

THESIS
3
2009

Michigan State
University

This is to certify that the
dissertation entitled

EXPERIENCES AND EXPRESSIONS OF POWER:
EMPOWERMENT IN A YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

presented by

TRAYMANESHA CHANTE MOORE

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

DOCTORAL

degree in

CURRICULUM, TEACHING,
AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Susan Florio-Ruane

Major Professor's Signature

December 12, 2008

Date

MSU is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer

PLACE IN RETURN BOX to remove this checkout from your record.
TO AVOID FINES return on or before date due.
MAY BE RECALLED with earlier due date if requested.

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
NOV 09 2010 01 17 11		
OCT 06 2013 07 02 13		

**EXPERIENCES AND EXPRESSIONS OF POWER:
EMPOWERMENT IN A YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

By

Traymanesha Chante Moore

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy

2008

ABSTRACT

EXPERIENCES AND EXPRESSIONS OF POWER: EMPOWERMENT IN A YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

By

Traymanesha Chante Moore

This dissertation explores a youth leadership development program for Black adolescents. The program selected for this study meets the following criteria: serves Black high school students, operates year around, has been in operation for more than three years, and incorporates youth leadership and empowerment in program goals and objectives. The purpose of this study is to analyze the perceptions of power in terms of the experiences of participants in a youth development program that explicitly states that its purpose or mission is to empower youth leaders. The following research questions are addressed: How do participants talk about leadership, power and empowerment within this youth leadership development program? What is the process by which a participant becomes an empowered youth leader within this program? The following data was collected for this study: transcribed audiotapes of focus group meetings and individual interviews with two program staff members and seven Youth Council members; programmatic documents (curriculum, goals, objectives, brochure, information packets, websites, etc.), and field notes of participant observation. The data was analyzed using methods of ethnography to develop grounded theory by means of constant comparison of evidence and data triangulation. The result is a case study developed by means of framing, testing, and revising themes and assertions derived from an analysis of the multiple data sources. The

study is conceptually framed using the sociopolitical development theory and theories on youth leadership and empowerment. The findings suggest that Leaders in Action participants talk about leadership in the context of their situated learning experiences with positional, relational, and transformational leadership. The process to becoming an empowered youth leader within the Leaders in Action program involves applying the knowledge, skills, and social networks gained from the sociopolitical leadership development process to transformational leadership roles within the family, home, school, community, etc.

Copyright by

TRAYMANESHA CHANTE MOORE

2008

Dedicated to every young person I have had the pleasure of working with.
You are my inspiration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my Creator for giving me life, and for blessing me with so many mentors, friends, and family members who have supported me throughout this process. I am eternally grateful for your grace and mercy.

I would like to thank my Advisor, Dr. Susan Florio-Ruane for your guidance and your unwavering support. I would have never made it through this without you.

My Committee Members, Dr. Joseph Featherstone, Monsignor William J. Linder, Dr. Sonya Gunnings-Moton, Dr. Mathew Diemer, and Dr. Samantha Caughlan, I could not have chosen a better group of intellectuals to walk with me through this scholarly journey.

Special thanks, to all of the participants in this study, for giving me the opportunity to listen to your stories and share them with the world. It has truly been a pleasure working with all of you and learning from your leadership experiences.

I would like to thank all of my friends at home in New Jersey and in Michigan. My surrogate sisters Marini Lee and Rashida Harrison, Money, Sherik, and Sylvester thanks for listening to me complain, watching me cry, and then telling me to get back to work. My Leadership Learning Circle, Ms. Kathy Spivey, Reverend Frances Teabout, Tammye Coles, Dr. Denise Maybank, the Michigan State University Black Student Alliance, and New Community Corporation in Newark, I've learned so much about leadership through my interactions with all of you.

You have empowered me to be a better leader, teacher, and mentor and I greatly appreciate you for it.

I would like to thank my loving family, Nana Mary Jo, Grandma Flo, My Daddy, Aunty Glo, Stepmom Sandy, Aunty Cissy, Aunty Debbie, Aunty Caroline, Uncle William, my Brother Brian, Sister Raychel, Cousin Michael and Tyree, and my Godmother Ms. Kathy Spivey for your love and support throughout my life. I would not have made it this far without all of you.

Last but not least, to my Mom, this is not just my degree this is Our Degree, I love you so much for giving me life, nurturing me, and then allowing me to evolve into my own woman. This dissertation is especially dedicated to my Great Grandma Mrs. Eddie Mae Davis and to my Goddaughter Jaila Inez Powell.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE	
EMPOWERMENT IN A YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Problem Statement.....	3
Rationale for Research Study.....	5
Linking Theories of Youth Leadership & Empowerment.....	7
Creating Alternative Spaces for Learning.....	9
Outline of Dissertation.....	17
CHAPTER TWO	
INVESTIGATING A YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM.....	21
Description of the Research.....	21
Research Questions.....	21
Setting & Research Participants.....	24
Research Methodology.....	27
Data Collection Techniques.....	28
Data Analysis & Reporting.....	33
CHAPTER THREE	
LEADERSHIP LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LIA PROGRAM.....	38
Description of the Foundation and the Leadership Program.....	38
In the Beginning.....	43
Organizational Overview.....	43
Vignette One: My First Encounter with Leaders in Action.....	50
Research Reflection and Commentary.....	55
Vignette Two: Becoming a Youth Council Member.....	57
Research Reflection and Commentary.....	61
Creating a Context for and Definition of Youth Leadership.....	62
CHAPTER FOUR	
EXPERIENCING POSITIONAL LEADERSHIP: "I WANT TO BE LIKE THEM".....	66
Changing Positions: From Delegates to Youth Council Members.....	68
Understanding the Power Limits of Leadership.....	77
Understanding Youth Role and Power.....	79
Differentiated Leadership Roles.....	86
Positional Leadership and Accountability.....	98
Conclusion.....	102

CHAPTER FIVE	
RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP	110
Uniting Behind a Mission and Vision for Youth Leadership	110
Creating a Space for Young Black Leaders to Network	111
Sharing Knowledge: Learning from Social Networks	117
Growing and Learning Together in the Youth Council	125
Learning How to Negotiate thru Relational Leadership Experiences	128
Conclusion	133
 CHAPTER SIX	
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP	138
Introduction	138
Discussing Culturally Relevant Topics	139
Leading, Loving, Saving, Serving	148
Learning Leadership and Experiencing Power	157
Passing the Baton	163
Youth Council Members Speak About Youth Empowerment	166
 CHAPTER SEVEN	
THE CALL TO ACTION & THE TOOLS NEEDED TO GO FURTHER	174
An Overview of the Research Study	174
An Evolving Theory on Sociopolitical Leadership Development	176
Empowered Youth Leaders	178
Implications for Further Research and Practice	181
 APPENDICES	 186
 REFERENCES	 192

LIST OF TABLES

The Big Questions....And Their Little Parts.....	22
Organizational Chart.....	45
The Study Design /Data Collection Method.....	186

LIST OF FIGURES

Constant Comparative Method & Data Triangulation.....	34
---	----

CHAPTER ONE

Empowerment in a Youth Leadership Program

Introduction

If you were to poll a group of adults and ask them about their youth, you'd probably find that almost everyone can recall a childhood experience they had growing up. These experiences may have been met with a little uncertainty, doubt, or confusion but yet in still they are experiences meaningful enough to one's growth and development that they are recalled months, years, and sometimes even decades later. Our experiences tell our story, they shed light on the world as we see it, and over time they show how our world is continuously being shaped by the people and the things that we encounter along the way. These experiences also describe our development and growth as young people into adulthood, and how our learning extends far beyond the school house doors.

However, little is known about the experiences that shape how youth come to learn and experience leadership. Moreover, we know little about those who have the opportunity to be involved in youth leadership programs. How do we come to understand who we are and what we are capable of doing? How is our knowledge of our capacity to lead connected to the actions in which we partake in throughout our lives? Young people grow and develop into unique beings grappling first and foremost with the very question of their existence: Who am I and what is my purpose? How we assist them through their path of self

discovery in many ways determines not only their growth and development but their ability to recognize their capacity to contribute to the growth and development of their community and society.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the experiences of young people and staff members in a youth program that focuses on empowering adolescents through youth leadership. This study seeks to understand how youth leadership and youth empowerment are interpreted and actualized by program participants using ethnographic research which includes interviews, observation notes, and an analysis of the written texts created by participants. By analyzing the distinctive and common experiences of program participants along with a review of programmatic documents and participant observations, this case study examines how youth leadership and empowerment are defined, explored, and assessed.

The research is based on the premise that it is important to assess the extent to which youth programs provide the skills and create the opportunities for adolescents to explore issues of power and experience leadership roles that will empower them as youth leaders in their community. The youth development program in this study explicitly states that its purpose or mission is to empower youth in order to develop youth leaders. However, this study is not an assessment in itself. Rather, it is an investigation of the process by which a program, that has been in existence for several years and has established a name and track record, enacts youth leadership development.

Problem Statement

This study acknowledges that although schooling represents an important experience in the life of young people, we cannot rely solely on schools to provide the learning environment for our youth; youth organizations/programs must also recognize their impact on youth development (McLaughlin, 2000). There are a wide range of youth development organizations (YDOs) offered for young people with multiple features and structures to assist adolescents through the youth development process, yet few YDOs are classified by researchers as *positive* youth development programs that build on the strengths of youth (Quinn, 1999). The positive youth development perspective asserts that “leadership development experiences are good for all youth, providing them with supportive relationships and opportunities to see themselves (and be seen by others) as having valuable contributions to make to the world” (MacNeil, 2006, p. 31). Whether or not youth programs contribute to positive youth development is questionable because youth programs are often criticized for their absence of clearly defined goals or objectives that explain how the programs develop young people (Halpern, 2000; Hirsch, et.al, 2000).

Research studies also suggest that there are a limited number of structured programs for youth. A self-conscious setting of goals and objectives, of norms and practices (i.e. of structure) is uncommon because youth programs have had a history of informal organization. Program staff members tend to fall

back on the program's philosophy of providing safe and comfortable programs for youth, which in some cases mean uncritical and/or challenging (Halpern, 2000). Scholars studying youth development organizations and programs argue that youth programs should offer something more by building on the strengths of youth participants within challenging yet nurturing programs that treat youth as authentic participants in their home communities (Quinn, 1999) and as positive resources for social change (Ginwright & Noguera, 2005). Such changes would enable the articulation of program standards, assessment of program effectiveness, and continuous improvement of program quality. When these rigors are absent, programs implicitly and explicitly communicate low expectations of their own potential to effect leadership development among young people and of young people's realistic expectations that they can learn to become authentic leaders in a variety of facets of their lives and society.

When youth organizations and programs hold low expectations they also miss the opportunity to create leadership positions for youth that allow them to participate in organizational governance. If young people are to be empowered they must begin to actively participate in social processes that govern their existence. As Shor argues, education is empowering when individual growth becomes an active, cooperative social process (1992). When low expectations are held of youth, both the program and their youth are negatively affected by reinforcing modest aspirations (Halpern, 2000).

Halpern found that a major concern about youth in youth development programs is that “there sometimes seemed to be a gap between who and what they were and who and what they might become” (Halpern, 2000, p. 503). In order to understand who youth are and the limitless possibilities of what they might become, youth programs must provide leadership opportunities and experiences that support the youth leadership development process. To fill this gap there also needs to be more research on youth development and leadership learning. Having access to leadership opportunities is essential for positive youth development (London, 2002), because it allows young people to play multiple roles in youth programs that will enhance their growth and leadership skills (Brice Heath, 2000). When youth leadership programs focus on providing positive developmental opportunities aspiring leaders can gain experiences that will help them become exceptional leaders (Kress, 2006). Research on existing leadership programs has value in that it can make visible the challenges, successes, and possibilities in order to create leadership development programs that empower young people.

Rationale for Research Study

Youth organizations need to do three things: (1) clearly define their goals and expectations; (2) assess and address the attitudes and beliefs held by program participants as a function of their participation; and (3) clarify the roles and responsibilities of youth within their programs (MacNeil & McClean, 2006).

The reciprocal developmental needs of young people and staff should be addressed using open communication as a tool to plan program activities (Hirsch, et. al, 2000) and assess program goals and objectives (Zeldin, 2004). Libby, Sedonaen, and Bliss (2006) argue that if program developers do not engage traditionally marginalized youth in the discussion of the program, program developers miss out on the benefits that can be gained from their expertise and the contribution of youth voices within the programs they occupy.

Halpern (2000) attempts to incorporate youth voices to describe the day-to-day activities of the young people, however he does not present a clear analysis of the goals and expectations of the program he studied in relation to the goals and expectations of youth participating in the program. His analysis further raises the question: How are we to assess whether or not youth development programs are actually impacting the development of young people, when these programs do not provide goals and objectives that identify which aspect of youth development they are focusing in on?

When I first began thinking about conducting this study, it was largely due to my background working as a program coordinator, curriculum developer, program evaluator, youth counselor/mentor, and volunteer in several youth leadership development programs. Having experienced youth leadership programs as a participant and an evaluator, I approached my research in hopes of uncovering the significance of youth leadership development from the perspective of youth participants.

As stated previously, this research study is based on the premise that it is important to understand the extent to which youth programs provide the skills and create the opportunities for adolescents to explore issues of power and experience leadership roles that will empower them as youth leaders in their community. The following section will describe how theories on youth leadership are linked to empowerment literature.

Linking Theories of Youth Leadership and Empowerment

Although youth leadership development is emerging as a topic of study in existing youth development literature, it has also undergone criticism surrounding the vague and often ambiguous concept of leadership presented in the studies (Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006; MacNeil, 2006; Kress, 2006). Some leadership theorists have argued that regardless of the leadership pathway a program provides, it is important that definitions of youth leadership also emphasize the importance of youth involvement within the decision making process (Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006). Unfortunately youth leadership development literature has focused predominately on leadership ability (skills, knowledge, and talents) while ignoring leadership authority (voice, influence, and decision-making power), which is more commonly found in adult leadership literature (MacNeil, 2006). It may be possible to learn from research on adult leadership as we attempt to clarify the concept of "leadership" in research on youth.

Adult leadership literature recognizes the importance of leadership and situates it in practice (MacNeil, 2006). This idea of leadership as a practice (or set of practices) is sometimes absent in youth leadership programs and in discussions of “leadership” as a goal of such programs. Building on the literature of adult leadership, we can investigate leadership among youth as an ability that can be acquired by teaching and learning, which encompasses a myriad of skills, concepts, and talents in social context. As such, learning to be a leader is a social, rhetorical, and interpersonal accomplishment as much as it is the exercise of individual effort, skill, or talent. However, there is not a lot of empirical research on the process of leadership learning as a situated activity. The situational approach to leadership advocated by Hersey and Blanchard (1969) acknowledges that leaders use directive and supportive leadership styles when adapting to different situations. The situational approach to leadership provides a theoretical approach to leadership development within organizations, and has also been criticized for its ambiguity and lack of empirical research (Northhouse, 2006). The proposed study aims to fill this gap in our knowledge of youth leadership development.

It is important to study authentic leadership among youth as they participate in youth development organizations (YDOs). This should be done because there is a need to discover grounded theory about how young people learn to lead. We also need to identify barriers to providing authentic leadership roles for youth in YDOs (MacNeil & McClean, 2006) to ensure that youth and

youth programs recognize the capacity of young people to lead their communities now (MacNeil & McClean, 2006; Matsudaira & Jefferson, 2006). This is a dimension of leadership which involves not only individual motivation and personal skill, but the capacity to work culturally, socially, and politically to articulate and advance leadership goals. For this reason it is important to study youth leadership development in a social context and as both an individual and collective process of teaching and learning.

Creating Alternative Spaces for Learning Leadership

Northouse presents several key elements that describe leadership as a phenomenon: "leadership is a process, leadership involves influence, leadership occurs within a group context, and leadership involves goal attainment" (2006, p.3). The literature on youth development also suggests that, "leadership consists of skills, experiences, needs, and motivations and is a long and cumulative effort, not the single act of one individual who may serve as a catalyst of action" (Kress, 2006, pg. 52; Klau, 2006; MacNeil & McClean, 2006; Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006). These definitions of leadership as a process suggest that leadership is a learning experience. If we are to move towards theories of youth leadership development for all youth, scholars must urge youth leadership programs to be more specific regarding the leadership pathways they choose to implement instead of adopting the trait approach to leadership.

The trait approach focuses exclusively on the "great man theories" describing the qualities and character traits of exemplary leaders (Bass, 1990;

Jago, 1982, Northhouse, 2006). The character trait theory on leadership suggests that some people have distinguishable leadership characteristics that they are born with and some do not (Libby, Sedonaen, & Bliss, 2006; MacNeil, 2006). When the character trait theory of youth leadership is called into question we can probe more deeply into the nature vs. nurture perspectives on youth leadership. In order to advocate for youth leadership as a developmental process, youth leadership programs need to be able to describe the leadership learning experiences that exist within youth development programs and provide a more pluralistic approach to leadership. A pluralistic approach to leadership may ensure that all participants are given an opportunity to experience nurturing leadership roles and leadership skills that develop and enhance their natural leadership abilities.

In attempts to understand the leadership development phenomenon, leadership theorists (Astin & Astin, 1996; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998; Northhouse, 2006) have created leadership development models for adult centered organizations and universities. Meanwhile developmental models describing the leadership development process for youth are obsolete. The sociopolitical development model has, however, been used to describe the development of youth in youth organizations (Ginwright & James, 2002). This section will explain the rationale for an evolving theory on youth leadership development and provide a brief overview of the interconnecting relationship

between youth leadership and the sociopolitical development of young people in youth organizations.

Creating youth leadership empowerment programs would require a different outlook on youth leadership that incorporates empowerment as a key aspect of the leadership development program. Sociopolitical development (SPD) provides a framework for investigating issues of power and empowerment within youth leadership development programs. This theory challenges youth to explore their identity in relation to the larger sociopolitical context of power in which they exist. SPD urges youth development programs to recognize that urban youth face an array of social, political, and economic barriers to their participation in society (Ginwright & James, 2002). The SPD process attempts to formulate a more critical understanding of the viable forces that impact the youth development process by interconnecting oppression, social justice, and youth development (Watts & Guessous, 2006).

Awareness of oppression and social justice are also key components of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a process that involves empowering followers by making them conscious of their ability to impact change by focusing on the needs of others (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2006). In this study transformational leadership is described as a process that also involves understanding both positional and relational leadership roles for youth in youth leadership programs.

Positional leadership describes both the assigned leadership role in a group or organization as well as the emergent leadership role, which is based on the perceptions others have of your leadership ability or capacity (Fisher, 1974; Northouse, 2006). Within positional leadership there are discussions of leadership power. Northouse (2006) describes the positional power that comes with organizational ranking and the personal power leaders derive from their emergent leadership role. The power of positional leaders is also noted within the taxonomy of power as legitimate power based on rank and referent power which is based on emergent leadership (French and Raven, 1959). In this study positional leadership is described as an element of transformational leadership because positional leadership involves an acknowledgement of one's leadership identity and being conscious of one's power to lead.

Whereas identity exploration provides the first step toward empowerment in the liberation stage of sociopolitical development (Watts, Williams, & Jagers, 2003), in leadership literature, the community also plays a key role in providing the opportunity for youth to explore their identity and enact change within their community as youth leaders (Lewis-Charp, Cao Yum, & Soukamneuth, 2006). This brings us to the relational leadership component of transformational leadership. As stated previously, transformational leadership also involves using one's power to help others. To this end, relational leadership describes leadership as collaborative relationships as opposed to an individual initiative (Astin & Astin, 1996). Within MacNeil's definition of leadership, a clear

connection can be drawn between relational and transformational leadership described as follows:

A relational process combining ability (knowledge, skills, and talents) with authority (voice, influence, and decision making power) to positively influence and impact diverse individuals, organizations, and communities (MacNeil, 2006, p. 29)

MacNeil's definition of leadership also supports the notion that "leadership involves collaborative relationships that lead to collective action grounded in the shared values of people who work together to effect positive change" (Astin & Astin, 1996, p. 16).

SPD describes this cumulative effort as youth become critically conscious of social inequalities and motivated and empowered as social and civic activists within their communities. The focus on community also suggests that, like transformational leadership, sociopolitical development is more than an individual fulfilling a role or task. The notion that leadership is cultivated through a balance of experiences where youth are supported and challenged (Kress, 2006; Sabo, 2003) also supports the developmental stages of SPD.

In order for youth leaders to be challenged in SPD they need civic/social activism incorporated into their youth leadership development process. Youth leadership development includes not only providing youth with leadership skills, but giving them the opportunity to practice these skills through authentic leadership experiences (MacNeil & McClean, 2006). Authentic leadership experiences require that youth make "real" decisions that impact the organization or community, as opposed to relying solely on simulations or "mock situations"

that have no impact or consequence outside of the leadership activity (MacNeil, 2006). It has been noted that when youth have authentic leadership experiences where they have voice, influence and power in the decision making process the outcomes are powerful and significant (MacNeil & McClean, 2006).

Youth leadership, youth empowerment, and sociopolitical development are often presented as separate ambiguous concepts where theory and practical implications are often disconnected. The previous review of the research literature, however, has shown instances where these theories are interconnected. This study explores the interconnections between these concepts in an attempt to understand how they are actualized in a youth leadership development program. I argue that social political development theory presents a way in which to conceptualize and teach youth empowerment through a transformational leadership development process. However the transformational leadership theory has not been applied to empirical research studies on youth programs that seek to empower youth leaders.

This study embraces a theory of empowerment which asserts that empowerment cannot be sustained by bestowing power upon people (Freire, 1970). A key question I pursue within my study's larger research question is a pragmatic one: Can we assist people as they begin to explore their own power by engaging them in issues of power (relationships, negotiations, concepts, context of power) through social, economic, political awareness and activism? Here I am wondering about the importance of the combination of awareness and activism in

a supportive, scaffolded environment—what might be thought of as an apprenticeship in leadership with the gradual release of control from mentors to novices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This gradual release of control from mentors to novices is seen throughout the social political development process which I argue provides a bridge connecting positional, relational, and transformational leadership. This bridge is best explained by combining two assertions: people arrive at their own understanding of power through identity/self reflection (Freire, 1970), and through community awareness they may began to see themselves as activists (Lewis-Charp, Cao Yum, & Soukamneuth, 2006).

For conscious social/civic activists, developing, enhancing, and utilizing leadership skills in the community are necessities. But are youth really becoming empowered to lead? How do we know? What does this process entail? It is at this point that our theories require grounding in the local realities of youth learning to lead. This is the central rationale for conducting interpretive phenomenological research within youth development settings and contexts. Only through thorough exploration of this phenomenon can a grounded theory linking youth leadership development and sociopolitical development be formulated.

If there is a need for more authentic leadership experiences in which we explore the power of youth to lead through social activism, I wish to study the characteristics of those leadership experiences within a program that seems to support young people assuming and sustaining leadership roles in authentic

community contexts. In order to explore the power of youth to lead, we need to begin to articulate what we mean by the words “power” and “empowerment.” And we need to discover what those terms mean to young people—and how their participation in structured youth leadership development programs can impact the development and enactment of the concept of leadership in meaningful contexts of personal and civil life.

This study investigates my assertion that when youth internalize their power they can become “in-powered” as social change agents. I created this term to highlight a distinction between dominant literature on empowerment as conferred power and my own claim that power cannot be conferred from one person to another (the powerful vs. the powerless), but can be taught, learned, and experienced in authentic activity. Power is constantly being internalized, expressed and negotiated through discourse and action similar to energy; it cannot be created nor destroyed. However, the distinguishing factors between those who become social change agents and those who do not are unknown; likewise we seek to understand the features of contexts or activity settings in which youth successfully become agents of change.

The choice of a design for research is influenced by the problem and questions under study, their rationale, and the values of the researcher. The introduction to this dissertation has attempted to argue that leadership is more than just a feature of an individual’s character. Leadership, and the in-powerment it entails, can be taught and learned; it is meaningful in communities and

contexts; and adults can structure programs in which leadership is taught, high standards and expectations of youth conveyed, and a program's effectiveness in achieving goals of youth leadership development can be assessed.

As this chapter explains, there is a substantial amount of literature on adult leadership in the workplace and growing literature on leadership development for college students. However, the empirical literature on youth leadership is limited. What are some of the contributing factors that help youth transition into adulthood? This study focuses on youth who are at a major transition point in their developmental process. College students who began participating in a youth development program as high school students are asked to reflect on their leadership experiences. They speak openly and frankly about their leadership experiences from teenagers into young adults, and pinpoint what they perceive as major contributions made within the LIA program to help them become empowered or in-powered youth leaders.

Outline of Dissertation

This study attempts to explore the nurturing aspect of youth leadership development by analyzing the developmental process we establish in youth programs to develop youth leaders as social activists. The internal perspective within in-powerment leads me to also explore the nature aspect of leadership development. The nature aspect is explored by focusing on youth characteristics, skills and perceptions of power and youth leadership held by

adolescents in the program being studied. In the end, if we agree that empowerment is an important component of the youth leadership/sociopolitical development process, then understanding how youth internalize, express and negotiate their power as youth leaders can help in developing and strengthening youth leadership programs that “empower” youth to lead.

Through this kind of deep probing, I have elected to focus my research on local meaning within one setting. What close analysis of language, culture, and thought lacks in its ability to make sweeping statements about what large numbers of programs are like, it makes up for in its ability to probe leadership as it is developed in the talk, texts, and activities of young people and staff members working within a principled learning environment. The potential of such a case study to shed light on aspects of other cases and its affordance of questions, insights, and concepts as useful tools for wider use is needed in the current climate of a proliferation of programs with ill-defined structures and limited theoretical or conceptual underpinnings.

The following research questions are explored in this dissertation: How do participants talk about leadership, power, and empowerment within this youth leadership development program? What is the process by which a participant becomes an empowered youth leader within this program? Chapter Two describes the research methodology and data triangulation process used to address the research questions. (Note: Some of the key overarching themes found during the data analysis process are highlighted in the data analysis

Chapter Four, Chapter Five, and Chapter Six. The research in these chapters are presented using a blend of vignettes, expository reporting of findings, and researcher commentary). Chapter Three explains the context for youth leadership and empowerment by focusing on a synopsis of the collective experiences of Youth Council (YC) members entering into the LIA program for the first time as youth delegates. In Chapter Three a detailed description of the youth leadership program is provided in two detailed vignettes accompanied by analytical commentary. The positional leadership experiences of youth delegates transitioning into their role as Youth Council members are discussed in Chapter Four. The Youth Council members describe their initial perceptions of power and leadership within the LIA program as they begin to reflect on their own understanding of what it means to be in a position of power as a member of the Youth Council in the LIA program. Chapter Five highlights the relational leadership experiences of program participants as they begin to form connections with one another around a common interest in leadership and youth empowerment. The role of other youth and adult support staff in helping young people understand their role as youth leaders and transition through their leadership development process is the focal point of Chapter Five.

