistance in improving the leadership development of middle school students. Please find attached the consent form for your signature on behalf of your child's participation in the research study and additional information pertaining to the study. Also, please indicate with a check mark on the consent form whether you would like a copy of the findings (results).

 Sincerely,
Esther Haynes Tross
Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D. Executive Leadership
St. John Fisher College

St. John Fisher College
Institutional Review Board

Parent Consent Form
(for use with minors)

Title of study: The Importance of Developing Leadership Skills in Grades 6-8 Middle School Students

Name(s) of researcher(s): Esther Haynes Tross

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Josephine Moffett   **Phone for further information:** ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Purpose of study: This study is to investigate from your child's ideas and from the questions that guide the study, what are their feelings about the importance of developing leadership skills in middle school students.

Approval of study:

Place of study:– ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Length of participation: January 2015

Potential risks: There are no foreseeable risks anticipated by taking part in this study. Your child's name will be confidential and his/her identity will not be disclosed. Information your child provides during the study will be stored in a safe place. Through special coding, no names will appear anywhere on any documents so anonymity and confidentiality are maintained.
Potential benefits:
- The findings of the study will help your child and peers, educators, researchers, and can be used to initiate policy based on your child's feelings about leadership skills development in middle school and the benefits it provides. Benefits include helping your child to achieve better grades, develop your child's self-esteem and self- confidence, help him/her to stay focused to graduate and to move on to college to develop his/her career and to become a productive citizen.
- Your child will be empowered, as his/her opinion is valued. The findings will disclose to school personnel your child's opinion (without any names appearing) for possible enactment of leadership skills development that will make a positive difference

Method for protecting confidentiality/privacy: A special coding system will be used so that no names will appear on any documents in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Information will be secured in a safe place.

Your rights: As the parent/guardian of a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to allow your minor child to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you or your minor child.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

Consent for a minor child:
I, the parent of _____, a minor, _____ years of age, consent to his/her participation in the above named study. I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to have my child participate in the above-named study. I understand that the results of this study may be shared at conferences and published in journals and give my permission for use of any data collected from my child's participation to be included in such presentations and publications. I understand that my child's anonymity and confidentiality will be secured.

_____   _____
_____
Print name (Parent/Guardian)   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Child/Participant)   Signature   Date

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Investigator)   Signature   Date

Permission to Audiotape my child
I, the parent of _____, a minor, _____ years of age, grant the researcher permission to audio record the focus group that my child will attend.

_____   _____   _____
Print name (Parent/Guardian)   Signature   Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above at ███████████
Thank you.
Esther Haynes Tross
Doctoral Candidate
St. John Fisher College

Appendix Q

St John Fisher College
Institutional Review Board Study Approval

October 2014

███████████████

Esther Haynes-Tross
St. John Fisher College

Dear Ms. Haynes-Tross:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Expedited Review project, "The Importance of Developing Leadership Skills in Grades 6-8 Middle School Students."

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at irb@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Eileen Lynd-Balta

Eileen Lynd-Balta, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

ELB:jdr