Chapter Six's exploration of transformational leadership describes the multiple experiences and activities created within the LIA program to help youth develop into empowered youth leaders within their families, schools, and communities. In Chapter Six the role of the LIA curriculum and program

philosophy in creating an atmosphere for youth leadership development is discussed. Chapter Seven summarizes the study's major research findings regarding the participants' experiences with positional, relational, and transformational leadership. This chapter also provides implications for further research and practice.

CHAPTER TWO

Investigating a Youth Leadership Program

Description of the Research

This qualitative research study uses ethnographic theory and methods to gather and analyze data on the Leaders in Action¹ youth program. Its goal is to discover grounded theory about how young people learn and enact leadership in the context of one leadership program. The program was selected for this study because it meets the following criteria: 1) includes Black adolescents from various socioeconomic backgrounds, 2) has been in operation for more than three years, and 3) incorporates youth leadership and empowerment in program goals and objectives.

Research Questions

In chapter one, I described several areas of needed research and several broad questions prompting my research. The broad questions were concerned with understanding how youth participants perceive the goals of “youth leadership” and “empowerment,” how these goals are internalized as concepts, and how they are enacted in the context of the youth development program. Two key research questions were spawned based on my interest in making a meaningful contribution to the existing literature: How do the participants talk

¹ Pseudonyms are used throughout this dissertation to protect the identity of the foundation, the youth program, and the study participants.

about and understand leadership, power, and empowerment within this youth leadership development program? What is the process by which a participant becomes an empowered youth leader within this program?

As is characteristic of ethnographic research, I framed and focused the inquiry and grounded it both in the literature as well as in my ongoing collection and analysis of data. I narrowed my focus to one youth organization, studying it closely and for an extended period of time using a variety of data collection methods. Gradually I developed and refined the following discrete set of researchable questions that address aspects of the broad questions of my research. I did this both inductively and deductively, incorporating my prior knowledge of the field and its problems, my review of relevant research, and the patterns in the data as I collected and analyzed them. This process will be described in detail below. The questions derived from this process, and to which my dissertation is addressed, are the following:

- How is power socially constructed in program documents, texts, activities/events, workshops, and interactions between students and staff?
- How is youth empowerment and youth leadership defined and enacted in the program?
- How do staff and youth perspectives on power, youth empowerment, and youth leadership relate to their program's definition of these terms?
- How is the concept of power or the process of empowerment used to develop youth leaders?
- How are youth responding to and reflecting on the program's curriculum hand-outs, activities, and assignments, etc.?

The focus of this study is to answer these research questions about youth leadership and empowerment by analyzing a well-known youth development program in light of current literature on youth leadership and empowerment. Through an analysis of the distinctive and common experiences of program participants, along with a thorough review of programmatic documents, this study describes and analyzes how youth leadership and empowerment are defined, explored, and assessed throughout the daily practices of one youth development program. The primary and secondary research questions are outlined in Table A. with a brief description of the data analysis questions and the triangulated data that was investigated to ensure that the research questions were addressed.

TABLE A.
The BIG Questions.....and their little components

The BIG Research QUESTIONS.....and their little components

How do participants talk about leadership, power, and empowerment within this youth leadership development program? What is the process by which a participant becomes an empowered youth leader within this program?	
1. How is power socially constructed in program documents, texts, activities/events, workshops, and interactions between students and staff? (Doc. Analysis, Interactive Data/Observation notes)	●What references or inferences are made regarding power based on the structure of the organization? ●What roles, tasks, assignments, and responsibilities are offered to participants? ●How is power inferred/referenced in program documents/texts?
2. How is youth empowerment and youth leadership defined and enacted in the program? (Doc. Analysis)	●How is youth empowerment and youth leadership defined in program documents?
3. How do staff and youth perspectives on power, youth empowerment, and youth leadership relate to their program's definition of these terms? (Doc. Analysis, Interactive Data/Observation notes, Participant Self-reports)	●How do participants describe power, youth empowerment, and youth leadership in interviews and observation notes? ●How do participants reflect on these terms as they are presented in program documents during think aloud debriefings and focus group meetings? ●What activities, actions, or conversations

TABLE A. Continued

	recorded in field notes can be used to support youth perspectives in relation to the programs definition of these terms?
4. How is the concept of power or the process of empowerment used to develop youth leaders? (Doc. Analysis, Interactive Data/Observation notes, Participant Self-reports)	● To what extent are youth aware of social, political, economic inequalities? ● What leadership skills, events and activities are offered to youth in the program? ● To what extent are youth active in planning, organizing or facilitating program activities and events? ● What leadership roles and experiences exist within the program that allows young people the opportunity to address social inequalities? ● How does the program define, and discuss social, political, economic inequalities that youth face in society during program activities and events? ● What do young people think about their role/power as leaders in addressing social inequalities? ● What do program staff think about the role/power of youth leaders in addressing social inequalities?
5. How are youth responding to and reflecting on the program's curriculum hand-outs, activities, and assignments, etc.? (Interactive Data/Observation notes, Participant Self-reports)	

Setting and Research Participants

The Leaders in Action (LIA) program is a major youth services component within the McNeal Foundation that provides leadership training and development for African American youth regardless of social economic status or geographical location. The four day LIA Leadership Institute is an annual event and centerpiece of the McNeal Foundation's Leaders in Action program. The Leadership Institute brings together young people who participate in various

aspects of the Leaders in Action program; youth from the LIA city-wide tours, former Leadership Institutes, LIA scholarship recipients and newcomers who have heard about the program but have never had any direct contact with LIA are all encouraged to apply to participate in the annual Leadership Institute. Many presenters who network during LIA's year-long activities and efforts also participate in the annual Leadership Institute as guest speakers and panelists.

The Leadership Institute is also the major research site in which I conducted participant observation for this study. Although the headquarters for the McNeal Foundation, the LIA program, and the Annual Leadership Awards Fundraiser are all located on the West coast, the annual nation-wide LIA Leadership Institute has taken place at a Historically Black University (HBCU) located in the South for 3 consecutive years. During the Leadership Institute students are housed in college dorms and utilize the college campus classrooms, a lecture hall, and dining services for Institute programs and events. The Institute activities include leadership and current events workshops, meetings, and informal sessions with about 200 adolescents from across the country.

This study focuses specifically on the youth and adult program participants who assisted with the logistical planning of the 2007 LIA Leadership Institute. The youth planning committee, formally known as the Leaders in Action Youth Council, will be referred to in this study as the Youth Council (YC) and the adults who assisted in the planning of the program will be called the adult support staff.

Interviews were conducted with seven Leaders in Action (LIA) Youth Council members and two adult support staff members.

The Youth Council members are focal in this study, not only because of their significant role within this youth-centered program, but also because their interviews provide a clear depiction of learning-in-context. The interviews and observation notes of the Youth Council provide a window into their learning and the various perspectives young people have of the context(s) in which learning takes place. The Youth Council members consist of 14 young people from across the nation; 12 of them participated in the 2007 Leadership Institute in which the data for this study was collected. All of the Youth Council participants that were present during the 2007 Leadership Institute were asked to participate in the study, of which, seven consented to be interviewed. The seven research participants from the Youth Council included four males and three females. All of the participants joined the Youth Council when they were adolescents in high school, participated in the Youth Council for at least 4 years, and are currently in 4-year universities working on their undergraduate degrees.

In addition to the Youth Council, the LIA program also consists of the following adult support staff members: two program staff members, an adult advisory committee and a host of volunteers who help with the organizational structure of the program. One of the program staff members and one member of the adult advisory committee were selected to be interviewed. Both of the adult support staff participants have also been working with the LIA program for over 4

years. The organizational structure and the roles played by program participants will be analyzed and discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

While interviews and observation notes from the LIA conference were key sources of data in this study, the analysis of programmatic documents also provided insight into how the program's mission, objective, and curriculum documents were interpreted and actualized in the LIA program. The proceeding sections of this chapter will describe how the interviews and observation notes of the program participants' were analyzed alongside the programmatic data that was collected for this study.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study includes research inquiry and design methods from the following qualitative traditions: ethnography and discovery of grounded theory. Ethnographic methods are used to collect and analyze data in an ongoing process to develop a "grounded theory" (Creswell, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is developed to explore and describe the meaning held by people who share a common experience (Creswell, 1998). In this case, the common experience is the participants shared involvement within the Leaders in Action program as they explored what it means to be an empowered youth leader. This methodological approach is necessary to understand the nature of teaching and learning within a youth leadership program that seeks to empower young people.

In Chapter One, I reviewed relevant research and identified the need to study such programs in-depth in order to theorize the concept of empowerment, the development of youth as leaders, and the role of curriculum in this developmental process. Without research to develop grounded theory that describes teaching and learning of empowerment in context, it is difficult to establish research-based design principles that assess the impact of programs on their intended goals. Therefore while this dissertation is neither a design study nor an assessment of an extant program, its close contextualized analysis offers a research-based case study of leadership development in order to further our understanding of how youth empowerment is actualized in a youth leadership program. This study can inform both design and assessment of programs and also theory and practice in the area of youth empowerment and leadership development (the concluding chapter of this dissertation returns to these ideas).

Data Collection Techniques

A qualitative case study provides an opportunity to research a specific case using data collected from multiple sources to provide an in-depth depiction of the context, environment or setting being studied (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 1998). In this study, the case is described as a youth leadership development program; however the study focuses more specifically on understanding how participants come to understand and explore youth leadership and empowerment within the context of the program. I developed a depiction of the experiences of

program participants that incorporates their perspectives and my analysis of several types of data: published, public materials about the program explaining its curriculum and activities; an analysis of the program's structure and the ways members of the program interact with one another in planning for, enacting, and assessing learning activities; and interviews of the youth leaders who hold central roles in that process who can offer perspectives on leadership and empowerment within the program from several various perspectives.

The research process cycles from questions to assertions which are tested and elaborated by means of triangulation of evidence. Triangulation presents an opportunity to collect and compare data from multiple sources in order to analyze divergent perspectives and provide an in-depth analysis and interpretation of research findings (Glense & Peshkin, 1992). The following kinds of information to be used for triangulation in data analysis were collected for this study: audio-taped and transcribed individual interviews with two program staff and seven Youth Council members; programmatic document analysis (curriculum, goals, objectives, brochure, information packets, websites, etc.); and observation notes of participants experiences and conversations (refer to Appendix A. Study Design and Data Collection Methods for a detailed description of the information collected and the significance of the data analysis to the study).

Research methods for this study emphasize collecting data from multiple sources, and the grounded theory development emphasizes interviewing

participants, collecting observation notes, and continuously developing assertions which are tested against subsequent observations and interviews to develop and refine descriptions—many in the form of analytic vignettes—which combine description and analysis of participants' experiences (Creswell, 1998; Erickson, 1986).

Following the review of the information collected and the development of preliminary categories for data analysis, I developed an open-ended interview that I administered to the Youth Council leaders, the program director, and an additional staff/board member who was chosen to be interviewed because of her length of time in the program and experience in transcendent leadership roles.

The Youth Council members were selected as a target population because of their 4 or more years of experience with the program. They were also able to shed light on their experience first as a regular youth participants who attended the LIA program and then as a member of the Youth Council. Both of the staff members were also once volunteers in the program. All of the study participants were able to provide background information on their perceptions of how the program has shaped their development as leaders and provide a deeper analysis of the program's transformation through research questions that encourage self-reflection.

The interviews gathered general information about the participants' perceptions and experiences within the program: why they came to the program, length of time in the program, perceptions of program structure, etc. In addition,

the interviews also explored their perceptions of power, youth empowerment, youth leadership, and social activism. The open-ended questions probed the participants to describe their experiences and actions in greater detail (questions posed were relevant to the research questions and/or provide clarification of the researcher's interpretation of the data observed.) The interview questions and probes for the Youth Council and the staff members are listed verbatim in Appendix B. Research Questions.

In addition to the interviews (and essential to triangulation of evidence and the development of rich, grounded analytic description), I also conducted and collected data from participant observation during the Leadership Institute conference panels and small group discussion workshops, projects, and events. These took the form of field notes. Archival data, such as program booklets, CD-ROMs, etc. from previous years were also collected. Just as I reviewed the interviews and the field notes, these programmatic documents were also viewed with an eye toward understanding the participants' experience.

In order to familiarize myself with the research setting and analyze its organization, activities, and social contexts, I studied the operations of the Leaders in Action program during and following the annual Leadership Institute. I was present during the program activities and major functions, documenting the ordinary and the extraordinary as events unfolded, activities were undertaken, and local meaning made. My analysis began as a participant observer in the

program, and also as I stepped back from participating while taking observation notes.

Observational notes were taken during workshops and program events, in addition to field notes taken during and/or immediately following meetings and conversations. These notes were expanded as field notes and used to frame new questions and create tentative assertions to be pursued in subsequent participant observations, in interview responses and program artifacts. This process was followed after each visit to the program site and prior to the next observation. The process of observing, taking notes, and making sense of notes is an inferential one. Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to it as part of the “constant comparative” method by which a fieldwork researcher gathers information, analyzes it, and further refines or re-focuses her observations on subsequent visits to the field. This is a process of moving between induction and deduction to address the question of local meaning—to find out what people are doing and how they are thinking about their doings in both local terms and in terms of the researcher’s questions and conceptual frames.

Some researchers have also suggested that before interviewing participants, and throughout the data collection process, the researcher should bracket their experience by writing detailed descriptions of their experience aside from the data being collected (Patton, 1990; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). By bracketing my experience in critical reflection essays at the end of my observation notes, I was also able to recognize my subjectivity as a researcher

by acknowledging preconceptions I held about the study: What were my initial expectations of the program, and how might they relate or differ from the expectations of youth, staff, and volunteers who participated? Bracketing also provided an opportunity to begin the first stage of data analysis using the constant comparative method. As I reflected on my own experience in the program as a participant observer, I began to refine interview questions that would address many of the issues and concerns that arose from my short self-reflection essays written alongside my observation notes.

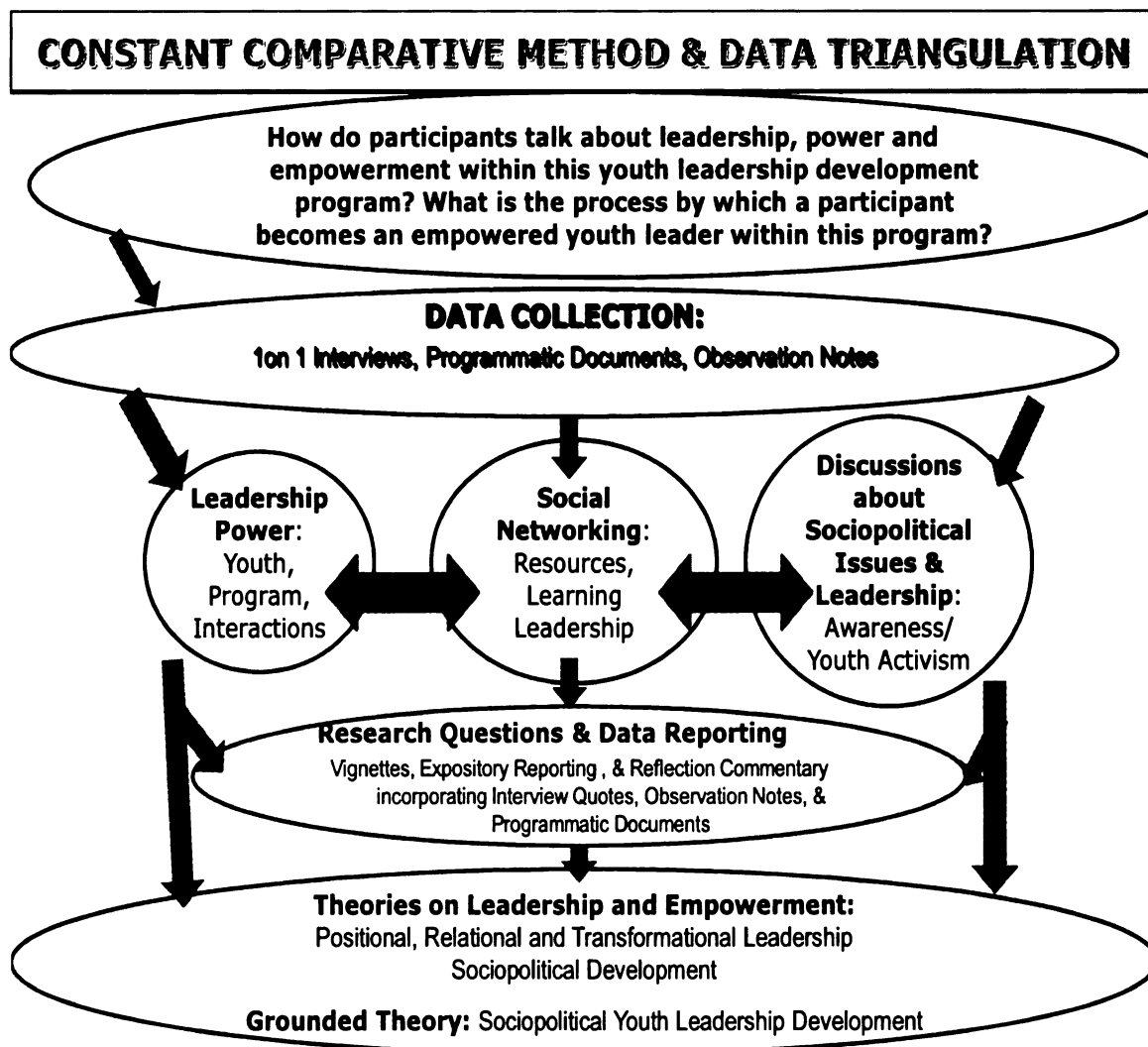
Data Analysis & Reporting

Information that made up the data set for this study was collected between August 2, 2007 and January 2008. During August and September field observations and background information on the day to day structure of the program were gathered. Once a rapport with program participants was established and the first phase of background information on the program was gathered and analyzed, the interview protocol was revised again for validity. September through November consisted of interviews with youth and staff members in the program. The interviews were transcribed on a rolling basis from November to January. An analysis of research findings, including dissertation writing, was done throughout the study from October through November 2008.

The constant comparative method was used to gather and code data throughout the data collection and analysis processes to ensure that the data

collected was focused and that additional questions arising during the data analysis process were probed through additional research. This process is illustrated in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1. Constant Comparative Method & Data Triangulation



As shown in Figure 1., the data collected from interviews conducted in this study were transcribed, coded and organized using overarching themes derived from the research questions and participant responses. These themes focused on leadership power, social networking, and discussions about sociopolitical

issues and leadership. Through bracketing and horizontalization preconceptions held by the researcher were bracketed out as reflective data and statements that explain the universal structures that underline the participants experiences were brought to the forefront (Creswell, 1998). The data reported in this dissertation uses vignettes, expository writing, and reflection commentary to provide the reader with a detailed description of the overarching themes as they emerged from the triangulated data. The research findings provide insight into the experiences of program participants and add to the existing literature on youth leadership development.

At this point of analysis, the study moved toward the grounded theory focus on generating analytic descriptions of what was happening in the program around leadership and from the perspectives of the participants. The open coding and axial coding found in grounded theory is very similar to bracketing and horizontalization. However the distinction is made in grounded theory during selective coding, in which the researcher creates a story line that describes the theory and describes the framework on a conditional matrix. The conditional matrix "elucidates the social, historical and economic conditions influencing the central phenomenon," (Creswell, 1998, p. 57) hence theories on youth leadership meet sociopolitical development framework.

The next four chapters highlight some of the key overarching themes I developed in response to my research questions during the data analysis process. The research in these chapters is presented using a blend of vignettes,

expository reporting of evidentiary findings, and researcher commentary that describe the triangulated data analysis. Vignettes “ground the more abstract analytic concepts” of research studies into “concrete particulars—specific actions taken by specific people together” (Erickson, 1986, p.150). In this study the narrative vignette (Erickson, 1986) is presented as an analytical narrative (Riessman, 1993) used to give the reader a detailed description of the daily happenings within the youth leadership program from the perspective of youth participants. I have chosen this genre of reporting for particular reasons of theoretical and practical importance. In this regard, I followed ethnographer Rui Niu (2008) who wrote of her ethnographic research on a community's response to newcomers who are English Language Learners. She stated the following:

I chose to use the vignette as a tool for analysis and reporting because analytic narrative text describes the liveliness, flow, and local knowledge [which takes place when learning is situated] in group activities and negotiated in the dynamics of learning among peers (Niu, 2008, p.69).

The narrative vignettes presented in my study take two forms. In Chapter Three the narrative vignette is used as a tool to reveal to the reader the program's structure and social organization from the perspective of youth participants. In this chapter, individual interviews with program participants are interconnected to create a collective voice depicting the Youth Council members' experience. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six, the ethnographic reporting of observation notes also assumes many of the characteristics of narrative vignettes. The observable experiences recorded in observation notes are written as narrative vignettes incorporating the voices of program participants with

detailed descriptions of the situated-learning experiences as they are happening in the context of the Leaders in Action program.

This chapter described the methodology used to investigate the research questions posed in the study. Chapter Three explains the context for youth leadership and empowerment by focusing on the perceptions of Youth Council members entering into the LIA program.

CHAPTER THREE

Leadership Learning in the Context of the Leaders in Action Program

When I saw this program I thought, “That’s a way to help people understand how to access, how to get engaged and how to be involved in programs and partnerships and issues and things of that nature” (Tammye, Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

The purpose of Chapter Three is to provide the reader with a detailed description of the linked contexts for leadership learning within the Leaders in Action program. The contexts for youth leadership and empowerment are explored using narrative vignettes (Erikson, 1986) that describe the collective experiences of Youth Council (YC) members and programmatic documents describing the organizational structure of the Leaders in Action program. In addition to describing the contexts for leadership learning, Chapter Three also provides a preliminary analysis of the following research questions: How do participants talk about leadership, power, and empowerment within this youth leadership development program? What is the process by which a participant becomes an empowered youth leader within this program?

Description of the Foundation and the Leadership Program

Who would have thought that a response to a single mother’s request to have her son shadow a prominent Black leader would lead to the creation of a youth leadership program which has served over 5,000 youth from over 22 states within the last 8 years? The Youth Leadership program was spawned after this one experience led to thousands of request from parents across the country for

an opportunity to have their child spend a single day with Raymond McNeal².

The program is an effort to reach out to more youth based on two main objectives: “provide training and exposure to opportunities to allow youth to demonstrate their skills as organizers, activist, advocates, and catalysts for social change on behalf of themselves or their community” (Website Mission & History, 2007). Today the program is viewed as a cornerstone program of the foundation that bears its founder’s name. The program addresses the foundation’s mission to enlighten, encourage and inspire youth through scholarships, one day high school workshops in 10 major cities, youth community service projects, an awards/fundraising banquet, and the Leadership Institute (Leadership Institute Program Booklet, 2007; Website Mission and History, 2007).

According to its public documents, the purpose of the LIA Leadership Institute “is to train youth to meet the challenges in their communities” (Leadership Institute Program Booklet 2007; Website Institute, 2007). The program identifies the following set of goals and objectives that serve as a criterion for training youth to meet community challenges:

- To develop a cadre of young leaders with critical-thinking skills who will share their knowledge and skills and make a positive impact on the world.
- To help youth develop a sense of civic and personal responsibility and commitment.
- To foster relationships among youth from different parts of the country, schools, church, and community groups.

² Raymond McNeal and all other names of people involved in the Foundation and its LIA program presented in this dissertation are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the foundation, its programs, and the study participants

- To increase student awareness about important issues facing our world. (Leadership Institute Program Booklet, 2007; Website Institute, 2007).

The program's goals and objectives are referenced and analyzed in relation to other data sources throughout the data analysis chapters as part of the constant comparative method and triangulation of evidence. It is important to acknowledge that no precise relationship exists between an organization's formal explication of its ideas and goals and the ways that participants engage in activities to accomplish them. This is not a shortcoming, but a reality that it is important for an ethnographic study to document (Brice-Heath & Street, 2008). While outside the scope of this descriptive study, one contribution of such documentation of the similarities and differences among formally stated goals and program enactment is, as discussed below, its potential usefulness to program designers and staff in better articulating goals, activities, and outcomes.

The Leadership Institute goals and objectives for youth training suggest that critical thinking skills are important for young leaders, and that these skills, once gained through the program, should be shared with others within the community and society as a whole. Not only are the youth leaders expected to pass on or share their knowledge, but the knowledge and skills that they attain and develop should be used to make a *positive impact* on society. The program acknowledges that young people must recognize that they are responsible for themselves and for their communities. A commitment to youth leadership is also needed in order for youth to impact change in their communities.

The objectives of the Institute are as follows:

- The Institute will provide leadership training to more than 200 students and 40 adults interested in youth engagement.
- Each student attendee will be challenged to join with youth in their community or school to create a service project within six months of the Institute. Outstanding individuals, teams and their projects will be featured on the foundation's website and receive special commendation from [Raymond McNeal] (Leadership Institute Program Booklet 2007; Website Institute, 2007).

By bringing youth from across the country to the LIA Leadership Institute the program provides an opportunity for relationships to foster between young people, which address the program's third youth training goal. The objectives also suggest that the community service-learning projects that are encouraged by the program offer young people an opportunity to use the skills and knowledge they receive from the conference to make others aware of important issues impacting the world.

Although the objectives provide the basic outline of the program leadership training that leads to the creation of service projects, the objectives do not describe how the goals for the program are met. How does the program develop *critical thinking skills, a sense of civic and personal responsibility and commitment, foster relationships and increase awareness*? The answers to these "how" questions surface during the exploration of the research questions in data analysis Chapters Four, Five, and Six. For now, it is important to focus on the purpose of the LIA program in order to better understand the experiences and perspectives of the program participants. The program justifies its existence and purpose in the following statement:

We exist to help youth expand their horizons by exposing them to experts who teach them about goal setting, team building, project planning, decision-making, advocacy, public policy and leadership so that they may create a positive future. We believe that every child has a talent which can be used to improve their community and our country and that a national network of youth leaders is an essential force to enlighten their communities and affect pertinent social agendas (LIA Program Website History, 2007).

The program embraces a certain concept of leadership by exposing youth to the aforementioned skills. These skills support the exposure to knowledge with the sole purpose of leading youth to some form of action. Teaching youth how to set goals and work in teams to create project plans gives them the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process as advocates who are aware and influential of public policy issues impacting their community. By recognizing that all youth possess talent, the program seeks to provide an opportunity for all young people to begin to think about the individual and unique contributions that they make to their communities, society and the world by working together with other youth leaders.

It is interesting that the program chooses to identify a set of clearly defined skills within the program's justification of its purpose and existence without mentioning these skills within the program goals or objectives. If these skills are incorporated within the goals and objectives for the program, it might be easier to construct an assessment tool to measure the program's success. However, this is not a school curriculum but rather an emergent set of activities and goals with an equally emergent set of diverse outcomes. One goal of my research is to trace these relationships more systematically so that, as I mentioned earlier it

might be possible for research to inform program assessment and increase the alignment of formal goals, formal and informal activities, and the program's desired outcomes. It is also possible that a formal statement of goals is sufficient, within an organization that aims for authentically emergent leadership through youth planning, to set the process of leadership development in motion. In this case, one would want to look for ways that the program creates an environment or activity setting supportive of the learners accomplishing particular goals but providing for their learning in a variety of forms and activities rather than in a linear, explicit curriculum (Brice-Heath & Street, 2008).

In the Beginning

Raymond McNeal founded the McNeal Foundation within a major city on the West coast in 1999. Leaders in Action began shortly thereafter in 2000 as a one-day leadership conference in several major cities and it is now considered a cornerstone youth program for the McNeal Foundation. As stated previously, LIA consists of a high school tour through 10 major cities across the nation, a four-day Leadership Institute, a two-day Leadership Institute tour incorporating youth facilitators in major cities, youth community service projects, an annual leadership awards fundraiser, and scholarships for youth participants. The presenters and guest lecturers at the Leadership Institute include notable leaders within the Black community such as mayors, professors, authors, actors, poets, etc.

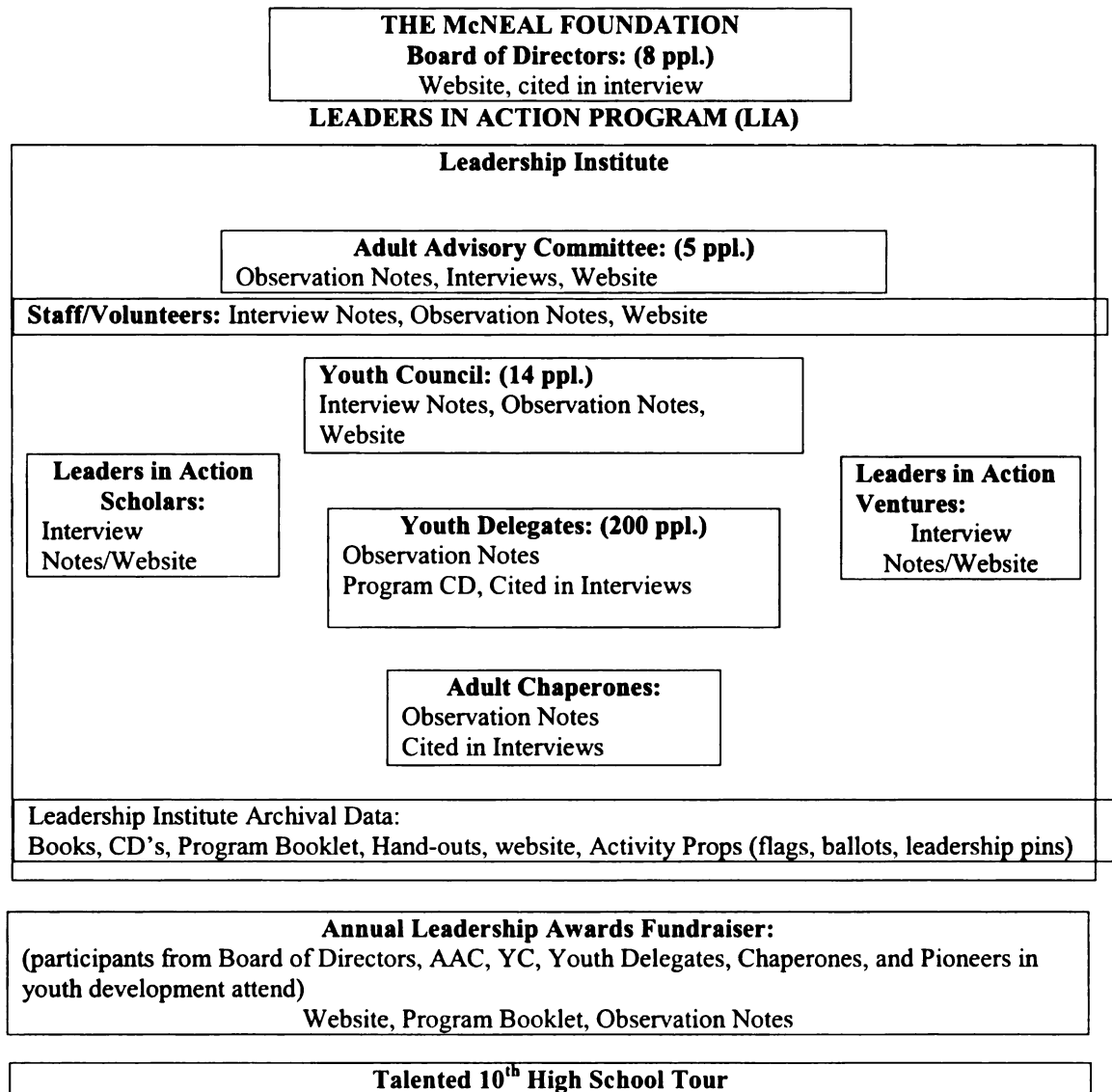
Leaders in Action youth can opt to participate in various aspects of the program; for example, some young people partake in the city-wide tour of the host city and the Leadership Institute and others partake in the Leadership Institute and meet to design and document community service projects in their communities. Some of the participants in the one-day local conferences come together at the LIA's annual four-day Leadership Institute located at a Southern university. Since its inception, young people across the nation from cities such as Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Houston, New York, Oakland, Ohio and Washington, D.C. have participated in the Leaders in Action program.

Following the conferences LIA youth are expected to return to their respective communities and use the knowledge, skills, and social networks they gain from the conference to impact change in their communities.

Organizational Overview

The focus of the LIA program is on youth adolescents age 13 to 18 who are considered youth delegates. The youth delegates are strategically placed at the center of the Leadership Institute and the high school tour because the program is centered on issues facing young people and the need for youth to become actively involved in addressing these issues. The Organization Chart In Table B. portrays Youth Council members and delegates in the center, surrounded by their adult support system.

TABLE B. Organizational Chart



The Leadership Institute represents the largest portion of the LIA youth leadership program. As shown in Table B., the bulk of the LIA program components are either situated within or connected to the Leadership Institute. The youth delegates represent the largest population of young people to participate in the LIA program. As youth delegates, they have the opportunity to create LIA venture projects, which are community service projects they can

implement in their respective communities once they leave the Institute. During the Institute youth present their venture projects, and some of the projects receive \$500 or \$250 stipends to be implemented. In addition to the youth venture projects, youth who participate in the LIA program also have the opportunity to apply for LIA youth scholarships to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or apply to be members of the Youth Council following their participation in one of the LIA programs. Obtaining a position on the Council, acquiring a LIA scholarship, and receiving funding for an LIA venture are extremely competitive given the 180 students and approximately 10 to 15 slots for each of these leadership opportunities. Only about 12 to 14 of the youth delegates transition through the program to become members of the Youth Council.

The Leaders in Action program's youth-led focus is also noted in the role played by the Youth Council in handling the basic logistics of the LIA Leadership Institute. The Youth Council is able to provide insight, organize, and implement aspects of the program from a youth perspective because they are closer in age to the youth delegates; a prerequisite to becoming a Youth Council member is also having previous experience as a youth delegate. The Youth Council members play an active role in planning the Leadership Institute and shaping the program with adult assistance from staff and volunteers and advice from the adult advisory council when needed.

Adults within the Leaders in Action program include members of the adult advisory committee, two staff members, volunteers, adult chaperones, and guest speakers and presenters. Many of the adult chaperones volunteer to bring youth delegates to the Leadership Institute. Some adult chaperones volunteer to help with program logistics. All of the chaperones are responsible for a set number of young people during the conference, checking in on the delegates to ensure that the students are safe and ensuring that they are abiding by the rules and regulations of the program. The adult chaperones also attend training workshops during many of the breakout sessions for the youth delegates, which limits their time to interact directly with the youth delegates.

Volunteers provide additional support to the staff and Youth Council by interacting with youth, working the registration table, and providing basic assistance during the Leadership Institute when needed. It must be noted that the only paid position within the LIA program is for two program staff members, thus members of the adult advisory council, Youth Council, and chaperones are all technically program volunteers. The adult advisory council consists of five Black business professionals with various leadership backgrounds working with youth and communities to address social and political issues. They provide consultation by offering suggestions and feedback on the programmatic structure. The adult advisory council, the staff, and the volunteers are interconnected in multi-faceted roles that sometimes overlap. Some of the members of the adult advisory council participate as staff members for the

program; assisting the Youth Council with the logistics during the Leadership Institute, facilitating workshops for youth and adult chaperones, and playing a more active hands-on role or a more observational or coaching role when needed.

Although young people are the focal point within the Leaders in Action Program, the program recognizes the collective support and contribution of all of its participants and funders during the Annual Leadership Awards Fundraiser. This LIA event honors members of the adult advisory council, staff, volunteers, Youth Council, and youth delegates. In addition to the leaders honored from within the program, the awards fundraiser also recognizes pioneers in youth development who are not directly involved in the program, while raising money for the LIA program through silent auctions during the fundraising event.

The changes in these young people from newcomers to program leaders raise important questions about the structure of the program, its roles and activities, and the curriculum it offers. The next several chapters deal, in turn, with each of these aspects of the program and the students' experience of it. The proceeding section in this chapter provides a context for further inquiry into the second research question: What is the process by which a participant becomes an empowered youth leader within this program? As a researcher I sought to uncover their journey toward leadership within the context of the program, by listening to their experiences, hearing their voices, and following in their footsteps.

As stated previously, my method for reporting what I learned about the experience of being a participant in the organization as a whole and the Youth Council in particular is derived from analyzing the interviews with Youth Council members and triangulating that analysis with field notes and artifact data. In order to retain the narrative sense and voice of the student self-reports of their experience which I collected in the extended interviews, I have written it in the form of what Erickson (1986) calls the vignette or analytic narrative (Riessman, 1993). Although each leader's voice is unique, I have synthesized their comments as well as their observable experiences in program activities into a narrative which aims to tell the story of a young person's experience within the program in order to reveal the relation between the program's structure and social organization, and the ways it supports the learning of young leaders.

The experiences of the Youth Council are interwoven with the voice of a fictional youth narrator in order to describe how the program is organized and structured around youth. Their collective voices from the interviews are also linked to the observation notes from the 2007 Leadership Institute to provide a clearer depiction of the context in which the LIA program exists. This collective lens depicts the path of an adolescent exploring the program for the first time as a youth delegate and then transitioning into their role as a Youth Council member. In writing the following vignette, I include both this composite and also verbatim quotes from the student leaders whom I interviewed.

Vignette One: My First Encounter with Leaders in Action

Starting out as a youth delegate from California, Indiana, Texas and Philadelphia you can only imagine the anxiety of a 16 year old headed to a youth conference in Washington, D.C. for the first time. We were all unsure of exactly what to expect from the host of panelists and guest speakers which include notable celebrity artists, writers, speakers, and youth activists from all across the country. "And my experience was just overwhelming...overwhelming that there were a lot of people that were like me there"³ (Reginald, Interview Notes, 11/21/07). Urged to attend by our mothers, our church groups, and our counselors many of us decide to embark on this journey with a group of 5 or 10 other youth accompanied by an adult supervisor. Upon arriving at the conference I noticed that there were over 600 other youth from all across the country, glassy eyed, nervous and probably as uncertain as I was to exactly what would happen next. As our nerves subsided, we met, we greeted and then we were reminded of the true reason why we were there in the first place...youth leadership.

A group of young people, called the Youth Council explained the purpose of the conference and described their role in planning and organizing the event. There were about 14 students in the Youth Council, which is considerably outnumbered by over 600 youth like me who were attending the conference as

³ Some forms of expressive language such as "um" and "you know" have been removed from interview quotes in order to provide clarity of reading. These forms of expression have been kept in instances where they do not interfere with the flow of the discussion and in instances where removing the expression would change the meaning of the quote.

participants. We were the youth delegates from all across the country whom this conference was assembled for. They called us the youth delegates, for we represented not only ourselves, but our families, churches, communities, and millions of other youth in our generation. The Youth Council seemed a little taller than us and a little more self-assured, yet the sense of unity within their voices and urgency behind their words appeared non-threatening, and I must admit it drew me in. They were outspoken, they were confident, and most surprisingly, they were in charge. The Youth Council members made a point to speak with us, and to find out about our personal stories in between workshops and group discussions. "I was interacting a lot with the planning committee. And they had put on this huge *HUGE* summit, and it was a week long and they had everybody come out and speak, and I really got a chance to see what the foundation was doing (Crystal, Interview Notes, 1/10/08)."

Although the Youth Council definitely played a central role in planning the conference, there were also adult staff members and volunteers that helped usher us through the workshop sessions making sure that we were properly checked in and in the right place at the right time. "So basically it was youth-led. [Ms. Tammye] took care of where the money came into be (meaning contacting sponsors), worked on making sure everyone was fed and taken care of, but as far as the actual workshop and the actual conference itself it was the Youth Council at the forefront" (Shante, Interview Notes, 12/11/07). You could see the staff members and volunteers usually working behind the scenes talking with the

Youth Council, but rarely did they ever approach the podium. When questions or comments were addressed to individual Council members, they rose to the challenge to handle problems with room assignments, overcrowded workshops and scheduling conflicts. No problem appeared too big or too small for them to address, and they devoted careful thought to addressing these issues; taking into consideration the needs of the youth delegates they were there to serve.

And the Conference was an amazing experience, because there were so many workshops so many options so many great people, you know who came to speak with us. And basically it was the first time that I had ever been able, you know had the chance to sit under [Dr. Harrison⁴] (Shante, Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

As I sat through numerous workshops, panel discussions, and guest speakers, I couldn't help but be moved by the conversations young people in the meetings were having with one another and by being surrounded by so many other faces of youth delegates who looked just like me—not literally, of course, but we had a lot in common on terms of how we dressed, what we talked about, how old we were, and why we had come to the conference. Not only did they look like me, but they talked about issues in their community from poverty, drugs, violence, poor schools, and teen pregnancy; these were issues that I could also relate to. All of a sudden I realized my issues and my community's issues had now become our collective problem. I realized that these problems were much bigger than my city, and I also realized that other youth in other communities felt as passionate and frustrated as I did.

⁴ Dr. Harrison is a pseudonym for prominent Black leader who has played an influential role as a speaker, guest panelist, and mentor to Youth Council members in the program.

I just learned that though I'm from Indiana and a girl maybe from Philly or you know my friend that I just met might be from Chicago, these issues are prevalent in each one of these states and you might think that they happen to just you but, it's amazing to see that so many Black youth are dealing with the same issues and if we can just find out one common grain that one factor to help get people back on track it would be very beneficial and very much needed (Shante, Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

For the first time people were encouraging me to do something about these issues. They weren't just pointing the finger at me; they were asking all of us, all of the youth who were there, to take a stand that would help impact change. I'm not sure if it was the call of the speakers, or the energy coming from my peers sitting next to me, but I felt that I could actually do something, that I could make a difference, that I had the power to do great things, and most importantly that I wasn't alone.

I began to think that not only might getting involved help, but that it was my responsibility to be involved. This was an important change that happened in my thinking as I participated in the sessions. During a panel discussion, for example, a youth panelist told us that "it's up to us to break the cycle. A lot of young and old people are not informed, but since you have heard, now you're informed. It's up to us to make a change" (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007). Her words echoed in my heart, and as I looked around the room it seemed like others felt it too.

As I left the workshop, her words later resonated with me again during the "Got Issues? Get Organized!" workshop series. We were given the assignment of creating community service-learning projects or organizations with other youth

delegates from across the country. These ventures focused on the various topics mentioned in the workshops such as teen pregnancy, education, healthcare, HIV/AIDS, global warming, poverty, etc. As a group, we used the curriculum packets presented in the conference to create our own strategic action plans. The strategic action plan curriculum hand-outs allowed us to implement our own thoughts and ideas on what projects we would like to create in the community. First we decided on a topic we wanted to focus on, and then we learned how to create a sample strategic action plan around that topic. Later on we broke into groups and created our own strategic action plan to help make youth aware of HIV/AIDS in the community. I worked with a group of 12 other delegates, and we all bounced ideas off of one another, agreed, disagreed, and negotiated to create an action plan that we were proud of. At the end of the conference we turned in our strategic action plan hand-out, and gave a short presentation to describe the Leaders in Action venture project that we wanted to implement in our community. My group's presentation on teen pregnancy was chosen as one of the Leaders in Action ventures to be funded \$500 to be implemented. It was an honor presenting our project to other youth, and being selected by the Youth Council as one of the Leaders in Action ventures to be enacted. Before I left I made a point to go and find Tammye, the program coordinator who originally responded to my application. I asked her for more information on how I could also become a member of the Youth Council.

Research Reflection and Commentary

Several things stand out in Vignette One as it characterizes the Youth Council as a context for learning leadership. For example, as youth delegates, many of the young Council members enter into the conference with little prior knowledge about the experience that they are to take part in. They are overwhelmed by the number of youth that are there, and the numerous workshops that they are able to attend. Youth relate to other youth at the conference through discussions about issues that are relevant to them. They become even more engaged as they realize that these issues cut across geographical locations connecting them to other youth at the conference. The young people speak of the presence of prominent Black figures that are there to speak with them, as opposed to lecturing or speaking at them. The presence of these prominent Black leaders gives even more significance to the issues being discussed, and further validates the importance of the voices of young people in addressing these issues. The interactions between the delegates and the Youth Council members are impressionable to the point that these delegates inspire to become Youth Council members themselves. As they reflect on the role of the former Youth Council, they describe the Council based on their positional leadership role. Youth Council members are at the forefront of the conference taking on the responsibility of planning the event for other youth.

All of the Council members were selected prior to the appointment of the program coordinator. However, Tammye stated that the selection process for the

Youth Council involved an application, an essay and interview process (Observation Notes, 10/04/07). As stated previously in Chapter Two, all of the Youth Council members must also be former participants in the program prior to appointment to the Youth Council.

Another thing that stands out in this vignette is the program's effort to make learning authentic to the participants' experiences outside of the meetings. Leadership learning within the context of the Leaders in Action program involves exposing young people to knowledge about issues within their own communities, recognition of the importance of these issues not only to their communities but to other youth, and validation of the importance of youth voices in addressing these issues as youth leaders. They are exposed to various aspects of positional, relational, and transformational leadership as they move from understanding the importance of youth in leadership roles to the importance of youth acquiring knowledge about issues and using their knowledge and social networks to enact change within their communities.

In Vignette Two, we will hear some of the voices of Youth Council members, reflecting on their transition from youth delegates into their roles in the Youth Council. In the previous vignette Youth Council members described their exposure to positional, relational, and transformational leadership, whereas Vignette Two describes the complexities of leadership once issues of power are recognized and taken into consideration.

Vignette Two: Becoming a Youth Council Member

Since my group received our 2003 Leaders in Action venture award for our proposed community program, I am happy to say that our program is still up and running. However few other venture projects are still in existence. I was able to maintain contact with a few of the participants from 2003, but I have lost contact with some of them.

I think that I definitely would have wanted to stay connected with more people maybe. Or somehow if we can, you know all the young people, because I think that we meet so many great people at the different conferences and just because of distance and time and because everybody is in school, sometimes you might talk to some people on a regular basis right after the summit...but I think definitely trying to stay connected to people is definitely something that I would have changed... (Crystal, Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

After my first conference things have evolved a lot with the Leaders in Action program. As members of the Youth Council, we have planned four annual conferences for more than 200 youth from 22 states ages 13 to 18 (Our Programs Website, 2007). The conference is now only four days long with about 200 youth delegates. Because of my persistence and my eagerness to get involved in the program, I was appointed to the Youth Council the following year. I now understand the hard work that goes into planning the Leaders in Action program's Leadership Institute, and am thankful for the learning opportunity I received by working with other Youth Council members, staff, and volunteers to plan and implement the event. As a member of the Youth Council I have had the privilege to grow and evolve as a youth leader along with other Council members. I realized the importance of teamwork when planning events, I learned

how to listen and negotiate with others, and I became a role model to younger delegates like the Youth Council before me had been role models for us.

One of the things that stand out to me now more than ever is the power of youth to impact change. It was the Youth Council that selected the conference topics, chose the speakers, and facilitated many of the workshop sessions, while handling logistics throughout the conference.

The Youth Council focused pretty much on speaking with [Ms. Tammye] and the other staff about some of the programs and activities we wanted to see. What didn't work from the previous years, some new things we wanted to add and then we talked about, you know once the program itself, the conference, was finalized and planned, we focused on the executing the conference making sure that logistically everything was in place (Brian, Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

We were up from 6am until sometimes 2 o'clock at night; planning, organizing, and most importantly reflecting on the day's events. We wanted to do everything in our power to make sure that the youth delegates had an experience that surpassed the experience we had our first year in the program. We worked hard to stay connected long after the conference was over, opening our hearts and our minds to youth leaders from around the country.

When I reflect on my experience, and my path to becoming an empowered youth leader, I realize the importance of having a strong social network of youth leaders to grow with you and also inspire youth. "One of the things that [Raymond McNeal] says every time that we have a conference, 'The conferences provide an opportunity for the next young Malcolm to meet the next young Martin and the next young Ida B. Wells to meet the next young Rosa

Parks or Sojourner Truth” (Brian, Interview Notes, 12/18/07). Today, I understand what it means for the young Martin to meet the young Malcolm, and for the young Ida B. Wells to meet the young Harriet or Sojourner Truth. I believe that while working with other members of the Youth Council, I have definitely met the Sojourner’s and Martin’s that will help as I enter into another stage of my leadership development.

Since joining the Youth Council, I was also awarded a Leaders in Action Scholarship to attend a prestigious Historically Black College or University (HBCU). This scholarship was awarded to me because of my role as a youth leader within my community, and it allowed me to expand my leadership capacity by pursuing my career goals. I have taken what I have learned from the youth leadership program and applied my leadership skills on campus by starting my own organization and actively participating in school government. In planning the last four conferences I was also able to initiate those meetings and to watch other young leaders gain the same sense of identity, awareness, and passion towards making an impact within the community as I did.

Although members of the Youth Council play an active role in facilitating the conference, the role of the program coordinator who is one of the two full time staff people dedicated to this program, is definitely one that I now see as extremely noteworthy. One of our biggest challenges in dealing with logistics of the conference has always been funding/sponsorship. Unlike the previous Council, we were not able to hold as many meetings in person due to financial

constraints that were outside of our control. "It has a lot to do with you know, financial reasons, sponsorship, and just how feasible it would be for us the [Youth Council] to come to, to all come together to a meeting table and be able to do it. I'm not you know, I can't really say, why it was the way it was, but you know it was just a barrier for us all" (Khalilah, Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

We have relied heavily on the program coordinator and the adult advisory council to secure funding for the program through fundraising events like the honors and fundraising banquet. This fundraising event showcases the program by honoring staff/volunteers, youth delegates, Youth Council members, and pioneers in youth development who embrace the program's mission for youth leadership. Through events like these we are able to secure corporate funding for the youth leadership program. Securing funding is a difficult task and responsibility for one person. As a Council member I do wish that I myself played a more active role in the larger logistics of the program, like fundraising/sponsorship or even booking the location. I feel that although our voices were heard and our concerns were taken into consideration, there were many aspects of the program that were already predetermined or outside of our control due to funding constraints.

As I reflect on my experience in the program from high school up until my first few years in college I believe the program has contributed to my growth. "I'm not going to stop with the whole leadership thing because I'm still doing the [McNeal] thing, and when I go to a main campus I'm going to pursue more and

when I graduate I'm going to pursue more and more and more" (Algernon, Interview Notes, 11/27/07).

Research Reflection and Commentary

Once they became members of the Youth Council, the youth began to look at the program from a slightly different perspective. They recognize the power of their voices in planning the conference and ensuring that other youth delegates have a memorable experience. They also recognize the limitations of their role as Youth Council members, and rely heavily on their group cohesiveness to address some of these issues and concerns. One of the biggest concerns that stood out in this vignette is the funding issues, which limit the amount of time Youth Council members have to interact in person and plan for the conference as well as what speakers, workshops, or events they are able to hold during the conference. This is a reality that impacts youth leadership development programs because monetary contributions often determine the number of leadership opportunities and apprenticeships youth programs can offer (Rubinstein-Avila, 2006).

Another concern that arises is the likelihood that the strategic action plans and Leaders in Action venture projects will actually be implemented following the conference. Since the young people in the program come from various cities across the country, it is extremely difficult to assess whether groups are able to use the venture award towards planning a successful community service project

or organization in their communities. Although some young people are able to maintain contact with one another and implement action plans in their community, the distance once again made it difficult to keep track of some of the community success stories. Youth Council members and the adult support staff did identify three cities that had successful programs following the conference; of which one of the programs are still active today. These projects are not investigated in this study; however the presence of an adult support staff to assist youth as they enter the beginning phases of their Leaders in Action venture project appears to be a contributing factor to the success of these organizations.

Creating a Context for and Definition of Youth Leadership

Leadership means different things in different contexts. The program focuses heavily on creating an environment in which young people can explore issues that are relevant to youth, and begin thinking critically about their role as youth leaders in their community. The program director, Tammye describes this environment as a space where young people are engaged in their developmental process:

It's like professional development for young people, but it's around youth and engagement. And leadership has so many different...characteristics and definitions that it's kind of hard to describe, but at least with our program we try to expose young people to leadership and they can even come to their own conclusions about what it means. So we don't necessarily have the description of it, but I think the exposure and just even talking about it can help them form their own opinions around what it means to be a leader (Tammye, Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

Tammye explains how the program engages young people by exposing them to leadership and providing an environment that allows them to think through their own views and opinions on what it means to lead. Rather than prescribe a clear definition of leadership, the program creates an environment where youth inquiry is not only accepted but highly encouraged. In a learning environment where problem-posing education (Freire, 1970) is the norm, youth voice becomes an essential ingredient in the success of the program. As youth become active agents in their own leadership development process, they also contribute to the growth and development of other youth leaders. In order to provide a clearer depiction of the process to becoming an empowered youth leader, this study focuses heavily on understanding how young people are talking about leadership, power and empowerment within a program they themselves have helped create.

Youth Council members are faced with a multitude of leadership experiences within the program as they transition from their role as delegates to members of the Youth Council. Rather than sugar coat the obstacles that arise throughout their leadership development experience, many Youth Council members speak of these experiences as influential to their leadership development process. In fact, it may be that in confronting these challenges and solving authentic problems they are able to experience the need for leadership as well as the importance of being responsive, flexible, and creative leaders.

Leadership theorists have characterized multiple aspects of leadership

development as, for example, positional, relational, and transformational leadership (Komives, Lucas, and McMahon, 1998; Northouse, 2006). The positional leadership approach suggests that leadership is a role describing the characteristics or traits of emergent leadership or the power given to positional leadership roles. Relational leadership describes the leadership relationships formed between people with the intent of collaborating for change (Astin & Astin, 1996; MacNeil, 2006). This study argues that the sociopolitical development framework can be used to describe what happens when transformational leadership serves as a bridge between understanding positional leadership power and the ability to establish relational leadership experiences in order to impact social change.

Each of these leadership approaches is meaningful to the multiple contexts for leadership learning in the LIA program. They are differentiated by the leadership experiences within a given context, and they are interconnected because they are all negotiated socially. Because this study focuses on leadership and empowerment as a social phenomenon as opposed to an isolated experience, these various approaches to leadership development are explored as learning takes place. Lave and Wenger (1991) have argued that situated learning takes place in communities of practice where people learn from their experiences in common activities. In these communities of practice learning is social, as people are engaged in community activities they learn through their experience with others (Wenger, 1998). Following this idea of situated learning,

it might make sense for there to be both the aforementioned clearly stated program goals yet a less-than-clear correspondence of these within the rich, authentic activities in which those goals can be reached by the youth leaders who approach them via varied paths and at different paces by the fledgling leaders. The idea of apprenticeship, legitimate peripheral participation, and the social organization of learning in context and conversation all come into play as the youth leaders plan and enact the conference.

Chapter Four, Chapter Five, and Chapter Six, describe how Youth Council members learned about leadership through their shared experiences in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) within the Leaders in Action program. The following chapters expand on the experiences of program participants as they come to understand their role as youth leaders who grapple with issues of power throughout their leadership development process. The participants' stories of their experiences will be analyzed as they develop as positional, relational and transformational leaders.

The data analysis Chapters Four through Six also describe how positional, relational, and transformational leadership surfaced as key factors in the growth and development of youth leaders in this program. Specific attention will be paid to the power issues that surface during the youth leadership development process, as Youth Council members begin thinking critically about what it means to be an empowered youth leader and what it means to be a leader to other youth.

CHAPTER FOUR

Experiencing Positional Leadership:

“I Want to Be Like Them”

There was a youth group in my community, growing up as a teenager that would go throughout the city during community functions presenting skits about teen pregnancy and saying no to drugs. We would all watch young and old, in admiration of the energy and inspiration the young people delivered in their powerful performances incorporating song, dance, acting, and oration. I always considered myself an active student involved in various groups in school and in the community, yet there was something about this particular group and their sense of purpose that always stood out to me. There was something in the power and energy behind their message that made me want to be just.... like.... them.

As I researched the role of the Youth Council in bringing these larger societal issues to light at the annual meetings, I observed a similar response that Youth Council members received from youth delegates. The observation notes during the LIA conference describe how some of the delegates seemed to long to be in the shoes of the YC members. They exchanged hugs, tears, and contact information; some youth delegates remained in contact with the Council members throughout the year. At the end of the LIA conference one of the second year youth delegates encouraged other delegates to “please keep in touch” noting that this was her second year and the Youth Council were “very

accessible" (Observation Notes, 8/6/2007). She later inquired with one of the Council members about a seat on the upcoming Youth Council (Observation Notes, 8/6/2007).

The Youth Council members also noticed a similar response from the youth delegates who appear to be looking up to them:

Crystal: At the end of the day I think a lot of people, from talking to participants, I think they enjoyed talking to me, listening to me and even looked up to me even if they were like the same age as me a year younger or 2 years younger (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

Shante: The actual participants dealing with the Council, they saw our purpose, saw our need, and wanted to find themselves in our position (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

After observing the interactions between the Youth Council and the youth delegates, I wondered if and how members of the Youth Council were not only a part of a leadership process, but also key facilitators within the leadership learning process of their peers. In the research described in this chapter, I argue that they are the motivators who engage other youth to become active, to become aware, and to aspire to impact change within their community. They are youth leaders from various walks of life who have embraced their role as youth leaders. Uncovering their experiences and the dynamics of how this process occurred is a central goal of my research and is the focus of the evidence I will present in this chapter.

Changing Positions: From Delegates to Youth Council Members

As active participants within the youth leadership program the members of the Youth Leadership Council have roles that are multifaceted. As described in Chapter Two and Three, the Youth Council members played a large role handling the day to day logistics during the conference. They were also active in planning and facilitating workshops and addressing the needs and concerns of the youth delegates. At first glance you recognize that they are young, but there is something about each Council member's charismatic glow that lets you know that you are in the presence of someone who is a determined, driven, and, most importantly, a self-aware leader. Interviewing them, it is apparent that each of them has a high level of awareness of issues facing other youth within the organization, their home communities and society as a whole.

But how did they transition into their role as leaders within the LIA program? This chapter will take a closer look into their experiences with positional leadership. How do members of the Youth Council describe their experiences and position within the Leaders in Action program? How do they come to understand their own power and their power to impact change within their program, their communities, schools, and society as a whole? This chapter addresses the following secondary research questions one, three, and four, in my study (refer to Table A.):

- 1.) How is power socially constructed in program documents, texts, activities/events, workshops, and interactions between students and staff?
 - What roles, tasks, assignments, and responsibilities are offered to participants?

3.) How do staff and youth perspectives on power, youth empowerment, and youth leadership relate to their program's definition of these terms?

- How do participants describe power, youth empowerment, and youth leadership in interviews and observation notes?

4.) How is the concept of power or the process of empowerment operant in the development of youth leaders?

- What do program staff think about the role/power of youth leaders in addressing social inequalities?
- What leadership roles and experiences exist within the program that allows young people the opportunity to address social inequalities?

This chapter examines the ways that young people who have advanced to the Youth Council speak about, reflect upon and enact their roles as young people leading other young people. The chapter contains several sections: Changing Positions: From Delegates to Youth Council members, Understanding the Power Limits of Positional Leadership, Differentiated Leadership Roles, and Positional Leadership and Accountability followed by the chapter conclusion. Each section focuses on how Youth Council members come to understand their position on the Council while negotiating their leadership roles in the context of the LIA program. In each case leadership is analyzed as “positional” not in the formal sense of clearly defined status and role in a rigid hierarchy, but in contexts where participants must collectively come to acknowledge the YC members as leaders. I look at two contexts in particular: youth leading youth and youth assuming leadership in the context of adult activity and roles with support staff and chaperones. I conclude this chapter by explaining how positional leadership

is important in the overall development of youth leadership in the LIA program and how positional leadership connects to other forms and functions of leadership in research questions discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

The Youth Council members describe multiple reasons for why they initially came to the program. Some had parents, school counselors or church advisors encourage them to attend, whereas others sought out a connection with other Black youth who were interested in making a positive impact in the community. The quotes below come from interviews where I asked Youth Council members about their entry into the program. Although they had various reasons for entering the program their outcome as members of the Youth Council were the same.

Khalilah: [When I first came to the program] it wasn't a decision that I made it was a decision that my mother made for me and I felt like I was pretty much forced to go, but by the end of the day when she came to pick me up afterwards it was a decision that I knew was best for me (Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

Crystal: My mom told me about it and I was just open to see what it was all about and I definitely, with a little bit of force from my mom though, but it ended up being a great experience and I met just lots of positive young people who were like me; interested in going to college, like had goals,...it was just really nice to meet people that I could just talk with about the future (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

Dominick: It was an opportunity for me as an African American male who strives to better the African American community, African American perception, and I felt this was a good idea for that to happen (Interview Notes, 11/09/07).

Reginald: I heard that there was gonna be an all Black youth conference in Washington, D.C. and I thought it would be a really cool thing for me to do. Too, because I go to a mostly, I went and still go to really, a mostly white school and I really was interested in getting in touch with more Black

people that were leaders and just people who were like my thinking, and you know more young people today. Just so you know it is really refreshing for me to be in that kind of environment (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

As the quotes illustrate, young people entered the program from different starting points, perspectives and leadership experiences. Some were forced to come by parents whereas others actively sought a connection with other African American youth. Regardless of their initial perspectives, prior to attending the LIA program, after their participation in the first LIA youth conference all of these former delegates utilized their agency by willfully applying to be members of the Youth Council. They all expressed a genuine interest in becoming active in the LIA program; they were impressed by the size of the LIA conference and the role of the Youth Council members in planning the event. When probed on their reasons for joining the Youth Council, the former delegates pointed to the significant role the Youth Council played in putting on the first conference.

Crystal: I wanted to be a part of creating a summit like the one that I had in 2003...It was so many people. People came from all over to Washington, D.C. and I think that I wanted to do something like that. Plan something mega big and huge and bring everybody out (Interview Notes, 1/10/07).

Reginald: I talked to the youth advisory council that year, and I said what do I need to do to get on your committee. You know, so while I was there I set goals, I met the right people and I made sure that once the conference was over I could be one of those guys they call to be considered for the committee (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

By the end of the LIA program they had all shared a common experience as youth delegates, admiring the power and responsibility of the former Youth Council in planning the Youth Summit. Crystal, who had initially been urged by

her mother to attend the program, now explains how she wanted to play an active role in creating a summit like the one she attended. Reginald who had initially attended the conference to connect with other African American youth was now social networking with members of the former Youth Council and using his agency to gain insight on how he might also become a member of the Youth Council. Though their initial starting points and perspectives varied, both Crystal and Reginald shared a common leadership experience in the LIA program which made them want to attend the conference again not merely as delegates, but as members of the Youth Council responsible for planning the LIA program.

When selecting delegates for the LIA program and members of the Youth Council, it is also important from a programmatic perspective to select a diverse group of young people. The program coordinator describes the selection process as a combination of two essay questions, an application, a letter of recommendation, and background information on youth activities and program involvement (Tammye, Interview Notes, 10/4/07). In the following quote she explains why there are multiple parts to the application process:

Tammye: ...because we are looking for just a mix of young people. So everyone at that conference wasn't a 4.0 student. And everyone at that conference wasn't from the suburbs. And everybody wasn't from the inner city, and everybody wasn't adjudicated youth. It was a mix of young people from all over. So, that seems to work best so that they will also see sort of a mini-world of young people. Some who are rich and whose parents could afford to you know pay their registration and sent them with no problem. Some who had to earn money to come. Some who got sponsorship. Some who came from church or a community group. Some who are involved in everything in their school. They're a cheerleader, they're on the debate team, they're you know Ms. Roosevelt High. Some

who's struggling to even get there every day. But it ends up every time just always being a great group mix of students (Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

In Tammye's description of the program participants she touches on the diversity within the LIA program participants as being important for not only the program, but for other youth to "see" youth in the program as a mini-world of young people. By creating an environment where Black youth were coming from diverse backgrounds the program creates a context for learning that involves understanding that even within one's race there is diversity of experience and perspective. Youth who came to the program came from diverse backgrounds and therefore entered the program at different points in their own developmental process. Since Council members were selected from this diverse pool of program participants, they were a representative sample of the program's larger youth population. When they became members of the Council, their position in the program had changed from a participant to a youth leader responsible for helping to organize and plan the LIA program. One of their key roles was working with youth delegates. Many of the Council members reflect on their initial experience entering into the program, as delegates, in order to help new delegates transition into the program.

Khalilah: You know when I started off I was forced to go to the conference, so a lot of times I can relate to a lot of young people who come in and I see their parents with them and I see their parents nudging them and you know they are huffing and puffing. I always make that effort to go over there and introduce myself to them and I share my experience and how I was like them what about 6, 7 years ago...I'm always like I assure you that by the end of the conference you will have a different outlook a different perspective on being here. And lo and behold when I see them at the end of the conference it was, "yeah, it wasn't so bad it

was good,” and that’s what makes all the difference to me because I knew how I felt when I first came, and a lot of times just being a young leader (Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

Khalilah uses her own experiences as a source of insight into the needs and perspectives of the delegates. In the previous quote she describes how she was initially forced to go to the conference and can therefore relate to some participants who were also being forced to attend by their parents. She connects with these youth delegates by using her experience as a narrative to share with the new delegates in order to help them get a sense of where their experiences are headed.

The effort put forth by Khalilah was also expressed by other Youth Council members who recognized their new role on the Council also meant using their position as an opportunity to pass on the same type of advice they had once received as youth delegates. For example, when reflecting on the stance he takes working with the delegates Brian commented, “I just want to be able to be in a position to give them the type of advice that I received” (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

The Youth Council members still saw themselves closely connected to the delegates even after their position in the program had changed. They could actively recall their experience when they first entered into the program as a delegate, and they passed on the advice and information they received to help new delegates transition into the program. The YC members also used their prior knowledge as youth delegates to incorporate youth voices into the planning of

the LIA conferences to come. When describing the role of the Youth Council, staff member Joyce also points to the importance of having the “youth perspective.”

Joyce: They are supposed to plan; it's supposed to be an Institute planned by young people. And the reason that it's supposed to be planned by young people is that they're supposed to have the closest perspective or expectations that another young person would have. It's like ok, who better to plan a youth conference than youth (Interview Notes, 11/26/07).

Joyce's comment describes the significant role Youth Council members play in the program because of their position as youth who are similar in age and background to the youth delegates they are planning the conference for. This similarity in perspective and expectations were key to planning the logistics of the program as far as the discussion topics, guest speakers, and the conference schedule was concerned. The program coordinator also describes the role of the Youth Council in providing a youth perspective throughout the program planning process in the following interview quote:

Tammye: For the conference they are workshop facilitators; they generate ideas about what the workshop should be. We ask them to come up with topics for discussion we invite them to come up with the themes. We invite them..., because we were trying to figure out what makes the most sense for them to be able to do, and looking at the Institute itself it's like there are pieces that make sense for them to manage. The talent show and the closing banquet, those kinds of pieces that they can own, but overall we're looking for their input even to just manage it from the standpoint of a young person. So what do you think a 13 year old is going to be interested in doing for the next four days? And looking at this schedule do we need to go all the way up til midnight or do we need to stop at 11 o'clock? How much do we, should we have as regards to speakers? And you know young people are really good about speakers too....So that's why it's so important to have that youth voice if you say your about youth engagement (Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

Tammye's comments identify specific aspects of the program LIA Youth Council members manage or "own." Her reiteration of the phrase "we invite them" suggests that the program was making a conscious effort to incorporate youth voices into the planning process. In Tammye's example managing "from the standpoint of a young person" also meant probing young people to get their perspective on aspects of the program, such as speakers, scheduling, etc. The Youth Council members had a lot of power, in this case, because their thoughts and opinions were believed to be representative of the perspectives and expectations of the youth delegates participating in the LIA program.

The LIA program was able to incorporate the voices of young people through the Youth Council and numerous feedback/evaluation forms that were handed out to delegates during each section of the conference. The Council members were constantly interacting with youth delegates throughout the conference while handling the day to day logistics of the program. The LIA program was able to gather feedback on the conference from multiple sources: directly from youth delegates, indirect conversations between delegates, the Youth Council, staff and volunteers, and directly from Youth Council members.

The Youth Council members were strategically placed in the middle of the LIA program based on their prior experience as youth delegates and their current role as Council members who help plan the LIA conference. Their role as youth leaders within the program also represents this multifaceted hat worn by the Youth Council members who are both youth leaders and leaders of youth. In

describing himself as a youth leader Brian describes the role as two-fold, “a youth leader has two definitions...a youth leader is someone who is still a youth or would consider themselves or is considered by society as a youth and is doing what they can to lead...but in addition I think that a youth leader is also someone who is leading youth” (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

The ongoing dialogues between the Youth Council members and support staff provided a space for the LIA program to gain a deeper insight into the perspective and expectations of young people from youth leaders who were also leading youth in the LIA program. This formulation of the youth leader as both a young person who is a leader and a person who leads young people is a unique feature of the LIA program because it provides an authentic site for youth to learn leadership from experiences with other youth who are assuming leadership roles as members of the LIA Youth Council. In this instance, the process to becoming an empowered youth leader is in understanding one's positional leadership roles is also connected to the relational leadership experiences as you learn from and with others.

Understanding the Power Limits of Positional Leadership

Although they could relate more to the youth delegates because of their close proximity in age, the Council members were also challenged to figure out how best to assume their role in an authoritative way that did not seem overpowering or controlling to the delegates. For example, in an interview with Shante she reflects on the challenges she faced with leading other youth:

Shante: I think it was more, because it was youth led and youth run it was kinda hard to be you know a few years older than the person, and to be able to be in charge of them, but then not act better than them or that you're over them and that in itself was a task because you know, a lot of times people think that you know your tryna run over them or tryna hold the power over their head. So just learning how to work with people, but get something agreeable above it (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

From her experience as a youth leader Shante learned how to work with people to reach agreements instead of working over people by holding her positional leadership role over their heads. She explains the importance of not letting one's position as a leader lead to an abuse of authoritative power which is also echoed in other interviews with Youth Council members. For instance, Crystal describes how being close in age with the youth delegates, also made her aware of the need to talk to others with a level of respect regardless of age.

Crystal: I was just so close in age at one point, because I feel like when I first started I was God sixteen or so....So learning how to, you know, you're almost just like teaching your peers but you can't come off as Miss Know It All. Because I don't, at the time, I don't know it all, I only know my experience and what I've been taught. So, learning how not to talk down to people that's just I think a skill that even if I was talking to somebody that was half my age you know you can still talk to people with the same level of respect and hopefully you can get that respect from people (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

Having positive communication skills regardless of age, was an important lesson Crystal learned while teaching youth delegates in the LIA program. The authentic leadership experiences described by Crystal and Shante taught them how to use their communication skills without abusing their positional leadership role within the LIA program. Shante's focus on working with people to reach an agreement coupled with Crystal's emphasis on respectful communication regardless of age

are prime examples of the Youth Council's willingness to negotiate as youth leaders.

Understanding Youth Roles and Power

The Youth Council were also faced with other issues of power when interacting with both youth delegates and adult chaperones, many of whom were not accustomed to the youth-led philosophy of the program. In the following interviews Shante and Reginald describe how their authoritative power as youth leaders on the Youth Council were sometimes called into question by the adult chaperones who attended the program as escorts to many of the youth delegates.

Shante: And it was kinda hard to get the [adult chaperones] to see that it wasn't about them, it was more about the participants. So that was a struggle in itself. Basically, just the order of power and you know people understanding their role (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

Reginald: When we ran into problems is with the adult chaperones sometimes they would treat us like we were the youth going through the program as well....I think that sometimes the adult chaperones on that level, we felt sometimes as if we were [treated as] delegates and not you know staff members at times in their eyes, so that was something that we had to overcome there (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

In the previous comments, Shante points out the difficulty of getting adult chaperones to understand the program was youth centered, and in this case youth centered also meant that there was a significant shift in the power and roles given to youth to the point that it was a struggle getting adult chaperones to adjust to this change. Reginald speaks more to the experience and authoritative power of Youth Council members sometimes being devalued by the adult

chaperones who viewed them more as youth delegates as opposed to staff members.

Since many of the adult chaperones were volunteers who escorted the youth participants, some were initially unaware of the philosophy of the program or its focus on having a youth-led conference that was adult supported. Although programmatic documents were sent to chaperones describing the program philosophy and the role of the adult chaperones (Adult Chaperone Hand-out, 2007). In addition to the hand-outs, workshops for chaperones were also created to help chaperones understand the program's philosophy toward youth leadership.

It is important to note that the power struggle between the Youth Council and the adult chaperones was not merely an issue of the age and maturity of Council members, but a difference in philosophical understanding of the role and power of youth to effectively lead a youth development program. As Joyce and Dominick both point out in the quotes below, this was not only a struggle for adults but a struggle for youth delegates who had prior experience in other youth programs where structure and power were distributed differently. When asked to describe what she liked least about the program, Joyce addressed the challenge faced when people from other youth programs do not embrace the youth centered philosophy of the LIA program:

Joyce: People who don't understand it becoming involved in it and trying to mold it into other programs that they are familiar and used to being involved in. Trying to clone, you know trying to make it fit into what they are comfortable with instead of accepting it as something new and

different and going along with that... you get kids that come from...other organizations that maybe they do the Robert's Rule of Order, or they're just used to having things done a certain kind of way...[youth] trying to say this is how you need to act, trying to dictate to one another based on their own comfort level as well as the [adult chaperones] (Interview Notes, 11/26/07).

Dominick: I like working with staff. Sometimes it's kinda hard working with staff because, we don't, I can't say we I, I sometimes saw and got the feeling that they didn't see or respect us as adults or as the planners of this conference, because we do plan and I think that the staff when trying to...teach other chaperones to take the second hand in facilitating and you know being chaperones in the conference sometimes, I think that the staff also loses that division to take second hand roles in planning or being facilitators of the conference (Interview Notes, 11/09/07).

In her previous comment, Joyce suggested that there is a level of understanding on the part of new program participants that is often missing, and that in order to adopt the youth centered approach of the program youth and adult participants must move outside of their comfort zone and focus less on the structure and order that they are accustomed to and more on the leadership experience offered in the LIA program. She described the challenge of helping adult chaperones and youth from other programs adapt to the LIA program's youth-centered philosophy because some youth and adults have prior experiences or perspectives on youth leadership and youth organizations.

In contrast, Dominick points out, that Youth Council members were sometimes not viewed or respected by staff members for their role as planners of the conference. His comments suggest that it was difficult for adults in general, both staff and adult chaperones, to adjust to the division between where youth lead and where adults are expected to support. The complexities of this

relationship may seem to some as a barrier or obstacle in youth leadership development; however it can also be seen as an opportunity to teach young people and adults about shifts in power, power dynamics, and working in relationships of power with adults and peers.

The comments from Joyce and Dominick both suggest that it is virtually impossible to create a youth leadership environment where structure and power are not ongoing issues that impact the leadership development process. They point out that program participants often bring their prior knowledge and expectations about program structure and philosophy with them to their new experiences in youth leadership programs. This can present a challenging opportunity for youth leadership programs that allow young people to experience and learn about leadership by shifting power dynamics between youth and adults. This is also an ongoing struggle and learning experience for adults who view themselves as leaders of youth or adult supporters of youth leadership.

Both Dominick and Joyce pinpoint this as one of the challenges of youth leadership in a situated and negotiated environment that must also effectively communicate new understandings of what it means to be adult and youth participants in youth-led groups. As such, the social position of “leader” is only partially defined by existing social norms. The youth leaders in the LIA program must attain positional leadership in and through cooperative interactions with others-young people and adults. Thus an important aspect of being a leader in the LIA program is experiencing the authenticity of leadership as it is learned and

practiced by all participants in a program context that is often contested by program participants who seek to understand what it means to be a leader in multiple contexts.

The struggle of how to negotiate power with program participants became one of the many issues of power that provided leadership experiences for Youth Council (YC) members. The YC members also encountered various issues of power that they were unable to foresee because their perspectives were also rooted in their prior position and experience as youth delegates. When the former delegates became members of the Youth Council their position changed, and so did the shape of the program. The large one day Youth Summit gradually became a four-day LIA Conference, and the role of the Youth Council in planning the program also changed with the program's progression. YC members were faced with many obstacles as youth leaders which made it more difficult for them to replicate the experience they had as delegates. The struggles, as expressed by Youth Council members in interviews illustrate their initial assumptions about leadership. The ways their expectations were challenged, and as in many leadership situations mentioned in this section, the effort, frustration, and success or failure of their efforts.

Reginald: I thought we were going to be the ones, they brought in I think [an event planning group] one year, some other groups to basically do the logistics for the camp, and we thought that we were going to be in charge of doing things like that. And, we thought that we would be called throughout the year to come up to [the McNeal Foundation headquarters] to help you know run a few things, but you know they took care of that on the front end by calling other groups in to do it. And that was not something that we expected very much at the beginning, but you know it

was ok with us after it happened....Because we're like the logistics of the running, the actual running of the conference and we thought that we would have a greater role there (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

Reginald did not expect the Youth Council to run the entire program when they first began, but he did expect to interact more with the foundation by going to the headquarters to work on the initial logistics of the program prior to the start of the conference. He suggests that although the Youth Council thought they would play a greater role with the initial logistics, they were okay with focusing more on the logistical role they played during the actual running of the program. His comments explain how the role of the Youth Council was initially unclear, which also made it a little difficult for them to negotiate power with the adult support staff. This is also reiterated in the following interview with Khalilah who describes how some of the financial barriers limited the Youth Council's ability to have a free space for them to take more of a leadership role as major stakeholders in planning the entire conference.

Khalilah: Well the only obstacle that I can think of that I feel I experienced was the fact that I didn't feel like I had that free space to have my part in what I think the conference should have been. I think it was a lot of adult ran and more of we sit at the table and they tell us, "hey this is what we're gonna do this is how things are going to be done" opposed to we as young people planning a conference for young people coming to the table and saying, "hey this is what we like as young people this is what we want to do as young people and this is what we'll do." I mean, I'm not blaming anybody for that it has a lot to do with you know, financial reasons, sponsorship, and just how feasible it would be for us the [Youth Council] to come to, to all come together to a meeting table and be able to do it. I'm not you know, I can't really say, why it was the way it was, but you know it was just a barrier for us all (Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

Khalilah felt as if the financial constraints limited the Youth Council members' ability to come to the meeting table with adult staff and carry their thoughts and ideas on what they felt should take place at the conference to fruition from beginning to end. Since the adult support staff played a large role in the initial logistics of the program, Khalilah describes being called to the table by the adults as opposed to youth coming to the table with adults and telling adults what they felt should take place in the conference and what they as youth wanted to do. As Brian mentions in the next comment, the comments made by the Youth Council are largely related to the prior experiences and assumptions they had as youth delegates during the first Youth Summit.

Brian: We were not able to do as large a conference as the one we had originally attended. Most, all 13 I believe, original members of my [Youth Council] had been to the large conference in 2003...due to funding and various other things we were not able to put on a conference as large as that one, but I would say that it was a strong learning experience, about corporate funding, and about various goals and aspirations that we might have had and about the feasibility of making sure that they happen. You know I really feel like we were able to put on great programs and we still made a difference but it wasn't as vibe as we had originally inspired (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

The funding restraints described by Brian and Khalilah provided another opportunity for youth in the program to learn about the challenges of leadership and how financial support can sometimes be a contributing factor in limiting the power of one's positional leadership role. The Youth Council members within this program were placed at the center of the program and utilized for their knowledge as youth on the likes and dislikes of adolescents. They were not perceived as empty vessels rather they were looked at as sources of knowledge

to help shape the program by incorporating youth perspectives and expectations. However, there was confusion and tension about “who is in charge” which can make achieving leadership complicated. The Youth Council had the power to voice their opinions and concerns throughout the planning process, yet some Council members felt that by not participating in the initial logistical planning of the conference their leadership roles were minimized. The difficulties faced that year, as described by the young leaders, made it clear that they saw themselves as attaining positional leadership in large part by planning the day to day logistics during the conference as opposed to the initial logistical planning. This will be described in greater detail in the next section on differentiated leadership roles.

Differentiated Leadership Roles

Zeldin (2004) describes the importance of young people playing a key role in organizational governance and creating new roles for young people to participate that meet their developmental needs and interest within youth development programs. The desire of Council members to increase their leadership role might have also aligned with their increase in leadership capacity and experience as youth veterans in the program. As stated previously, the youth on the Council played an active role in planning and structuring the program in regards to the logistics during the actual conference; however in the initial planning of the conference some of the Youth Council members felt like they did not play an active administrative role. This administrative role was assumed by a

two person staff that initiated contact with sponsors, handled fundraising, basic logistics regarding the location, booking of speakers, and the application process for program participants. An outside event planning group also assisted with transportation and some of the initial program logistics. Thus logistics were split into two parts: the initial logistics that the staff, volunteers, and outside event planning groups spearheaded and the logistics during the actual conference that the YC members were in charge of.

It is interesting to consider the different perspectives staff and youth had on the nuts and bolts of “administrative” work needed to put on a large conference. In this case, youth identified this as a part of the role of leadership, while staff saw it as facilitative of the event –something the youth leaders did not need to worry about. These differences may speak to different imagined worlds in which leadership functions differently—e.g. executive leadership in a foundation which is supported by administrative staff, and community leadership in which organizing people to do the work of the project is a central part of the leadership experience.

The split in logistical roles effectively divided power amongst the Youth Council, the staff, and the Foundation. In explaining this division, the Youth Council members spoke about the funding issue as a main cause for their inability to play active roles in planning the initial logistics of the conference. The YC members were spread throughout the country therefore much of their contact prior to the conference was during conference calls, as opposed to flying the

Council members to the headquarters, which would have been more expensive. The division of power placed both youth and adults in the program in an interesting situation where their positional leadership roles rested heavily on their ability to share authoritative power. The relational leadership experiences caused by this division of power will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five. For now it is important to mention that the Youth Council's stance as positional leaders was impacted by 1) the experiences and expectations they had based on their prior positional role as youth delegates and 2) their new position as Youth Council members faced with financial constraints which caused them to share some of their authoritative power with adults.

The Youth Council members believed that they would have more of an administrative role to help structure and plan the initial logistics of the program because the former YC members played more of a leading role in soliciting sponsors. However, additional funding was available to transport the former YC members to the LIA headquarters on the West coast to plan the LIA program. As Brian pointed out in his previous comment, the funding restraints provided “a strong learning experience...about corporate funding, and about various goals and aspirations that we might have had and about the feasibility of making sure that they happen” (Interview Notes, 12/18/07). In this case, the Youth Council members also learned an important lesson about how positional leadership roles must also be flexible and adaptable to situational leadership experiences.

Being able to adapt to situational variables, such as funding issues, are an important aspect of learning to lead in multiple contexts. These situational variables also shape power dynamics, as evident in the shift in roles of the adult support staff and the Youth Council members from the first LIA Leadership Institute where the Youth Council members were delegates and the LIA conferences when they assumed their positional leadership roles on the Youth Council.

The Youth Council members did not necessarily blame the program for their not being able to take more of an administrative role in planning the conference, but they constantly made comparisons between their prior experience as youth delegates looking in at the role of the Youth Council and their current experience as Council members leading the conference. As they moved from being outsiders in the program to their role as insiders, the YC members were supportive of the program that nurtured their growth and development, but they also wanted more power in the program they had helped to develop. By juxtaposing their comments for more space and a stronger administrative role, with the realization that funding had also hindered some of the leadership opportunities they would be able to have in planning the program, the Youth Council were faced with the harsh reality that leadership is complex and subject to the constraints of a larger power structure. Money, time, responsibility, skill and capacity are a few of the many issues of power that impact leadership experiences and opportunities in the LIA program.

Despite the limitations to their logistical role in planning the conference, all of the Council members believed they played a significant role in the LIA program. Tammye, Shante and Dominick describe a transition in logistical roles, once the initial logistics were taken care of by the staff and event planning group, the Youth Council did assume the main logistical role during the actual conference.

Tammye: [The staff play] just in a support role. You know even though we have our Youth Council they have input, but obviously we have to manage some of the bigger pieces around the conference. Um the whole sorta infrastructure of it, you know putting it together, so that's a role that the adults have to play and because we're challenged a little too geographically because our Council is all over the place (Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

The program coordinator, Tammye provides a different perspective on the roles of youth and adult participants in the program. She recognizes that in order for the program to run smoothly adults have to play a managerial role in making sure the larger pieces of the conference are taken care of. Her comments suggest that the supportive role played by adults is also a shared leadership experience as Youth Council members and adult support staff negotiate their power and position as both leaders and followers in the context of the LIA program. In this instance leadership is not presented as monolithic or autonomous, but rather shared as situational leadership experiences are shaped by contextual factors such as time, location, and the nature of the logistical role played by both adult and youth program participants. This assertion is also

supported by Shante and Dominick, who describe in greater detail the leadership roles taken by the Youth Council members and the program coordinator.

Shante: So basically we were in charge of getting applicants to come, and making sure, running the actual workshops. We were in charge of the workshops whether it was getting the speakers or facilitating it ourselves. We also were in charge of basically; I guess just the overall running of the program. From media getting media coverage, we wrote the press releases, we went to radio stations; basically it was youth run/youth led. But yes Ms. Tammye and her team were there to make the traveling arrangements and things like that, but as far as the conference itself, we were in charge of it the material itself basically you know giving to the participants. And the firsthand one on one experience; the first persons you see in the morning was the Council, and the last persons you see at night were the Council. We were there throughout the day working with the participants and we basically led the way...Ms. Tammye took care of where the money came into be, worked on making sure everyone was fed and taken care of but as far as the actual workshops and the actual conference itself it was the Council at the forefront....it was very much our baby, like our idea (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

Dominick: Staff did more initial logistics, like when we needed everything they were the initial people to go to. After they had completed that, we became the logistics persons; once we had what we needed to do our jobs we took on the more important main role of logistics. They were the ones to get it started per se (Interview Notes, 11/09/07).

Shante describes the role Youth Council members played in the day to day activities of the LIA program from running the actual workshops to maintaining contact with the youth delegates. The program was youth led and youth run because the Youth Council members, "basically led the way" when it came to the logistics during the actual conference. However, Shante also recognizes the role the adult support staff played in managing the money, making the travel arrangements, etc. Her comments support the notion that youth did not have total autonomy; there was a sharing of leadership power. As Shante

argues, the Youth Council members were however at the forefront of the conference which made the day to day conference experience youth led and youth run despite the initial logistical role played by Tammye and the other adult support staff members. Dominick's comments also support the notion that power was shared between staff and the YC as they negotiated their leadership role as followers and leaders in the LIA program.

The previous comments suggest that the knowledge and skills of the Youth Council were being utilized; the YC member did not have full autonomy of logistical planning and implementation of the conference but they were able to articulate the positional leadership roles they had in relation to roles played by adults in the program. This suggests that the participants were not merely aware of their authoritative role as positional leadership but they were able to describe how their experience was in part shaped by the leadership roles played by adults. The responses from the Youth Council members tend to go back and forth, as they acknowledge that they did have a level of power in running the LIA conference, but they also would have liked to increase their leadership role. It appears as if the Youth Council members saw the leadership roles played by the adult staff and the YC as both a division of labor and a passing of the baton. There were some leadership roles in which the youth sought to be more active, for example finding sponsors, and there were other task such as reading all of the delegate applications that YC members thanked the staff members for doing.

The pace at which YC members developed leadership skills also shaped their leadership experiences in certain aspects of the program and the opportunities they had to create the LIA conference that they wanted. Tammye describes the initial training given to Youth Council members prior to putting on their first conference, and Brian concludes with the realization that developing skills and a level of maturity is essential for the increased leadership role of Youth Council members.

Tammye: With this particular Council what we have done and what we will probably continue to do as part of their membership is give them training on facilitating workshops. And they are challenged to research a workshop and outline it and come up with ideas for it, and role play and go through the motions of actually doing it... that's that development piece of like how do you help young people become leaders (Interview Notes, 10/04/07).

Brian: As the program progressed we were able to develop more input into the actual programs that went on and how things are run. But we did a lot more of still programming and planning and putting it on versus administrative, making the phone calls to corporate sponsors....I definitely would say that one thing [Ms. Tammye] and the leadership of the foundation that they are open to hearing what we had to say and hearing our input. I definitely think that throughout the 4 years that we participated, and they listened to our feedback and um, made the necessary improvements that are possible. Um, some things are just outside of their control for example allowing...13, 16 to 20 year olds, to put on a conference intended for 150, you know 12 to 16 year olds may or may not be a good idea. And so, as that Council matures they will probably be you know have more and more input as well (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

Together both Tammye and Brian's comments illustrate the important role scaffolding played in helping Youth Council members learn to lead. Their quotes also demonstrate how effective scaffolding can teach Youth Council members like Brian to reflect on their leadership experiences. Brian was able to reflect on the scaffolding leadership experiences he had within the LIA program in

describing how he learned to lead progressively as his skills developed within the program. He also acknowledges how scaffolding is necessary for other youth leaders to assume greater leadership roles as they mature as future Youth Council members. Subsequently, his knowledge of leading as well as his meta-knowledge of how he learned to lead via scaffolding is both important to understanding the youth leadership development process embraced by the program.

Brian's previous comments suggest that the Youth Council voiced their opinions about wanting to make certain changes in the structure of the program, and he also acknowledges that the progressive growth and development of the Council was an important factor in increasing the Youth Council's leadership responsibility. Providing a level of structure and flexibility in youth leadership development programs also means that power has to gradually be shifted at a pace that may seem too fast or too slow to others. It is important to have this level of flexibility in youth development programs, because this atmosphere provides one of the few opportunities for youth to engage in leadership opportunities outside of the constraints of the school environment and curriculum (Heath, 2000; Sabo, 2004) However, since learning leadership is so complex it's difficult to determine a set pace for scaffolding leadership experiences that supports adolescent's growth and development as youth and their growth and development as leaders.

Some researchers have argued that the zone of proximal development is the space where youth learn by being challenged to perform task a step ahead of where they are developmentally (Vygotsky, 1978; Holzman, 2000; Sabo, 2004). Learning theorists (Daniels, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991) have pointed to the multiple interpretations of scaffolding within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal development. In the societal collectivist view of ZPD, Lave & Wenger (1991) suggest that scaffolding occurs through social transformation as relations change and conflicts arise within communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). When youth leadership development is viewed within the societal collectivist perspective, scaffolding becomes a complex process where learning occurs through shared experiences that are constantly being negotiated as relationships change.

In order to create leadership roles within the zone of proximal development, youth development staff must have a clear understanding of the skills and capacity of youth to lead, and create a space where leadership can be experienced and negotiated. Based on the comments made by program staff members like Tammye and Joyce, it is clear that they understand that Youth Council members had the capacity to lead. It is uncertain to what extent the leadership roles of the Youth Council members continued to develop throughout the course of the program, especially since the Youth Council members never assumed leadership roles over the initial administrative logistics of the LIA program.

When discussing the leadership skills taught to the participants, program staff focused heavily on teaching leadership skills through the lived leadership experience of the youth. When learning incorporates the lived experience of young people, they are challenged to make sense of their own reality (Dewey, 1902). As the Youth Council members continued to grow and develop in their leadership roles, they learned through leadership experiences that with power also comes a level of responsibility. In the following quotes, Reginald and Shante describe the long hours and pressure they endured as Youth Council members.

Reginald: You know when your there, when we're all there we go pretty much from like six or seven in the morning to about 1 o'clock in the morning straight...by the last day your really tired. It's definitely worth it, but you know it's the amount of time that we have to put into it that kinda gets to you after awhile (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

Shante: I do feel like the pressure has taught me a lot and you know a lot of nights when participants were asleep, we were up debriefing about the day the night before. You know what can we do better? What do we want to improve today, How can we fix this? Reading the evaluations, because after each session we passed out evaluations, so that they can say what they like and what they didn't like. So, how can we fix it, what should we have done differently? And so that it's also this, you know the responsibility you know forced me to grow up, and I guess more so just step up to the plate (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

Both Reginald and Shante shed light on the level of commitment the Youth Council members made to the program. Their leadership experiences within the program emphasized the importance of constantly reflecting on what they were doing in order to make improvements as they learned from their experiences. Shante believes that these leadership experiences where also influential in her growth because she learned about the responsibilities of youth leaders. The

program coordinator Tammye and staff volunteer Joyce also explain how the Youth Council members had to learn some lessons about being given the opportunity to lead and assuming their role as responsible youth leaders.

Tammye: And the Council had ideas about how they wanted to do things, and I gave them deadlines to meet to get it done, and the deadline came and nobody had done anything. So we needed to move on and then they were upset that their ideas weren't implemented so I had to remind them you know you had a deadline. And so our conversation I think I think they were surprised. I think they thought that it was going to be me telling them off, and you know you didn't do this or whatever whatever. But when we had the conversation they ended up telling me, "oh yeah we didn't do our part." But that goes back to listening and how you sort of manage a conflict, like if you get people together and say understand here it's broken here (demonstrating with her arms). So what do you think happened, and we've had instances where we have had to do that and I think the only way we got through it is because we had conversations around every body's responsibility of what we you did or didn't do. As opposed to like sort of blame. Because they came to their own conclusion, I mean I did know that they didn't meet the deadline, but they sorta came to their own conclusion and I think it was a better approach for them to learn to do and talk about it that way so in the future they'll know how to manage their own conflicts (Interview Notes, 10/07/07).

Joyce: It was kind of like first opportunity was given to the young people, um the planning Council, but if they didn't fulfill it; [Ms. Tammye] would give them a little bit of a grace period but because of....the time sensitivity of planning this conference and having to put things in place, if they didn't submit it then it didn't happen and there were things that just didn't happen. Because it was like, well what happened to such and such and such and she was like hey, I asked you for it you never got it to me and so it didn't happen I had to move forward (Interview Notes, 11/26/07).

Tammye's lesson demonstrates the need for young people to participate in learning experiences that allow them to think critically about their role and contribution as youth leaders in the program. Instead of responding by reprimanding the youth for not completing certain projects by the deadline, Tammye posed questions for them to self reflect, analyze their actions and think

critically about their role in creating the problem and their role in creating a solution. Instead of sitting through a conflict resolution workshop, Youth Council members were given opportunities to resolve conflicts using their shared lived experience. The conversations with Youth Council members around issues of responsibility also provided an opportunity for members of the YC and adult support staff to be explicit about the roles and expectations they had for one another. This lesson in responsibility was also a lesson in positionality: how do I understand my role, my responsibilities, and how my actions or inactions impact others?

Positional Leadership and Accountability

The Youth Council was also faced with the realization that if they were to fulfill their role as youth leaders within this program they also had to be accountable and responsible leaders. They learned these lessons through hands-on experience; they worked long hours in order to make sure that the program ran smoothly and the needs of the youth delegates they were serving were addressed. At the end of the day it was not enough just to voice an opinion or a concern to the adult staff or volunteers, the Youth Council members were taught that they had to exert their agency by taking appropriate action to make sure that they were fulfilling their role as youth leaders.

Tammye and other staff members also modeled the problem-posing method for Youth Council members during conference calls and meetings in

which they allowed the young people to think critically about their role and responsibility in addressing issues within the program. Crystal explains the various questions that are posed and addressed by the Youth Council members in debriefing meetings held every evening during the LIA conference:

We would bring it up in the debriefing meetings, and um state this was the problem what can we do about it? How can we change it? How can we make it somewhat better? Because at the end of the day we were all there for the participants to make sure that they were happy and in a safe environment and they enjoyed their experience. But I think that we would. even at the end of the day, debrief for 2 hours or so about anything that we would change or if we didn't really have a plan maybe for it or if we didn't really have a solution we would try to come up with a plan B or plan C to just think of ways we can make the whole experience better for everybody (Crystal, Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

The debriefing meetings provide another space for the LIA Youth Council members to think about their leadership role in impacting change within the LIA program. The questions that are posed and addressed throughout the debriefing meeting deal with addressing issues that arise during the day-to-day operation of the program and planning ahead for multiple methods for addressing the problem even if a direct solution did not exist. These meetings describe a significant amount of reflection on the daily operation of the program along with foreshadowing actions or solutions for problems that may arise.

The methods used to address the logistical problems in the program are similar to the problem-posing method of Paulo Freire. Problem-posing education uses inquiry to challenge young people to reflect and act to transform their own reality (Freire, 1970). As described in Crystal's previous comment, the Youth Council members in turn used the problem posing method to enhance the

experiences of delegates in reflection meetings. The youth in this program were constantly challenged to pose questions that helped them address the concerns and issues during the day to day logistics of the program.

The previous section of this chapter argues and provides evidence for the idea that Youth Council members are going through a leadership development process. As they increased their personal and team work skills, they were able to take on more during the conference. Many of the Council members acknowledged that the barriers or obstacles they had to overcome dealt with developing skills to negotiate with and be accountable to other youth leaders, adults, and their peers on the Youth Council. For example, Tammye speaks about the change in the Youth Council overtime, "This Council you met, this was not the Council that I knew 4 years ago. I mean they are much more mature, much more responsible, much more respectful, much more focused on what it means to lead and to serve others then when they were 13 and 14. So when people look at the council and they say wow they're great, they've always been great, but they've been rough too you know...like all of us" (Interview Notes, 10/04/07). The growth and development described by Tammye was also expressed by Youth Council members like Reginald and Crystal who cited the program as being influential in their development.

Reginald: I wouldn't call them barriers or obstacles; I think I just had to grow up a little bit. You know. I think it's kind of been part of my growth just as a man period. You know, and starting out the first year and looking at my growth today, I really think that it kinda had a great thing to do with it and kinda like, you could look at each year that I have been a part of the program and see the growth that I had (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

Crystal: I did well I guess my barrier in being on the Council; it was really just learning how to work with a team. And I think that it was a group of 14 young people, and they selected us from a large pool of candidates to be on the Council, so we all were leaders in our own organizations, communities and schools. So having 14 leaders you know powerful leaders all in one room trying to get our ideas and thoughts on the table you kind of have to learn how to listen to one another, so you know the basic skills of you know working in a team. I think that in the beginning that was my biggest obstacle and trying not to get frustrated when things didn't go my way or my idea wasn't necessarily you know kind of used in the conference. I think learning how to just deal with that was the biggest thing. I feel like it was just interacting with different people, people from different backgrounds different beliefs and just really learning how to accept that amongst us. And of course everybody is different, so you just have to roll with it, and being flexible is also another obstacle that I definitely had to, um that I ran into being on the Council with the different conferences. You know certain things don't go as planned and schedules get mixed up and so learning how to be flexible and always having a plan B or C (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

Reginald speaks more generally about noticing his developmental growth over the course of his experience in the program, where as Crystal provides a clear cut example of how individual growth and development was coupled with learning leadership through shared experiences working with a team of leaders. The training described by Tammye and the maturation that Brian points to also suggest that Youth Council members were going through more of a leadership development process that included their growth and maturity as youth leaders, and their ability to lead alongside other youth who are leaders. The leadership experience appears more complex by acknowledging that: 1) we learn to lead in relation to others, and 2) youth leadership development requires that we give youth experiences that allow room for maturity and leadership growth beyond the confinements of a particular leadership position.

Conclusion

Positional leadership is focused predominately on understanding one's role as leader with authoritative power. The actual leadership authority of a positional leader is questionable because their power is always associated with their role, thus if the role did not exist would that leader still have power? When exploring the positional leadership of Youth Council members it is important to examine the power that was associated with their role on the Council, and how their change in position as insiders and outsiders on the Youth Council impacted their role. Approaching their position on the Council from the perspective of former delegates, the Youth Council members made constant comparisons between their role on Council and the role of the former Council.

When these young people were placed in a leadership role on the Youth Council, they had prior conceptions of what it would be like to be Council members. Based on their prior experiences as youth delegates, they saw the opportunities and experiences of the Youth Council as outsiders. Once they became insiders, members of the Youth Council, they made comparisons of their role in the program in relation to the prior role of the Youth Council, when the program had more funding opportunities to provide leadership opportunities for the Youth Council.

Khalilah: When I first entered the program as just a participant, um my goal was to someday be able to be one of the young people who would plan the conference. And I reached that goal, and once I became a part of the [Youth Council] my goal was to then plan an effective conference and I'm not sure if, I don't think that I have fulfilled that goal....there is a lot of restrictions and although it was youth, it was said to be you know youth

led, youth ran, youth organized I didn't feel like I had that free space to say hey this is what I think it should be our you know just in terms of preparation or logistics. I don't feel like we as the young people the [Youth Council], had that free space to do it, so um I don't feel like I was effective as I would have wanted to be as a member of the [Youth Council] (Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

Dominick: Oh yeah definitely. Did we lead over anybody no, but we were in positions where we showed our leadership strengths and weaknesses. It's the normal idea of what role a leader plays and that it's mainly a dominant leader someone whose that out there and who represents the groups. So if you're chairman you're considered a leader. It's a role a leader plays like being out in front of the group. The leader is the person who is the face, the voice of the group after talking to the group and so we all do that in some way form or fashion (Interview Notes, 11/09/07).

Dominick: [Youth Council members] should take a more leadership role. I mean we all talked about this and we all came to the agreement that we didn't find ourselves in much of a leadership position....Like they should be doing what they did with the prior committee and flying them out to places and having meetings... after that, we should be more like board members we should be flying out meeting each other on certain weekends on certain days and planning this conference but we didn't get that opportunity (Interview Notes, 11/09/07).

Although their opportunities to lead within the program increased, some Youth Council members still left feeling that they had not created the type of program they had hoped for. The limitations placed on the program and the Youth Council members, placed the YC in a secondary logistical role which also affected their initial expectations of the leadership opportunities they thought they might have on the council. As they moved from their role as outsiders to insiders, they became aware of the power relations that existed in the program. Whereas outsiders tend to be oblivious to the power dynamics that exist within leadership programs, insiders tend to recognize these power relations as

impacting the youth leadership and development process (Libby, Sedonaen, and Bliss, 2006).

The Youth Council members had more leadership power to voice their opinion as opposed to the space to make more administrative decisions themselves regarding the actual logistics and structure of the program prior to arriving at the conference. Many of the Youth Council members preferred a larger leadership role; not merely as logistical actors during the day of the conference or the sources of knowledge and ideas in planning the conference, but having the final say in decisions---walking the project through from beginning to end. The debate over youth voice vs. youth choice provides another element of the complexities of creating meaningful leadership roles, opportunities, and experiences for youth that allow for both their voices to be heard and for young people to play an active role in decision-making. The capacity to which youth voices and youth choices can be made also depends on the relationships of power between youth and adults in the program, and the context of power in which these youth programs exist. It also depends on both youth and adults to deliberate on their understandings of power and leadership when there are occasions of conflict, misperception, or misunderstanding. In these cases, leaders make their understandings of their rights and responsibilities explicit and hear those of others who also have authority. They learn to take perspectives other than their own, to assert their values, and to devise working compromises or plan for improvement and change.

Youth Council members, gained leadership skills and experiences from participating in the program that allowed them to not only question their power within the program but the larger power structure in which the program existed. Although Khalilah felt that a larger space should have been created for youth, she also praised the program along with other Youth Council members for providing her with an understanding of leadership.

Khalilah: When I think about the leader that I am today the first thing that comes to mind is [LIA]. Because I don't think I was the leader I am today before I attended that conference in Washington, D.C. (Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

Brian: I definitely like the fact that it's youth run, and the attendance and the participants come see that there are youth that are not too far from their age, that are close in age to them, that are helping to put all of the programs and that are taking apart in leading an organization like the [McNeal Foundation]. Um, I also like the fact that there's so much learning and um, challenge that we received as Council members and I definitely think that I am a much better person and much better leader through the various challenges that I faced within the program (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

The Youth Council members ran the day to day logistics of the conference, and therefore they stood out to many of the delegates as having a level of autonomous power in the LIA program. Once they became insiders within the program, the Youth Council members began to understand the complexities of youth leadership and their role as youth leaders. Through their leadership experiences in the program, they learned that there is a level of structure and power in every leadership position. Someone has to answer to someone, thus total autonomy never completely exist. Everyone has a role to play, and by transitioning from the initial logistical planning of the program staff, volunteers,

and event planning committee to the actual day to day planning by the YC members everyone was playing an active role in putting on the LIA conference. Youth Council members continuously noted their growth and development within the program.

Although the program was not entirely youth-led or youth-ran, YC members were experiencing roles that taught them about their own leadership capacity, and various obstacles that accompany youth leadership. In many ways, their leadership learning embodied certain elements of Kirshner's (2006) apprenticeship learning where youth learn through modeling, coaching, and fading-out. Interviews with program participants suggest that both modeling and coaching did occur, however adult staff never faded-out completely. Logistical roles were continuously split between adults and youth leaders, in youth-adult partnerships where leadership roles were shared. Rather than focus on the leadership dichotomy between what was youth-led and what was adult-led, Kirshner's (2006) argument for apprenticeship learning supports the notion that in order for youth to learn and grow developmentally within the zone of proximal development there must be a level of support from adult staff, thus a collaborative effort is in fact inevitable.

However the requirement for more space should not be taken lightly in a program that is described by many of its participants as youth-run/youth-led.

Tammye: For the conference [Youth Council members] are workshop facilitators, they generate ideas about what the workshop should be. We ask them to come up with topics for discussion we invite them to come up with the themes. We invite them, now we've gotten down to because we

were trying to figure out what makes the most sense for them to be able to do, and looking at the Institute itself it's like there are pieces that make sense for them to manage. The talent show and the closing banquet, those kinds of pieces that they can own, but overall we're looking for their input even to just manage it from the standpoint of a young person. So what do you think a 13 year old is going to be interested in doing for the next four days? And looking at this schedule do we need to go all the way up till midnight or do we need to stop at 11 o'clock. How much do we, should we have as regards to speakers? And you know young people are really good about speakers too...So that's why it's so important to have that youth voice if you say you're about youth engagement (Interview Notes, 10/04/07).

As Tammye states, youth are invited and they are asked to share their input, whereas the adult support staff "we" decides what task, assignments, and aspects of the program the Youth Council members can assume ownership of. The adult support is needed to help scaffold the youth development process, but the presence of the adult support also indicates that adults play a large role in the youth-run youth-led programs. When defining what it means to have a youth leadership program, we must begin to think about the capacity to which we are prepared to let youth lead and also making them aware of the power dynamics associated with leadership.

If young people are to play meaningful roles within youth programs, then the leadership opportunities and experiences they have must also reflect their role or position as leaders within a larger organizational construct where power is an ongoing factor. This means, that just like any other members of the organization, they are not viewed or suggested as being autonomous leaders. Young people must begin to explore their leadership capacity in realistic ways that acknowledge the presence of power.

Tammye: I don't want the council to think that all they do, their main thing is to put on a conference. Cause that's a different kinda idea about leadership as opposed to the one I think we want to go for. Cause for some people they look for, "oh they got to stand up there at the microphone, and they were in charge, you know and they had a staff badge....So we want to be *real* clear about what our expectations are and we really gotta go back through it and revisit it, and make sure" (Interview Notes, 10/04/07).

Tammye points to the need for clarity in not only describing the role of young people in the program, but making sure that they are not over glamorizing this role by just observing the position of the Youth Council members as being young people in charge of the conference. There seemed to be a willingness from the program coordinator to expand the role of youth within the program so that it continues to coincide with the growth and development of the youth participants.

Chapter Four discussed the Youth Council members' position as outsiders transitioning into their leadership role on the Council. This transition from youth delegate to Youth Council member came along with recognition of power dynamics that impacted the ways in which Youth Council members assumed their leadership roles. In addition to the individual growth of youth participants, there also seemed to be a heavy focus on the collective growth of youth with the programs emphasis on social networking. Youth Council members participated in a collective learning environment as they began to explore their position as youth leaders within the program in relation to other youth leaders on the Council.

The next chapter will examine the power relations within the program by analyzing the relational leadership experiences of program participants. Chapter

Five will focus more specifically on the youth to youth and youth-adult relationships where social networking lead to sharing knowledge and power.

CHAPTER FIVE

Relational Leadership

Uniting Behind a Mission and Vision for Youth Leadership

The previous chapter on positional leadership described how the Youth Council members understood their roles as positional leaders on the Council. The perceptions they formed about their position on the Youth Council were related to their prior experiences as youth delegates. As they experienced new leadership roles on the Council they learned to lead through shared leadership experiences with other leaders. These shared leadership experiences focus heavily on scaffolding and reflection in group discussions that challenged them to analyze their leadership position in relation to other leaders they were working with and serving. In the interviews, they acknowledged situational variables that influenced their leadership roles, such as financing, and how the prior experiences of other adults and youth in the program would ultimately shape their leadership experiences.

In this chapter the relational experiences of the Youth Council members are described in three sections: Uniting Behind a Mission and Vision for Youth Leadership, Sharing Knowledge: Learning from Social Networks, and Growing and Learning Together in the Youth Council. Whereas the previous chapter described how positional leadership roles are impacted by shared leadership experiences, this chapter examines how connectivity and networking are used to

enhance the relational leadership experiences between Youth Council members, youth delegates, and adult support staff.

Creating a Space for Young Black Leaders to Network

During the conference, in interviews, and throughout the program documents there is one quote spoken continuously by program participants that exemplifies the programs social networking opportunity. In multiple ways, the participants paraphrase the founder's emphasis on "providing an opportunity for young Martins to meet young Malcolms and young Harriets to meet young Ida B. Wells." In the following interview quotes, Algernon, Shante, and Brian paraphrase Raymond McNeal's mantra to describe their relational leadership experiences in the LIA program:

Algernon: networking too you gotta know how to hook up with self and then how to work with a powerful leader that's why [Raymond] always talks about a young Malcolm meets a young Martin, so things like...good networking is important (Interview Notes, 11/27/07).

Shante: [Raymond] always says he wants a young Malcolm to meet a young Martin. Like how different would the world have been if they would have met each other at a young age? And I feel as if I have met a lot of young Malcolm's. I really believe that the people that I have met will one day have an influential part in the world and so, I am just so thankful for that opportunity (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

Brian: One of the things that [Raymond McNeal] says every time that we have a conference is "The conferences provide an opportunity for the next young Malcolm to meet the next young Martin and the next young Ida B. Wells to meet the next young Rosa Parks or Sojourner Truth," and I think I tremendously believe in and support that mantra in that individuals, if we are able to meet the right people today, that can have a positive impact on the future tomorrow and we can collaborate our efforts and fully use our efforts and use our abilities and skills to better our lives and our communities I think it's best that we meet as soon as possible (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

This view is also shared by adults in the program who attempt to help put the vision into action as they set the context for leadership learning. For example, in describing the role of the adult support staff member, Joyce also stated that the overall role of the staff was “to support [Raymond’s] vision of that whole thing of Harriet meeting Ida B. and Marcus meeting Malcolm” (Interview Notes, 11/26/07). The reiteration of this mantra suggests that the idea that young African American leaders are coming together to meet and share their knowledge and experiences is deeply embedded into the minds of program participants. It also emphasizes the importance of having youth leaders who have the power to make immeasurable contributions to the African American community network and work together at an early age.

The Youth Council members describe social networking as an important component of leadership in the LIA program. Social networking stands out to many of the program participants as an opportunity to meet other youth with leadership potential. Reginald believes the purpose of the program is “to give them the opportunity to A., which is the part that I think is most important, to network and to meet each other and to get a chance to shake the hand of the next leader of tomorrow” (Interview Notes, 11/21/07). This opportunity is crucial for program participants like Reginald and Dominick, who came to the program specifically to be connected with other African American young people. Tammye, the program coordinator, describes this desire for youth to be around other young African American leaders as a response to what she calls the “only Black

phenomenon.” In an interview quoted extensively below, Tammye gives words to a common experience of young people who are Black and are in the minority in their schools.

Tammye: Most of the comments we get back from young people are around you know, “I’m so glad there are other people around who like me who care.” And we usually get comments from kids who “I go to an all white school, and it’s hard you know for me being the Black student there and I come to the program with the Foundation and I see now wait a minute there are other kids who are just like me. So at least we get to see that there are more than just one person like me who is interested in being engaged in community, etc.”... “I wanna go to college, I wanna be involved in the community, I wanna help people, and where I am in my school.” A lot of them are the only Black because there is this phenomenon called “*the only Black*.” There the only Black in maybe their advanced AP class or the only Black in the whole school, or the only Black who is in a model United Nations Club. And then we had another group of kids who are in a school, and doing things, and their peers are like, “why you doing that you could be doing x, y, and z?” So they’re not necessarily supported. So then we have a third group of kids who are probably not as involved as the first group maybe don’t have the support of the second group, but once they get around those other kids then they’re like “hey, I can do that too.” So it’s all good. It becomes, it ends up being this whole big positive peer pressure unit (Interview Notes, 10/04/07).

The “only Black phenomenon” describes the seclusion facing African American youth who are not placed in learning environments in their schools or communities where they are around other African American youth who are interested in being leaders in the community. Tammye uses this phrase both literally and figuratively to describe instances where LIA youth are the only Black students in their schools or cases where there are other Black students but youth are still faced with the same level of seclusion. As Tammye explains, youth who are in schools with other Black youth may experience the “only Black phenomenon” because they do not feel that other youth support or understand

the decisions and choices of Black youth who aim to be leaders in their community. For these young people, the leadership conference provides a space for them to interact with other young Malcolms, Martins, Harriets, Sojourners, and Ida B. Wells who have various levels of support, involvement, and interest in youth leadership. Having this space is important because it provides an opportunity for Black youth who aspire to be youth leaders to network and feel connected and supported by their peers, which can also help validate their choice to become youth leaders.

The Leaders in Action program attempts to connect the leaders of today to the historical role African American leaders have played in American society through workshops presentations and daily quotes that reference historical Black leaders. During the conference, speakers encouraged contemporary Martins and Malcolms to assume their leadership role while quoting historical figures like Harriet Tubman for assuming leadership responsibility. Youth Council members' recited quotes, such as the one listed below, by Martin Luther King, Jr.

(Observation Notes, 8/3/2007).

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy (King, 1963).

When asked to describe what leadership means to this program. The program coordinator, Tammye, spoke openly about bridging the generation gap between leaders during the Civil Rights movement and youth leaders of today.

Tammye: [Raymond McNeal] had this thought that this was the first actually the second generation of young African American leaders coming

from the civil rights movement who had no experience with the movement...the leaders from the African and African American experience come from two places from slavery through segregation, and then civil rights. So what happens to Black leadership if there are no struggles per se that this generation has had to experience, because our generation benefited from slavery, segregation, civil rights? We know that there are still issues to be resolved, so how do we connect those experiences to this generation of young leaders who will impact Black America? Our position is that we need to have something to help train these young people who will continue to be advocates and engage in civic engagement to benefit and improve relations and situations for African Americans. But how do we do that if they're not coming from the struggle (Interview Notes, 10/04/07)?

In the previous quotes, Tammye speaks to the need to connect the history of African American leadership with Black youth leaders of today by providing knowledge of the struggles facing African and African Americans with the skills needed for the next wave of youth leaders to assume their leadership roles. The previous quote by Tammye elaborates on the multiple issues facing Black youth who aspire to be leaders in their community. Not only are some of these young people faced with "the only Black phenomenon" within their social groups, but there is also a growing disconnect between youth leaders of today and the historical role Black leaders have played in addressing the struggles in their community. Tammye's comments point to the need for a collective sense of mission and efficacy amongst youth leaders who must develop a clear understanding of today's struggle as well as an understanding of the role played by Black leaders in addressing these struggles historically. Tammye's rhetorical question about closing the gap and connecting African American youth to the struggle is answered by the program's focus on connectivity and forming social networks for youth leaders to dialogue about their present day struggles. The

interview quotes below from Dominick and Shante describe how the struggles facing Blacks in the community are discussed in open dialogues between youth leaders.

Dominick: [What] I like most about the program is that the kids, the students getting together and talking about African American issues. But I feel it's more important because we need to have more collaboration between each other to connect those who are from Texas with those who are from Philadelphia who probably are doing the same exact projects and can be resources for each other (Interview Notes, 11/09/07).

Shante: I think what I like the most is that through the program I have gotten to know youth across the country. I now have great friends you know that are from Alabama, or from St. Louis, from Philly, just people that I would have never had the chance to meet, if it were not for [Raymond's] vision and [Leaders in Action]. Basically, I feel like I built up a strong network of people around me so that whenever I'm in need or if I ever have a vision I know who I can call....that would help me succeed in what I'm trying to do (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

Dominick ties the importance of having dialogue between young people about African American issues to the need to increase collaborative initiatives between youth leaders across the country. Shante also describes how forming social networks with participants in the program can serve as a resource tool in future leadership initiatives. African American youth participants were coming from various backgrounds, and some were faced with being the "only Black" in their classes, schools, and communities. However, when youth came together in this program, it was not merely to bring young people from various different cities together for the sake of bonding with other youth. The program had created a space where youth leaders were interacting with other youth leaders around relevant African and African American issues in order to do the following:

- To foster relationships among youth from different parts of the country, schools, church, and community groups.
- To develop a cadre of young leaders with critical-thinking skills who will share their knowledge and skills and make a positive impact on the world.
- To help youth develop a sense of civic and personal responsibility and commitment.
- To increase student awareness about important issues facing our world (Leadership Institute Program Booklet, 2007; Website Institute, 2007).

Sharing Knowledge: Learning from Social Networks

When asked to describe the purpose of the program in their own words, the Youth Council members identified two main components of the program: a social component and a knowledge component. In this section, I will analyze what these components mean to the YC members and why they make a distinction between the two, yet see both as necessary for leadership and learning to lead. The social component involves understanding the importance of social networking with other leaders and assuming an active leadership role within the community. The knowledge component involves utilizing the intellect and talent brought forth by youth participants along with the tools and skills taught during the conference. In this chapter the participants reveal how the sources of knowledge and the purpose for social networking are interconnected in a learning environment that values the sharing of knowledge.

The Youth Council members reported in their interviews that knowledge is something that can be utilized, transmitted or enhanced in the program by

communicating with other youth and guest speakers. For example, Dominick said that he thought the program is “meant to bring African American’s across the nation together in an intellectual way” (Interview Notes, 11/9/07). Khalilah similarly emphasized social interaction and learning, in her statement that the purpose of the program is “to meet other young people like themselves or to just enhance their leadership skills” (Interview Notes, 12/21/07). The YC members described young people as able to play an essential role in fostering their own growth and the growth of their peers. Crystal, for example, describes the exchange relationship between Youth Council members, delegates, and guest speakers in a learning environment where knowledge is shared:

Crystal: It’s interesting how you can almost be a mentor and a role model for people who are almost the same age as you. And I think that alone is just an amazing experience because not only do I, I tend to try to think I can teach you know other people the little bit of knowledge that I know, but I also think I can learn from them. So I think that that back in forth in exchanging information, in exchanging experiences about different topics. I met so many people over the years from so many different backgrounds, and the friendships the connections the network I think has just been the greatest part of it. And all along you’re also exposed to great people like [Dr. Harrison], of course [Raymond] and just knowing those people is just amazing and I think that it’s definitely been a growth experience for me (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

The “back and forth in exchanging information” that Crystal experiences is also described by Shirley Brice Heath (2000) as an opportune place for learning to occur in youth programs as young people grow and develop in multiple roles as learners and teachers.

Knowledge is a shared social contact among youth and adult speakers, by panelists, in planning the curriculum for the conference, and in socialization

between youth delegates around issues that pertain to young people such as education, homelessness, Black on Black crime, Hip-Hop, the Abuse of the N-Word, etc. During the LIA conference, youth delegates created youth venture projects to address these issues (Observation Notes, 8/5/2007). Within these spaces for intellectual contact there is room for dialogue and also disagreements on issues. Disagreement is accepted as a part of a learning dialogue, and many of the Youth Council members believe that the LIA program provides a strong platform for youth voices to be heard regardless of whether consensus is achieved on every issue. For example, in an interview, Shante said:

I think that in any group there is going to be some controversy within the group. Some people are going to want to go one way and some people are going to want to go another but I feel as if [Leaders in Action] provided an open forum. Especially when we were dealing with issues, we would put issues up all around the room. And you could pick whatever issue you wanted to make an action plan for (Interviews Notes, 12/11/07).

Leadership is not dependent on all participants agreeing, but on the incorporation of youth talents and experiences through open dialogue about relevant topics, coupled with an exposure to information that would enhance their awareness around African and African American issues. This information is often introduced for discussion in the form of PowerPoint presentations, videos, activities, and hand-outs. The youth watched videos about the spread of HIV and AIDS in the Black community and they participated in dialogues with panelist about healthcare, education, poverty, etc. International relations were also discussed as youth participants heard first hand experiences from Sudanese refugees about the genocide in Darfur (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007). When

Tammye describes these efforts to provide young people with wide issue exposure, she talks specifically about connecting youth leaders to opportunities that they might not otherwise have.

Tammye: Through our program we're able to just help young people get access to so many things....Just thee exposure, when I tell the story about [Gloria], [Gloria] was screaming. [Dr. Harrison] calls you on your cell phone, like come on, like how cool is that? And I was telling you the story of the presidential forum, we had tickets...so when I went through the list of kids who attended the Institute and who were in the Maryland/DC area and was just like sending emails saying, "Listen we have some tickets if you're interested you know here is what you need to do."....And [Sylvester] he came up and he was so excited that he got to go to a presidential forum. That does not happen for Black kids. It just doesn't, so we get to enlighten, and we get to encourage, and we get to empower (Interview Notes, 10/04/07).

The exposure to opportunities to enter into dialogue with other youth and adult leaders both inside and outside of the program is one of the program's strongest qualities, because it is an opportunity that Black youth seldom have. As Tammye notes, the young people are prepared, however, to accept these opportunities and understand that they are able to engage with other leaders.

For example, Tammye describes in greater detail the knowledge youth brought to the program, and how the program's focus on exposure helps Youth Council members develop additional leadership skills through training. Her comments focus heavily on the social networking aspect of the program with an emphasis on teambuilding as an essential skill of relational leadership in workshops like "Leadership 101."

Tammye: Teambuilding, few people are successful by themselves. So how do you organize your team to make your plan work? And what are you gonna do? How do you as a leader, encourage and invite other

leaders to come together? That's why when we did the team building exercises at the Institute and also the piece around that "Leadership 101" that's the, you know, one of the many exercises out there where you connect, and sorta identify your personal skills and your personal strengths and personal weaknesses so that you can see what kind of person you are and then understand other people and how they work so you can best use all of the strengths that other people have on your team (Interview Notes, 10/04/07).

Workshops like, "Leadership 101" explored the leadership skills possessed by participants in an attempt to help them think critically about how their skills can be used to connect to other youth leaders. Tammye's emphasis on providing youth with knowledge about how to work together was closely related to Brian's description of what he learned through his leadership experience in the program.

Brian: Learning an individual in the quickest way possible and learning how they best hear and listen is something that I feel that I learned, and also being able to communicate with them through that hearing and listening....Teamwork, teambuilding is certainly something that also has to do with the learning of another individual. If you learn the strengths and weaknesses of those around you, you can best use your strengths and weaknesses together with theirs to obtain and receive common goals (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

The youth delegates participate in team building workshops like the "Leadership 101" workshop series that focuses on identifying your leadership style and using the knowledge of your leadership style to work with other youth leaders. Another workshop series called "Got Issues, Get Organized!" encourages youth delegates to collaborate with one another to create a plan of action to address one of the relevant topics discussed during the conference. In addition to these workshop series teambuilding activities such as the "Leadership Odyssey & Team Building Activities" and the community service-learning project

at a local youth center allowed youth to get hands-on experience working alongside other youth to complete leadership skill building activities or painting, planting, and cleaning to revitalize a local community center. Examples of some of these workshops and activities will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six. Through these experiences they learn team building and negotiation skills that can be used to strengthen their social networks. Youth Council members and youth delegates also interact in a closed forum discussion that is for youth only called, "What's Love Got to Do with It?" As Shante explains, in this workshop young people discuss the roles they play in relationships and the importance of loving yourself as you learn and grow from your relationships with others.

Shante: "What's Love Got to Do with It?"...that's basically just about relationships and the roles that they play within your growth and your relationship with other people, which is you know a great thing (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

During the closed forum discussions, Youth Council members have an opportunity to talk directly with youth delegates about the importance of forming relationships built on love and mutual respect. The "Leadership 101" workshop series and the "What's Love Got to Do with It?" workshop are two of the main workshops lead by the Youth Council members both dealing heavily with developing one's individual leadership skills and applying those skills in relationships with other young people. The "Leadership 101" workshop series consists of the following workshops: "Life/My Goals," "My Leadership Style" (also known as "What's Your Leadership Style?"), "My Resume," and "Myspace/ My

Issue” (Program Booklet, 2007). The workshop sessions rotate with youth delegates participating in workshops with different Youth Council members. One session of the “My Leadership Style” workshop was conducted by Crystal and Shante, and Khalilah participated in another session of the same workshop. The following observation notes describe Crystal and Shante's workshop:

[Crystal] and [Shante] begin their workshop with a follow-up from this morning, stating that, “the goal of the workshop is to know how to cope with different leaders, how to balance with each other and know our weaknesses and strengths.” They spoke of the importance of “taking your weakness and making it into a positive.” The first activity was for the youth delegates to complete a self-evaluation survey called a Youth Personality Profile. During the survey, the Youth Council facilitators asked the delegates about their experience in the program thus far...Following the survey the facilitators describe four types of leaders: powerful, popular, peaceful, and perfect. The delegates were asked to tally their score and were given leadership buttons based on their responses on the leadership style survey they completed. They were asked to break into groups based on their leadership style button: powerful, popular, peaceful, and perfect. After the groups were split up, the Youth Council facilitators introduced an activity assignment. The assignment was to work in a group to answer the following question: What would your group (committee) do to get 18-21 yr. olds to vote? They are instructed by the Youth Council facilitators to think of everything budget, who you're going to get your money from, etc. All delegates are actively engaged in planning this activity; the Perfect group is posing questions to one another to explain their opinion and listening to others ideas while offering suggestions. They followed directions to a “T”, and gave an overview of what was written by their group reporter. Some of the youth delegates in the Popular group are overpowering other speakers while discussing the entertainers they will bring to their event. The delegates in the Powerful group are actively debating ideas: they argue on the verge of silence. The Peaceful group is the first group to finish the assignment. They quickly agreed on an idea, and are sitting speaking quietly to each other.

The observation notes provide an example of the leadership role Youth Council members take in the “My Leadership Style” workshop. This example details the four leadership styles discussed during the Leaders in Action program

as well as the relationship between youth delegates who work with other leaders that share their leadership style. The youth personality profile hand-out supports the trait theory (Bass, 1990; Jago, 1982, Northhouse, 2006) approach to youth leadership which suggests that there are characteristics/traits that are specific to leadership. The observation notes describe how the traits prescribed to the individual leadership styles are practiced by various youth delegates while they complete their activity assignment. In a brief discussion with Shante following the activity, she explains how every year the youth delegates prescribe to the same behavior when working with a group of leaders who have their same leadership style. Shante explains, "It never fails this happens every year. The popular group talks about entertainment and location, the powerful group argues, etc. I guess that's why it's good to have well balanced leaders" (Observation Notes, 8/3/2007).

By interacting with other leaders who have similar leadership styles, the character traits of the youth leaders are brought to the forefront for discussion. The Youth Council members recognize that there is a nature and nurture component of leadership. This nature and nurture aspect was also recognized in other program workshops such as, "Are Leaders Born or Made?" which was presented by an adult guest speaker. At the end of the second "What's Your Leadership Style?" workshop, Khalilah shared knowledge about leadership with the youth delegates:

"Some leadership skills you're born with and some you develop throughout life" ... "We can all be leaders and have different leadership

skills. You can be a leader and be shy and not talk a lot. You can be a leader by carrying yourself in respective ways and leading by examples”....In the end you need to leave saying, “I am capable of planning an event, I am capable of starting my own program. Speak your events into an existence. You are all capable and powerful enough to do what you want to do” (Observation Notes, 8/3/2007).

The workshops facilitated by Youth Council members create an opportunity for the Council to share their knowledge and perspectives on leadership with youth delegates. It raises individual difference, the distinction between style and skills and the idea that, regardless of style, leadership also involves skills that can be learned. The learning experiences that occur during the workshops allow Youth Council members and youth delegates to learn more about their leadership skills and capabilities through the relational leadership experiences created within the Leaders in Action program.

Growing and Learning Together in the Youth Council

After 4 years of participation on the Youth Council, members describe their leadership development within the program as both positional (in virtue of their individual identities as Youth Council members) and also as a relational experience they shared with other members of the Council, program staff, volunteers and youth participants. For example, Algernon speaks of the relational aspects of enacting his position as a Youth Council member saying, “I keep very close ties with them. We have deep conversations, so like a lot of teamwork was developed and accomplished in our times there” (Interview Transcript, 11/27/07). For Brian, in his words, “The largest thing that I am most grateful for is the

development of a long lasting friendship and relationship with my fellow [Youth Council] members. I would definitely say that they, that we together have been through a lot as far as the development of not only ourselves but the program that we had that we wanted to put on fully as youth. And, I definitely believe I have some lifelong friends and with the members I served with" (Interview Notes, 12/18/07). Similarly, Khalilah speaks of relationships with other leaders:

The friendships that I built, I can say [Leaders in Action] I started my [own non-profit youth organization] out of [Leaders in Action], and the same people that I met from [Leaders in Action] 4 years ago are the same people that I work with today in the program. The same people that visit for college breaks, you know I keep constant contact with, and I think that they will be the same people in the future who will allow me, who will be great contacts as far as me furthering my own personal and professional goals. So I think it's the networking, the long lasting friendships, and just being in an environment where you're not the only one who is concerned about your community (Interview Transcript, 12/21/07).

As a result of participating on the Youth Council, Algernon, Brian, and Khalilah describe close relationships formed amongst YC members that evolved into friendships. They learned about teambuilding, negotiation, and connecting through the supportive social networks they formed as Youth Council members. They depict their relationships as being important to their continued developmental growth, extending beyond their time in the program.

In addition to forming relationships with program staff, youth, and adult volunteers, the Youth Council members formed relationships on the Council that moved them outside of their positional leadership role or title on the Council. Some had leadership experiences that were more closely linked to their career

interests whereas others saw a gray area between their actual leadership role and the multiple roles they were involved in together as a leadership team.

Crystal: I was spokesperson and then later for the past 2 or 3 years I became the publicity coordinator and just really helping bring in media and get media attention for the different conferences. I worked closely with Ms. Tammye in getting the various media out, TV, radio, newspapers. You know to really cover the event and write up about what the foundation was doing and of course being the spokesperson I was able to do interviews as well (Interview Notes, 1/10/07).

In addition to the logistical roles she shared with other Youth Council members, as spokesperson or publicity coordinator there were aspects of Crystal's role that were specifically linked to her prior career interest. Many of the other Council members, however, describe their leadership roles in a more general sense. As explained in the following quotes, the Youth Council saw themselves as a collective unit where leadership responsibilities were shared among the Council members, therefore many of duties or responsibilities associated with leadership titles were often approached collectively.

Khalilah: Well, I dealt a lot with logistics. I wouldn't say that was my "role" but that's what I dealt a lot with during conferences (Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

Reginald: The Council was such a group you know you really didn't even see positions after awhile. I think chair was really something that was given to, just to designate something as like a committee, you know. So they gave me certain things, because that was my position, or something that I was on the committee. But I really don't think that I was you know, I didn't feel as if I was a chair over my peers, I felt like we were all in this together (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

Shante: Vice chair was basically just you know within the Council,... [Reginald], which is our chairman, couldn't fulfill a role then I would step up. But basically, we as a Council worked as a whole, but you know certain priorities were upon the vice chair (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

Khalilah describes not really having a specific “role” as in title, whereas Reginald describing having a role but not really feeling as if his role as chair gave him power over the other Youth Council members. Shante’s comments identify the common ground between the leadership roles of individual Council members and how power is distributed between these roles. Her comments suggest that the Council often operates as a collective unit creating a bridge between positional leadership roles and their relational leadership experiences. I argue that the positional leadership roles given to Youth Council members involves them working together as a collective unit, and their relational leadership experiences involve them sharing power between one another. This is also described in Shante’s depiction of Youth Council members as gap fillers, assuming positional leadership roles as and when they needed to be filled.

Learning How to Negotiate thru Relational Leadership Experiences

As gap fillers, Youth Council members are constantly being impacted by the relational leadership experiences they have working together to complete tasks. During the conference, Council members were performing multiple tasks from leading workshops, facilitating panel discussions, and chairing the opening and closing banquets. The observation notes describe instances where they work collectively as a group huddling to find solutions for large problems that arise suddenly, such as the cafeteria being closed during breakfast time (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007). They are also able to lead discussions and deal with spontaneous logistical concerns by themselves, such as youth delegates

unsure of their room assignments or answering questions about workshop projects (Observation Notes, 8/2/2007). The obstacles they face as Youth Council members provide an opportunity for them to exercise their leadership skills and learn how to utilize those skills as a team.

In the next quote, Shante describes how the relational leadership experiences she had on the Council also extended outside of the LIA program:

Shante: It has just been a great privilege and I just feel like there's so many different personalities that have come together and um, we're all powerful leaders and you know peaceful leaders. Just to have all of those dynamics of one Council working together, it's not usual. Especially you know taking someone from Philly and taking someone from Indiana that's just not heard of. And she's now one of my closest friends. You know what I mean. And so, I don't think I could ever, if it wasn't for the Council, I wouldn't have ever had that kind of experience. And so because of that I am very grateful for the Council, and I owe a lot. And I know these are the people I will know for a lifetime. We've grown up together.... if I ever was to carry out something, I know that I would want them to be a part of it, and I know that they would help me to succeed at it. Like I have no doubt that we would succeed (Interview Transcript, 12/11/07).

Shante saw the different personalities and backgrounds on the Youth Council as an opportunity to learn in an environment where the group dynamics played a key role in the learning experience she encountered. Her appreciation of the group dynamics is reiterated in her affirmation that she would also call on the Youth Council to help her with her future endeavors. However, the group dynamics did not always provide an environment where ideas and opinions were easily agreed upon. When asked, "Do you feel you have contributed to this program?" Dominick stated the following:

Dominick: In some ways yes, in other ways no because I'm limited in what I can say, mainly because there's not a consensus, the group is very

diverse so we all have different ideas. We all have different aspects in which impacts the way the programs run so sometimes we agree sometimes we don't...(Interview Notes, 11/09/07).

When Dominick was asked, "When expressing your opinion to others, were your thoughts and ideas being heard?" he agreed with all of the Youth Council members that his opinions were heard by others in the group:

Dominick: The atmosphere always changed, regardless of the idea. We always, um, I mean it could change at the drop of a hat. Sometimes it was nice and friendly and we had time to discuss and articulate our ideas and there were other times when we didn't, we didn't have time to do that we had time to make drastic decisions and so sometimes it got overwhelming and it got heated debates and we just couldn't agree. And so we had to contest sometimes. But, for the most part the environment was fine until a pressing issue came about (Interview Notes, 11/09/07).

Dominick's comments suggest that the program does provide an atmosphere for youth voices to be heard, but the negotiation process is sometimes difficult because of the various perspectives and ideas presented by the Council members who were all leaders in their own right. Working as a leadership team placed the Youth Council in a relationship of power with other youth leaders. The different leadership styles created power dynamics on the Council which made it difficult at times to reach a consensus on issues. Instead of choosing one person's view over another, the Council had to negotiate and collaborate ideas; in the end it was not one voice or one person's complete idea always being implemented but a collaboration of their collective thoughts as they sought to reach some level of compromise for the sake of the program.

Crystal: So having 14 leaders, you know, powerful leaders all in one room trying to get our ideas and thoughts on the table you kind of have to learn how to listen to one another, so you know the basic skills of you know

working in a team. I think that in the beginning that was my biggest obstacle and trying not to get frustrated when things didn't go my way or my idea wasn't necessarily you know kind of used in the conference. ...I feel like it was just interacting with different people, people from different backgrounds different beliefs and just really learning how to accept that amongst us (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

Reginald: And you know, we had, there were times when we had our ups and downs, you know quarrels and so. When you have 10 strong Black women and only four guys, you know, you're gonna have some little issues and quarrels here and there. So we had those, but I guarantee you at the end of the thing we all, you know, felt like we went through this journey together. You know, and because we were all in it together and we've known each other for so long it really brought us closer. I think working with them, it was an honor for me to work with some of the people that we worked with. I just know that, you know, we're all going to be successful you know and I'm gonna call [Shante] in 10 years and find out what great things she's doing and [Brian]. All these people are going to go on and do great things and they respect the field you know. And to work with someone like that you know while we're all young and we're all struggling to do the same, to be successful together is really great (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

The Youth Council members recognize that the negotiation process was not always an easy one, yet their productivity as a Council rested on their ability to negotiate and compromise with one another. In the previous chapter we learned that some members had initial aspirations for what their experience on the Council would be like, and the individual power they thought they would have as Council members to implement the programs they wanted. Once they realized the limitations to their progress albeit because of financial restraints, limitations in logistical role, or divergence in ideas the need for collaboration, negotiation, and compromise became even more evident.

Crystal: Once we came together as a group as a unit we were able to you know just, I feel like our conferences and our meetings were just so much more productive and successful because we just really listened to each

other. And even if you know I had an idea, if somebody had an idea we would just kind of tweak it this way kind of really incorporating everybody's thoughts and ideas (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

Brian: Certainly by after the second one, and planning the third and the fourth one, you know it definitely was a great relationship and we challenged each other to think outside of the box and to think of each other of various other ideas or ways of doing things. And then in addition to that you develop this working relationship in so far as the conferences are concerned but at that point you can also provide various opportunities for others. For example, we have our various work experience or internship experiences and we can share those with each other, um we had established the types of relationships where we can talk about current events and basic other things where we have moved passed a working relationship towards a friendship (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

As the program was growing and evolving so did the Youth Council members. They had learned how to collaborate, negotiate and compromise while participating in an ongoing teambuilding project together; the development of the Leaders in Action conference. They continued to share knowledge from their learning experiences with each other, both inside and outside of the program from their internships, work experience, to conversations about current events. Over time, they learned to share and appreciate the space that the program provided for them to voice their opinions and ideas, by developing an appreciation and understanding of the multiple ideas that were also being voiced in that same space.

In many ways, the leadership position that the Council members were in went beyond their individual roles as their relationship as a Council allowed them to rely more on each other for peer support on generating new ideas and solution. This in turn introduced the negotiated nature of relational leadership and

echoes the similarly negotiated nature of positional leadership described in the previous chapter. Shante describes how the positional and relational leadership experiences of the Youth Council were interconnected at times:

Shante: I almost feel like I was placed in a position that was teaching me how to succeed. When all else fails someone has to step up. And I have to admit that since I was on the Council there were 14 other youth that were along beside me, so it wasn't all on one person's shoulders (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

The Youth Council members developed strong relationships with one another from working together in the LIA program. Although these relationships were developed from their collective involvement on the Council, Council members contacted one another and visited each other outside of the program. They also view their relationship as something that would carry on long after their role as Council members; they expressed their level of comfort with sharing their future leadership endeavors with each other and being able to rely on one another for support.

Conclusion

MacNeil argues that, "leadership is a relational process combining ability (knowledge, skills, and talents) with authority (voice, influence, and decision making power) to positively influence and impact diverse individuals, organizations and communities" (2006, p. 29). Knowledge in this program consists of the intellect or talent brought forth by the participants (youth and adults) and the tools or skills taught during the program. As stated in the previous

chapter, the idea that participants were bringing with them knowledge and prior leadership experience suggests that not only were the delegates not believed to be empty vessels, but that this program did not embrace a banking system towards leadership development which is also criticized as a flawed pedagogical approach to learning (Freire, 1970).

The relational leadership experiences in the program allow young people to establish connections and understand the importance of coming together to form social networks. By working together and sharing knowledge, Youth Council members were able to learn and help others in the village grow and develop as well. The planning and debriefing meetings were also a space for Youth Council members to reflect on their own learning and teaching and contribute to development of the program. The leadership experiences they share also play a key role in their growth and development.

Crystal: It's kind of the youth teaching youth, and you know of course of the phrase "It takes a village to raise a child", but I think it's really that the program the foundation looks at youth being a part of that village and you know and changing others. Because you learn a lot from your peers more so then...a lot of people think. And so, being a leader was important and it was a very serious role, it wasn't something that I took lightly because I just think that people were looking at me and looking up to me at times when I didn't know it (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

The youth to youth and youth-adult partnerships in the program helped create that village for leadership growth and development. As relational leaders, the Youth Council members began to think more intently about the impact of their role on other young people who were also participating in the program. All of the youth participants' responses surrounding the program's purpose support the

notion that youth in the program are going to encounter an experience from networking and sharing knowledge that will undoubtedly leave them different from which they came. These leadership experiences with other youth and adults helped form strong relationships between program participants as they collectively contributed to the leadership development of others.

Brian: I think the state in which my relationship is with [Tammye Lee] with [Raymond McNeal] with the [McNeal Foundation] and with my fellow committee members is the way it is now because of all of the experiences that we went through (Interview Notes, 12/18/07)

Whether it is exposure to new skills or social networks or enhancing one's talents through interactions with others, a change was going to occur and it was the purpose or hope of the program that that change would somehow have a domino effect; impacting the youth, their community, and society as a whole. As Algernon states, "it evolves people, my peers into becoming greater leaders in their community" (Interview Notes, 11/27/07).

This evolution is also recognized by the program coordinator Tammye, who describes the program as a developmental process.

It's like professional development for young people, but it's around youth and engagement. And leadership has so many different you know characteristics and definitions that's kind of hard to describe, but at least with our program we try to expose young people to leadership and they can even come to their own conclusions about what it means. So we don't necessarily have the description of it, but I think the exposure and just even talking about it can help them form their own opinions around what it means to be a leader (Tammye, Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

Tammye describes the program as a leadership development process focused more on helping youth experience their own leadership as opposed to

assigning them a specific definition of leadership. As we reflect on the skills that the program describes as being learned, once again, we see skills that youth are exposed to through their experience interacting with other youth and adults in workshops and activities as opposed to being taught explicitly a given leadership skill or characteristic. The program focused heavily on creating a social networking atmosphere where knowledge was shared by exposing youth to African and African American issues and encouraging them to use the knowledge provided through the program and their peers as resources to impact change in their community.

By creating relational leadership experiences, the program was able to connect young people from various parts of the country to each other using these current events and topics that transcended socioeconomic and geographical barriers. Since the program's focus was on youth leadership, the relationships that were developed were youth centered in order to meet the needs of young people. This is particularly evident in the servant leader role played by the youth Council and the adult support staff. A servant leader is "someone who makes decisions that enhance the entire group or organization. Such leaders place high esteem on the values of fairness, integrity, and dependability." (Libby, Sedonaen, and Bliss, 2006).

As servant leaders, the Youth Council and adult support staff held debriefing meetings and discussions with each other about the overall growth and development of the program and youth delegates. As a collective team and

unit they negotiated with one another to address logistical concerns, at times compromising their ideas and thoughts to incorporate the thoughts and ideas of other members in the group. This chapter supports the idea that vocal power between the Youth Council and the adult support staff was shared in reciprocal relationships where each collectively made contributions to enhancing the program. Creating youth-adult partnerships where vocal power is shared is not only more realistic of the power relationships that must exist in youth leadership programs (Libby, Libby, Sedonaen, and Bliss, 2006), but it also represents the reality that leadership exist within a larger power structure where power is constantly being negotiated through power relationships with other people.

In this chapter, the Youth Council's initial perception's of their role as positional leaders is expanded to include the relational leadership experiences they had within the Leaders in Action program. These relational leadership experiences point to the recognition that leadership is a relational process between individuals (MacNeil, 2006) in that the growth and development of youth leaders is also based on the leadership relationships they have with others.

Chapter Six will explain how forming relationships around issues effecting Black youth also provides transformational leadership experiences for LIA youth delegates. These transformational leadership experiences provide opportunities for young people to think critically about how issues impacting youth also impact their families, communities, and society as a whole.

CHAPTER SIX

Transformational Leadership

Introduction

Leadership development literature describes multiple theoretical approaches (Northouse, 2006). However these approaches to leadership development do not describe leadership as a contextualized, interconnected process linking positional, relational, and transformational leadership. Nor do they describe the leader as meta-cognitively aware of the differences and able to assume various leadership positions based on the situation and participants' needs at hand—a leader whose strength comes from skills not necessarily from style. Thus far, the analyses of aspects of the leadership learning experience in the LIA program have underscored alternatives, awareness, and learning. Chapter Four and Chapter Five discussed the positional and relational leadership experiences of Youth Council members. Chapter Six, however, delves deeper into understanding leadership development by describing how positional, relational and transformational leadership are interconnected within the LIA program leadership experiences for all of the youth participants.

Transformational leadership is a process that involves empowering followers as they become conscious of their ability to impact change by focusing on the needs of others (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2006). In this study transformational leadership also involves understanding how leadership within

the LIA program means becoming empowered as positional and relational leaders in order to use your power as a transformational leader in multiple contexts: the LIA program, home, school, community, etc. In addition to the interviews and programmatic document analysis, Chapter Six focuses more specifically on transformational leadership in practice. The observation notes detailing the daily operations of the program are used as a focal source of data in this chapter to provide detailed evidence of how the LIA program curriculum is enacted.

This chapter describes how transformational leadership surfaces as an essential component within the Leaders in Action program by addressing the following research question: What is the process by which a participant becomes an empowered youth leader within this program?

Discussing Culturally Relevant Topics

The concept of power and the process of empowerment surface during the implementation of the LIA program's curriculum. During workshops and panel discussions, service projects and activities young people are engaged in conversations about social, political and economic inequalities in today's society. This section describes the active learning that takes place in the LIA program's hands-on experience and group discussions about culturally relevant topics. The culturally relevant discussions increase youth awareness about social inequalities and provide a platform for young people to engage in critical dialogue about the topics.

During the open forums held in the lecture hall youth participants tackle various socioeconomic and political topics facing Blacks in society such as poverty, education, healthcare, and international affairs. When asked to describe some of the topics or issues addressed in the program, the Youth Council gave the following responses:

Algernon: AIDS was talked about a lot. Yeah we talked about AIDS, gang violence this year we talked about Darfur. Um, education and there was a lot of talk about violence where there are violent lyrics in hip-hop (Interview Notes, 11/27/07).

Dominick: Darfur, AIDS was addressed, relationships was addressed. Those were my favorite (Interview Notes, 11/9/07).

Brian: We addressed so many different topics from teen pregnancy to the AIDS epidemic, to other STD's in the Black community to violence in the Black community to um, domestic abuse to sexual abuse, um Black female relationships, um what else. The future of the black community... (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

The Youth Council identify topics that span over a multitude of issues from healthcare to violence to education. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is mentioned by all of the interview participants. Although there are a diverse range of topics, one of the things all of these topics share in common are their connection to the lived experience of Black people both in the United States and abroad. Tammye, the program director, describes how these topics are selected for the LIA program.

When we did the [LIA] conferences the one day conferences as part of the applications the students, we had like a list of 25 topics, and we would ask them to rank the top five that they were most concerned about. And in almost every city, we did about 10 cities a year; the same ones kept coming up. It was education, youth violence, HIV and AIDS, Black on Black Crime, and maybe the family maybe the family. And every year it

still seems like when the students write their essays for leadership they still see those same issues continue to come up in the essays through what they think is a problem. So we kinda went to, "Okay, so these continue to be prevalent so when we look at our workshops let's make sure that we design them around." There's a leadership piece and the skills base decision making, how to organize, and then let's do a piece of just issue awareness so that we're making sure that young people are getting the latest information (Tammye, Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

The sociopolitical topics identified by the program participants, were a part of what Tammye describes as the program's "issue awareness" piece. She also notes that the program made a conscious effort to design workshops around problems identified by the youth. Since these topics were originally selected from the programs one-day conferences and 10 city tours, they have been revised throughout the years to incorporate the responses made by program participants in their application essays. However, as Tammye notes, many of these topics surface continuously by youth applicants who apply from different cities around the country. The discussion of these topics therefore provides a sense of relevancy to the program participants and also builds on the programs emphasis on connectivity by discussing issues that youth from various backgrounds can relate to. Members of the Youth Council also believe that these issues are relevant to other young people for the following reasons:

Algernon: Yeah, especially with AIDS being that we are very high in the rankings of the amount of cases we have with AIDS break outs each year. So I think it's very relevant (Interview Notes, 11/27/07).

Dominick: Yes definitely. I mean it's something we can never get away from, that's why it's so relevant, we can't get away from these things (Interview Notes, 11/9/07).

Both Dominick and Algernon speak to the relevance and urgency in discussing these topics, because they impact the Black community specifically. Since Blacks are leading in the number of new AIDS cases, Algernon believes that talking about these issues is relevant. Dominick's comments add to the importance of discussing these relevant issues as a way of addressing them opposed to avoiding them. In the next quote, Shante describes how discussions on education, relationships, racial profiling, and Global warming are also relevant to youth, and should therefore be addressed by youth.

Shante: Along with AIDS, that's one of the main things we talked about dealing with, we talked about racial profiling, the importance of education, relationships, along with Global warming, any issue that you felt needed to be addressed was dealt with in some way at some point. The main thing that we were trying to get people to see around basically just their purpose within the world and their leadership role. I think that it's more just helping people define what type of leadership they have and then helping them implement in areas they feel the need for. If you felt that need was [for instance], more Blacks need to be going to school then you can deal with it there. So I feel like it was a pretty open forum and any issue could be addressed if it needed to be (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

Although only a select group of issues are presented each year, Shante believes the large open forums create a space where other issues that young people believe are pertinent can surface. As she states, the purpose for discussing these issues was to give young people an opportunity to see "their purpose within the world and their leadership role" (Shante, Interview Notes, 12/11/07). Shante makes a clear connection between discussing culturally relevant issues and affirming one's leadership role in addressing them. In *Towards a Theory for Cultural Relevant Pedagogy*, Gloria Ladson-Billing (1995)

provides a similar example of affirmation when she describes the academic leadership roles given to Black males in a classroom that uses culturally relevant pedagogy. The author argues that the academic leadership roles given to the young Black males allow them to incorporate their perspectives and their culture into the discussion thereby affirming their cultural identity (Ladson-Billing, 1995).

Youth within the LIA program participate in similar discussions that incorporate their perspectives and their culture. They are engaged in discussions about socioeconomic and political issues facing young people. Their engagement is recognized by YC members like Khalilah who states, "I think the workshops are relevant because the participants are usually excited about them" (Interview Notes, 12/21/07). Their engagement in these workshops is most noteworthy when their perspectives are incorporated within the discussion. The discussion that followed the documentary on HIV and AIDS in the Black community provides a prime example of engagement in culturally relevant discussions where young people participate in an open dialogue about their divergent cultural perspectives. The observation notes document this interesting exchange between youth participants; the researcher's reflection notes are bracketed within the observation notes:

Following the viewing of the documentary the youth delegates entered into an open forum discussion about their thoughts on the film. Some supported the film, while others questioned the religious stance on the film taken by the ministers. The students that questioned the film stated that homosexuality was a choice or preference and "those" people should protect themselves. Some youth objected to the ministers in the film discussing safe sex and condoms within the Church. Others refuted the statement that homosexuality is a choice or preference; they argued that

we should get back to the point that Blacks were dying from AIDS regardless of whether they are straight or gay. [Some of the youth delegates appeared to be approaching the discussion from a religious standpoint. Their comments about HIV and AIDS were made in conjunction with Biblical references, the AMENS that followed during some of the speakers' presentations, and the talent displayed at the talent show singing and dancing to gospel songs all support the notion that many of the youth were Christians.] The youth delegates also stated that they wish young people were in the film because then it would appeal more to youth. Two of the youth delegates stood, commended the film, and stated they wanted to take the tape to their high school. The speaker who presented the film fielded questions from the youth and let the young people express their opinions without objection (Observation Notes, 8/2/2007).

Through conversations between youth and guest speakers a space is created for youth voices to be heard and for them to articulate their opinions on controversial issues, such as HIV and AIDS in the Black community. The observation notes provide an example of the multiple perspectives and ideas that are challenged in the town hall meetings where religious beliefs and political views spark discussions on a variety of topics such as, homosexuality, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and immigration laws. These forums can be contested fields; as youth share their thoughts and ideas, they are also challenged by peers who question their views. Young people's ability to present and articulate their divergent cultural perspectives is an important step in affirming not only what Gloria Ladson-Billing (1995) describes as their cultural identity, but their leadership identity as well.

In addition to affirming the identity of young people, culturally relevant pedagogy also helps to develop critical perspectives of social inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The previous observation notes describing the HIV/AIDS

discussion illustrated instances where divergent perspectives were presented regarding homosexuality and religious figures discussing HIV/AIDS within the church. In discussions with young people it is important that they not only have the space to discuss controversial topics, but they are also given accurate knowledge about the facts surrounding the topic. I argue that this is an important step towards creating a conscious dialogue where critical perspectives about social inequalities are brought to the forefront and challenged in light of the facts surrounding the topic. To this end, the LIA program also provides educational workshops, such as the workshop following the documentary where youth delegates spoke directly with liaisons from the Black AIDS Institute who addressed many of the misconceptions held by people regarding the spread of the disease and the demographics of people contracting the disease (Observation Notes, 8/2/2007).

Along with the workshops, the LIA program also incorporates hands-on activities such as the mock election and a community service-learning project at a local youth center. These activities were not only relevant from a cultural perspective they were relevant from a sociopolitical perspective. The need for community involvement in sustaining urban recreational facilities and the presence of an African American and a female democratic presidential candidate are both socio-cultural issues. The mock election gave youth delegates in the program an opportunity to gain awareness about political candidates and cast

their vote for a political candidate of their choice. The observation notes taken during the mock elections describe the election process as follows:

In order to vote in the mock election, voters must turn in a voter registration application. All students are asked to exercise their right to vote for current Democratic and Republican presidential candidates; however it is up to the youth if they choose to cast a vote in the election. The polling site is located on the second floor in room 207. There are two older white women from the League of Women Voters working the voting booth sign-in tables. The women check the registration application and identification card of each voter, inform the youth of the voting procedure, and hand them a ballot. Democrats are given blue ballot cards with a listing of all of the current Democratic candidates in the primary election, and Republican candidates are given Pink Ballots with a listing of all of the Republican candidates in the election. There is a clock to keep track of the time directly behind the sign-in tables as well as tablets with each student's name on it. All youth voters must sign-in before they vote. Voting was supposed to end at 1:30pm but the line appears to be growing with over 30 youth still in line at 1:32pm waiting to vote. There is a drop screen, splitting the room in half from those youth waiting in line and those who are casting their vote. All voters are directed to go behind the drop curtain and cast their vote. After voting youth return their ballots at a second table where there are two [Youth Council] members collecting the ballots and placing them in a ballot box. All ballots are stamped, after the vote has been cast, and placed into a closed box marked "Ballots". The Youth Council members hand out Flag pins and sticker cards to youth delegates who have voted as souvenirs. The sticker cards read "I've voted! Have you? Presidential Election." Five more minutes have elapsed, and the line has about 50 voters still waiting to vote (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007).

A representative from the League of Women's Voters described this election procedure as similar to the old election process, pre-electronic ballot. The election results posted outside of the polling site declared Barack Obama the winner of the Democratic primary election with 63 votes, beating Hillary Clinton by a mere three votes. Rudy Giuliani won the Republican primary election with five votes to John McCain's three votes. Later on that evening the polls were reopened for the general presidential election. The youth delegates applauded

when Barack Obama's name was announced in the town hall room as the presidential election winner. (Observation Notes, 8/4-5/2007)

The mock election, created a real life atmosphere for youth delegates to gain hands-on experience participating in a democratic process by exercising the right to vote. Of the estimated 189 youth delegates, there were 141 voters representing about 75% of the youth delegate population (Mock Election Ballots, 2007). Along with the hands-on experience also comes knowledge about essential components of the voting process: the need to register prior to voting, taking proper identification to the voting polls, and casting votes in both the primaries and the general election are all important pieces of information that young people need to become conscious voters. An important element that was missing from the mock election was independent candidates on the election ballot, which could have also provided an opportunity for youth to discuss how certain political voices are silenced or overlooked in the election process.

The mock election and the documentary discussion and workshop are prime examples of culturally relevant experiences in the Leaders in Action program that increase youth awareness about sociopolitical topics while advocating for youth activism. The mock election is not only cultural from the perspective that an African American presidential candidate is on the ballot and ultimately wins the mock election, it is also culturally relevant from the perspective of the significance of such an election to American culture. Barack Obama is the first nationally recognized Democratic presidential nominee who is

of both African and Caucasian ancestry. The mock election therefore serves as both a culturally relevant experience and an opportunity to help young people understand how to become active participants within the culture of power.

Delpit asserts that young people must know their own culture and also understand the codes of power in order to participate in the culture of power with the dominant class (1988). The mock election provides a culturally relevant experience that makes the codes of power, regarding the election procedure, explicit to young people. By creating both informative discussions and hands-on experiences the youth within the LIA program are given the tools for critical reflection and action within the culture of power. Like Paulo Freire (1970), Lisa Delpit (1988) also suggests that dialogue is at the intersection of reflection and action which in turn creates revolution. However the revolutionary power of young people ultimately rest in their ability to choose whether or not to use the knowledge and skills they are given as tools to reflect or act within the culture of power.

Leading, Loving, Saving, Serving

The previous section described how the hands-on experiences and group discussions about sociopolitical and economic issues allow young people in the LIA program to exercise their power in voicing their opinions and perspectives about culturally relevant issues. Youth are learning about their powerful role as positional leaders when they voice their perspectives in discussions, gain

awareness about sociopolitical issues, and become active participants in addressing these topics. The statement “You Can’t Lead the People if you Don’t Love the People, You Can’t Save the People if You Don’t Serve the People” posted in bright bold colors on the conference program booklets and billboards (Observation Notes, 8/3/2007; Program Booklet, 2007) further depicts leadership within the LIA program is also a relational process that involves working with and for others. In addition to encouraging young people to exercise their right to vote in a mock election, LIA program participants are also challenged to assume real life leadership roles within their schools, churches, families, communities as servant leaders with both civic and personal responsibility (Leadership Institute Program Booklet, 2007; Website Institute, 2007). This section will describe the process by which youth delegates move from their positional stance on sociopolitical topics to understanding that their role as leaders also involves leading, loving, saving, and serving other people; in other words, leadership is bigger than the individual, it involves recognizing civic responsibility, and taking action.

Chapter Three identified four goals and objectives for training youth in the LIA program. Three of the four goals and objectives are focused on developing awareness about issues in order to help young people fulfill their civic duties in the world:

- To develop a cadre of young leaders with critical-thinking skills who will share their knowledge and skills and make a positive impact on the world.

- To help youth develop a sense of civic and personal responsibility and commitment.
- To increase student awareness about important issues facing our world. (Leadership Institute Program Booklet, 2007; Website Institute, 2007).

Aligned with the programmatic document, the previous chapters have also demonstrated that within the LIA program, young people are increasing their awareness about important issues, they are gaining critical thinking skills and a sense of civic and personal responsibility, and they are challenged to utilize their skills and share them with others. The focus on civic responsibility and sharing knowledge and skills with others supports the notion that leadership is relational experience. The program's emphasis on sharing knowledge and skills in order to make a positive impact on the world also supports both a relational and transformational approach to youth leadership development. As Tammye explains, the LIA program makes a connection between young people gaining awareness about current events and helping them to see how these events are connected to their lives and the lives of others.

Tammye: We wanted to make sure that young people are current with what's going on, and that's with even our theme, "Awake and Alert!" So you know what's going on and how it impacts you. Because if we get young people to start thinking about, not just in terms of this happened today, but what does it mean to me and I might not see it right now, but this is something that can have an effect on me or my family or other kids I know" (Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

In Tammye's words, being "awake and alert" means being informed about "what's going on" in the world around you and understanding "how it impacts you." Tammye links the importance of gaining awareness with the intent that this

level of awareness would lead to young people thinking about the topics discussed during the conference and how these topics impact their personal lives and their community.

By moving from a focus on self to a focus on others, the LIA program acknowledges that youth leaders must understand how their positional leadership roles are also connected to their relational leadership experiences with others. A prime example of the programs shift from self to a relational approach to leadership is demonstrated during the keynote address by the founder, Raymond McNeal. The observation notes describe how Mr. McNeal uses his positional leadership role as an opportunity to discuss the importance of relational leadership in a discussion where he shares his childhood experiences with youth participants. The following observation notes describe the keynote address in which Raymond McNeal reads excerpts from his autobiography:

The [Leaders in Action] program participants arrive to the open forum keynote address...The founder [Raymond McNeal] delivers the keynote address using excerpts from his autobiography. He begins the discussion by describing that each of us is a story; you are the author of your own story. Looking at the youth, he explains that each of you has in your life defining moments. Each day is a gift; another day to get it right. He then begins to read one of his defining moments as the audience follows along reading silently. Reading aloud to the audience, [Mr. McNeal] tells his life story as the youth follow along with their own personal memoirs of the autobiography. Their eyes are fixated on the pages, capturing the words and experiences of the founder's childhood...to his experience as a naïve first generation college freshman arriving on campus with \$50, a small suitcase, and an acceptance letter....He describes his life journey to a room full of listeners so silent that you could hear a pin drop. Their eyes scan across the pages with intense serious facial expressions during the reading. The next excerpt describes the estrange relationship between him and his parents, and how this relationship leads him to arrive on a college campus with only an acceptance letter; no room and board and no

financial aid. In this excerpt from the reading he talks about the generosity of an African American university official who helps him sort out the paper work for proper registration. Following the reading he fields multiple questions from youth delegates in the audience....One youth delegate ask [Mr. McNeal], "What kept you so focused?" He responds, "Knowing it's much more than me. It's about a larger mission; using the gift that you've been given for love and service to other people." In response to their inquiry he draws on a quote from the book, "turning the fear to energy." He uses this quote to explain how he used the lessons he learned from his experience to make positive life choices....[Raymond McNeal] also acknowledges the help of others along the way, stating that anyone in this life who says they have gotten ahead without the help of others is living in a fool's paradise. His closing remarks turn to his belief that it is important for young people to remember to share the blessings they receive with others (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007).

The silence during the reading aloud, as well as the intense look on the phases of youth participants as their eyes scanned the pages of the memoir suggest that they were engaged. The autobiography provided a graphic description of the founders lived experience. Though the autobiography has a personal undertone, there is also a connection being made between the experiences of individuals and how our experiences are impacted by others, such as individuals who impacted Mr. McNeal's life. By detailing how others have impacted his personal experiences, the founder is also able to draw connections between his childhood experience and the experiences of the youth participants in the audience. His story of struggle and perseverance serves as an example of youth agency for it details how other young people can also turn their "fear into energy." His agency is also illustrated in the program booklet summary which states that despite his obstacles, "Nothing however could quench his fierce inner drive to succeed" (Program Booklet, 2007, p.13). While acknowledging his own agency, Raymond

McNeal also acknowledges the importance of having the support of others when describing the help he received from university officials and encouraging young people to share their blessings with others.

Raymond McNeal's childhood experience and his current leadership status place him in the category of a positional leader. By sharing his childhood experience with youth participants, he creates a relational leadership learning experience with his youth listeners. This experience opens the door for other young people to see aspects of their own lived experience in his story. As he situates the reader into the context of his childhood experience, the founder makes two critical connecting points to LIA youth; he reminds the young people that Mr. McNeal was once a child and he understands the powerless weight that children sometimes feel. This was evident, during the reading aloud of the autobiography where Mr. McNeal describes the lesson he learned from his childhood experience: "I instinctively knew what all youngsters know: that regardless of the circumstances, children are entitled to justice. Children are entitled to a fair hearing. Children are supposed to be kept safe" (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007).

As young people begin to reflect on the social, political, and economic issues discussed in the program, they are also challenged to situate themselves within the context of these issues as youth leaders. The open forum discussions about relevant sociopolitical issues, not only allows young people to have a space to voice their opinion, but an opportunity to form a collective voice against

oppression. For example, “International Crisis in Darfur: What Young People Can Do Right Now” is a panel discussion that explains the genocide in Darfur and calls on young people to share the knowledge about Darfur with others. The panel discussion about Darfur is an example of how the program explores the multiple contexts for young people to participate in leadership roles. Prior to the panel discussion LIA program participants were given information about the genocide in Darfur in a PowerPoint presentation that incorporated a historical look at the Sudan, music by rapper Kanye West explaining the fight over Blood Diamonds, a brief clip from the film *Blood Diamonds* starring Leonardo DiCaprio, and clip from *The Lost Boys of Sudan*, a documentary about the thousands of young boys who became orphans in the Sudan during the genocide. The panel discussion that follows describes the absence of U.S. Military forces in Darfur, the silent voices from African Americans on the issue, and voices from Darfur refugees about their personal experiences. The LIA youth participants are called to acknowledge their civic responsibility to the international community in spreading awareness about the oppression of Darfur refugees. This call to action is first sound by one of the guest panelists who makes a connection between the LIA youth and one of the Lost Boys, displaced during the genocide in Darfur.

(Observation Notes, 8/4/2007)

Observation notes describe how the panelists directly speak to the young people in the audience about assuming active leadership roles by making others aware of the genocide in Darfur:

[Mr. Darnel Walker], explains to the youth that we must understand that he, placing his arm on one of the Darfur refugees shoulder, is one of us, our brother, our father. These are Our People. We need you to step up. The speaker looks across the room as if he were looking directly into the eyes of the youth. These are complex different problems that need you to solve. We need creative ideas and organizing skills for mass movements. When you have these opportunities make an opportunity to embrace yourself in the present. One of the youth from the LIA program tells the other young people that it's up to us to break the cycle. A lot of young and old people are not informed, but since you have heard now you're informed it's up to us to make a change. [Dr. Harrison, another guest panelist] chimes into the discussion stating that there are students on various college campuses that are trying to spread the word. To be alert and to be awake requires being committed to the freedom struggle. He tells the young people to be consistent to the principle, be aware of foreign policy debates, know them. "Understand that. Understand it. Identify with it with not only power but conviction. You can't really love people unless you can't stand them being treated unfairly. You can't love folk unless you have a righteous indignation. Justice is what love looks like in public. AMEN." Some of the youth in the audience respond with an Amen. He continues to speak explaining how the Lead is connected to the love but the love has to deal with fighting for justice (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007).

The dialogue between the guest panelist and the young people describes a call to action directed specifically at the youth in the audience who have heard the stories from the Darfur refugees and listened to the informational PowerPoint presentation describing the genocide in Darfur. The power to act rest in the hands of young people, as described by one of the LIA program participants, because youth are in the audience, they have received the information so they must address the problem. This call to action also suggests that assuming the role as a relational leader also involves having a level of compassion for others. For example, statements like "you can't really love people unless you can't stand them being treated unfairly" as well as referring to the Darfur refugee as "one of us" makes a relational connection between the youth in the audience and Darfur

refugees around the world. The youth speaker also draws a connection between being an informed young person and being in a position to take leadership action. Since LIA participants are also American citizens they are in a position to impact change, as explained by Dr. Harrison, like youth around the country who are assuming leadership roles addressing foreign policy issues.

The observation notes also describe how Dr. Harrison connects leadership to social justice, in explaining that the “lead is connected to the love but the love has to deal with fighting for justice” (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007). Connecting youth delegates to other youth who are assuming leadership roles in foreign policy and encouraging them to become active in the genocide in Darfur takes a relational leadership approach to civic responsibility by advocating for social justice. The observation notes describe how the call for social justice is done within a situated-learning experience where the discussion moves from increasing youth awareness about an issue, to making explicit relationships between young people and the issue, to encouraging youth to assume a leadership role in addressing the issue. In this section, the observation notes provide evidence demonstrating how relational and transformational leadership were linked throughout the LIA program open forum discussions. The next section will describe a very important element within transformational leadership, empowerment, and provide further examples of how the LIA program sought to empower young people through the curriculum.

Learning Leadership & Experiencing Power

The Leaders in Action program seeks to “provide training and exposure to opportunities to allow youth to demonstrate their skills as organizers, activists, advocates, and catalysts for social change on behalf of themselves or their community” (Website Mission & History, 2007). The LIA program’s belief that young people can assume these multiple leadership roles for social change supports the notion that LIA youth have the capacity to become transformational leaders. In this section we will describe the transformational leadership roles of youth delegates in order to explain how learning leadership is connected to becoming an empowered youth leader.

Discussions about how to act occur more explicitly in the “Got Issues? Get Organized! Workshop Series” which includes the following workshops: Media 101, Research Your Plan, Mobilize the Masses, and Money Management (Program Booklet, 2007). Within the discussion about action youth are presented with access to knowledge on creating action plans that are strategic. The *Action Planning Guide* is a packet that describes how to brainstorm issues, get organized, mobilize participants, establish a team, map out a plan of action using media, and how to develop and manage useful resources using budgeting charts, financial records and a reflective project journal (Action Planning Guide Hand-out, 2007). The format of the open-ended charts and the questions posed on these documents allow the young people to incorporate their thoughts and ideas in an effort to make the action plan their own. The document specifically

tells youth delegates “clearly define the issue you want to impact, and select a strategy that will work for you” (Action Planning Guide Hand-out, 2007).

The *Action Planning Guide* is presented as a transitions document in which youth move from leadership skills and recognition of community issues to actually formulating a plan for change. The curriculum documents seek to probe and guide young people toward developing action plans based on the issues that they deem important and they choose to act on. This also opens up the curriculum to incorporate the thoughts and ideas of the youth participants. The following observation notes describe the “Research Your Plan” workshop in the “Got Issues? Get Organized! Workshop Series.” The *Action Planning Guide* is first introduced to the youth delegates during this workshop.

The youth delegates are broken into small groups, about 20 youth in each group and sent to smaller classrooms. In the Green Room, the adult moderator tells youth that the objective of the workshop is to make an action plan guide. She informs them, “This time they are supposed to figure out what they are passionate about and create a plan. That is clear and doable. You will present this program on Sunday.”...The young people are asked to brainstorm and write their ideas on the board. The moderator explains to the young people that “the purpose is to think of a problem in your community that you can address as a whole. Think about it, I’m not trying to shoot down your ideas I just want you to think about how it will work.” One of the students suggests that culture should be added to the board as one of the topics. The youth delegate volunteers to take notes and she writes the word culture onto the board. Another student states that she is confused about what we are doing. The confused young lady is the same student who gave an idea earlier of starting a smaller conference for youth in their communities and the idea of creating a youth organizing group. Another youth chimes in, reflecting on the addition to of the word culture amongst the list of topics, “Why only one topic?” The adult moderator responds, “to simplify it so that you can handle it as a group. If you feel your group can handle more than that you can change it.” The youth delegates suggested the following action plan ideas and cast a vote on each idea: Education (1 vote), black on black

crime, government policy/immigration, safe sex (2), gang violence (youth joining gangs), violence, drug awareness (3), planning a leadership conference in hometown/high school, tasteful fashion (in terms of changing media images), business focus mentoring (7), self-esteem, culture (black history programs) (0), AIDS (0). The youth decided that they take off some of the ideas that they originally stated to simplify the list. In order to eliminate some of the items they agree amongst themselves that they should cast a vote. The ideas that have the least amount of votes are eliminated, and they agree to focus in on mentoring which has the most youth votes (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007).

The observation notes describe how youth delegates are active in the creation of their own action plans. Rather than dictate to the youth delegates which action plan to create, the adult moderator asks the youth to think about the ideas they are passionate about. All of the youth are asked to contribute to the discussion by incorporating their voices and ideas. Their perspectives are multi-faceted, as shown in one youth delegate's question regarding the word "culture" being added to the board. Reflecting on the objective presented at the onset of the workshop, another youth delegate questions the selection of only one topic. The moderator allows learning and inquiry to take place in a setting that encourages young people to voice their opinion by allowing the youth delegates to question the rules regarding the dialogue that takes place within this setting. By questioning the selection of only one topic, the rules for dialogue are reshaped to include the voices of youth participants, and the perspectives of young people are affirmed as being significant to shaping the dialogue and the outcome of the learning experience. The observation notes also explain how youth delegates in this workshop decide amongst themselves that it would be best to cast a vote. The voting procedure that youth adopt in order to

compromise on a topic was also practiced earlier in the mock elections. Voting therefore resurfaces as a negotiating tool that the young people themselves have accepted as valuable when communicating with other youth leaders. In this experience we see how voting, as a situated-learning experience (Lave & Wenger, 1996), is scaffolded by youth who learn, practice, and utilize these skills within their community of practice.

After the vote has been cast, youth are still grappling with the challenge of incorporating all of their ideas into one project. The following observation notes explain how young people shape the *Action Planning Guide* curriculum to create “our solution”.

After deciding on a topic the youth delegates turn their attention to the *Action Planning Guide* and *Our Solution* hand-out given to them at the beginning of the workshop. Both of these documents were created specifically for the [McNeal Foundation's Leaders in Action Program]. The youth want to skip a step, in table three on page three of the hand-out, and move toward planning the event instead of completing the chart. The moderator tells the youth that “It’s up to you guys after the talent show to work the kinks out if you want to actually do this.” Currently the youth delegates have four issue statements written on the board by the youth note taker:

- Bridge in-between students and professions
- To help teenagers pursue their dream career
- To help manage their money to transform the lives of....
- To transform the minds of young people to increase their business sense and to be a positive influence on their lives.

Four students are in agreement with the final statement. “Yes that’s what we mean. However they question the meaning of the word “transform.” The moderator moves them to the next section [in the *Action Planning Guide*] on defining their audience chart. She tells them that they do not have to convince her they have to convince each other. Three young men in the second row do not appear to be paying attention: one student is swirling around in a chair whistling, another has his head down writing,

and the third young man is twirling a pen. There are 18 students in this group. Another young man calls out in response to the word transform. "You really want to get people involved, recognize their voice and do something better with their lives." After his statement the moderator asks to move on to the next page of the hand-out. One of the girls laughs; she [referring to the moderator] just dissed you. The moderator tries to explain that she is not moving on just for the sake of time but she wants them to map out their plan. And notes the really good comments that were made. The moderator asks the youth to map out 5 concise objectives. A young lady states, "it is repetitive and kinda annoying in a way...I've been organizing. Another youth chimes in, "We feel that the sheet is telling us how to do OUR plan." Another young man recommends that they feel that we should step away from the sheet for a minute and talk about it and then come back to the sheet. In response to his statement, a youth sitting in the front row agrees, "Yeah, and going along using the pages we need." "Ok, but what about page 7 and 8," says the moderator. Some more of the youth nod their head agreeing to keep pages 7 and 8.

The dialogue between the discussion moderator and the youth delegates describes an instance within the workshop where the youth delegates appear disengaged. This shift arises when they are asked to place their mentoring ideas into the *Strategic Action Planning Guide* hand-out and their ideas are not closely aligned with the step by step process of the hand-out. The mannerisms described by the youth delegates demonstrate a lack of engagement, despite the attempts made by some of the youth and the moderator to refocus the discussion. In this example the Strategic Action Planning Guide based on the step by step process outlined in the curriculum is reshaped by the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As the curriculum is experienced by youth delegates, they attempt to assume leadership roles that allow them to have more control over their "own plan" and their learning. The involvement of the youth delegates in shaping the curriculum is also significant in instances where the

skills and experiences of the youth participants place them at various learning levels and capacities. One of the youth delegates, for example, expressed her frustration in completing the Strategic Action Planning Guide because she already had prior knowledge from her experience in organizing.

The preceding observation notes describe how the moderator moves from trying to center the discussion on the curriculum to experiencing the curriculum as an interactive process shaped by youth learners:

The moderator decides to change it up a little bit by posing questions that are along the line of the information for the social action plan but also includes the ideas that have already been presented by the youth participants. She asks, "Ok, so how do you find mentors?" Various youth chime in, "Church, Media, Boys and Girls clubs, college kids. The youth note taker scrambles to write all of these ideas on the board. In response to the word mentor, another youth ask, "But will you pay them?" "Well yeah, we will have to pay them," responds the youth who recommended mentors. Another youth opposes, "Naw they can volunteer, we can go to professionals like the Big Brother Big Sisters and get the mentors that way." Other youth start calling out additional groups where they can find mentors. "Honor Society, Future teachers of America, Future Leaders of America..." A suggestion is made by one of the youth that maybe they should talk to these organizations first and get their kids from them as opposed to inviting an entire school, "We can have participants write an essay about why they want to be there?" Another youth suggests that they could also go through the phone book and ask people who work with local government to get tax breaks so that the participants are encouraged to work with them as a tax break. "We can have students fill out a survey of their interest and match them with the kids based on interest. Then they can have 2 hours a month, for example that they suppose to meet and they can decide when." "Absolutely" says another youth delegate, "I agree with that..." (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007).

By negotiating the curriculum with the youth delegates, the moderator was able, once again, to engage the youth delegates by bringing them back into the discussion. The curriculum steps provided in the Strategic Action Planning Guide

are reorganized based on the discourse surrounding the youth delegates' plan to implement a mentoring project. By brainstorming and sharing multiple ideas they addressed many of the steps described in the Strategic Action Planning Guide hand-out from selecting participants, financing, networking with existing organizations, the application process, and organizing the mentoring relationship.

The observation notes describe the youth as being engaged in the curriculum assignment and more willing to contribute to the discourse once they were able to shape the curriculum themselves. The active role youth delegates assume during the "Got Issues, Get Organized! Workshop Series" provides an important step towards empowering them to be active in creating their own action plans in their communities. The proceeding section, "Passing the Baton", will discuss how this workshop series served as yet another scaffolding opportunity as youth delegates apply the knowledge and skills learned during the workshop series to the venture projects to be implemented in their own communities.

Passing the Baton

The leadership experiences and activities in the Leaders in Action program provide opportunities for youth delegates and Youth Council members to think about sociopolitical issues and enhance their leadership skills through hands-on leadership experiences working with other youth leaders. This has been shown using evidence from conference workshops and panel discussions such as, the documentary on HIV/AIDS, the "Leadership 101 Workshop Series," the "Got Issues? Get Organized! Workshop Series" and the

mock election. All of these leadership learning experiences describe situated learning within the LIA program, and provide examples of scaffolding in the LIA program leading up to the culminating assignment presented during the Team Project Planning Sessions.

As previously described, the process to creating a strategic action plan were discussed and modeled in the "Got Issues? Get Organized! Workshop Series." In the Team Project Planning Sessions young people are challenged to reflect on what they learned about leadership in the LIA program and transfer their knowledge into practice by working to design projects along with their peers. In this youth-led break out session, youth delegates select one topic amongst the list of issues they discussed during the conference and use these issues to create an action plan for a venture project with minimal assistance from adult facilitators/moderators. The Youth Council, adult chaperones and support staff move from the position of facilitator/ moderator to coach during the "Team Project Planning Sessions". It is in this workshop that youth have an opportunity to design an action plan that they can take with them from the conference back to their home, school, and community.

At this point, youth delegates transition from program participants, to collaborators in creating sample Strategic Action Plans, to leaders in charge of developing their own Venture Projects. Their learning experience was scaffolded as they transitioned through multiple leadership experiences exploring positional, relational, and now transformational leadership. This transition was made using

the problem –posing method as a pedagogical technique (Freire, 1970). This pedagogical approach has the potential to empower youth because it challenges them to think for themselves and then by themselves (Freire, 1970). By using a pedagogical approach that aims to empower people, the Leaders in Action program is reaffirming their belief that young people have the capacity and the power to lead. The adult support staff's belief in the power of youth to lead is noted in Tammye's depiction of young people as youth advocates. When asked to describe what she meant by the term youth advocate, she shared these words:

Tammye: Meaning that if there is an issue or any kind of concern or problem, how do we help young people figure out how to address it? And we often talk about young people not being interested or they don't understand or they're not engaged, I'm not sure if that's really true. I don't know if we have really asked them the questions about would you, if you had an opportunity, what would you do about it. And then if you ask what would you do about it and they say well I would do x, y, and z and so maybe our next question would be or next statement to them would be you know I would like to help you do that. Let me show you how. Cause if you talk about leadership, you also have to talk about training and supporting and developing and listening. And young people from my experience are far more likely to listen to adults who listen to them. And often adults don't really listen they do a lot of talking (Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

Tammye's belief that youth can be advocates changes the discussion from youth capacity to youth opportunity. It then no longer becomes a question of whether or not youth are capable, but what must be done in order for them to recognize their own capacity to lead? In the concluding subsection I describe how youth perceive youth empowerment within the LIA program. As stated previously it is the empowerment component of leadership that is most significant

to describing the distinction between relational and transformational leadership. The concluding argument that transformational leadership exists within the LIA program will be presented using perspectives from Youth Council members who describe instances where they believe youth are empowered.

Youth Council Members Speak About Youth Empowerment

When youth delegates were given an opportunity to create their own social action projects for the chance to receive a venture funding grant to implement their action plan in the community, they were engaged in the challenge. This is most evident in their reactions to the challenge; many of the young people had formed connections with their “Got Issues? Get Organized!” workshop group, and strongly encouraged their old teammates to come together and continue to work on the Mentoring Project they had worked on in their workshop (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007). The following observation notes further describe the engagement of the youth as they immediately start working on their group projects:

As I look over to the group on Negative Music they are working in clusters going through the old sheets [Action Planning Guide Hand-out] from the conference and adding to their ideas. In the Darfur group there is one person who takes the lead and stands out in the front of the room to facilitate the group discussion. About 3 groups have now stepped outside of the open forum room to plan their project in another location. The HIV and AIDS group is huddled together in a tight circle mapping out their ideas on one sheet of paper (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007).

As the observation notes describe, the young people instantly began working in their groups in various different formats, as they began discussing and negotiating their action plan. Some of the groups huddled together whereas

others had facilitated discussions or smaller break-out clusters to work on different aspects of the project. The projects they created were also multifaceted, pulling on the various leadership strengths of group members. The following observation notes provides examples of several of the eleven venture projects presented during the team competition:

Project Team Competition Presentations

Group 2:

Open Your Eyes to Genocide: (Darfur)

This group began with a public service announcement about the war in Darfur. Following the public service announcement the students told people in the audience this could also happen to them. The public service announcement included a PowerPoint presentation with music. To conclude their presentation, the group spoke in unison "Open your eyes to genocide." Their goal is to spread the word about Darfur through communication using a public service announcement.

Group 3:

"Epidemic: Breaking the Cycle" (HIV and AIDS)

This group gave a presentation providing information about HIV/AIDS. They present a budget for the project and a project outline. Their plan is to do public service announcements and go to schools and tell them about the disease. Their project involves outreach in malls and on local streets in the community. They would also like to contact schools to advocate for lessons to be taught in all schools about HIV/AIDS. Group 3 concluded with two skits demonstrating their outreach initiatives by passing out condoms and getting the bill passed by school officials.

Group 5: Move Ahead the N-word is Dead (The N-Word)

This group began with a skit to the audience shouting, "What's up my [N-word]?" and giving dap to the people in the audience calling them uneducated black folk. [This skit is done to bring attention to the ignorance behind using the N-word.] Their plan is to create a conference about the N-word and a website to educate people about the historical roots behind the word. They described the estimated cost for their project. Two men in the back are holding a flyer with the word "NIGGER." Youth in the audience are shouting, "Rip it. Rip it." At the end of the presentation the group rips the banner shouting out to the audience "Move Ahead the N-word is Dead."

Group 7: Voter registration:

The presentation skit began with a “Put up or Shut up” protest as group members attempted to recruit people to join the group by telling them questions about their organization during the protest. They concluded, “We hope you all join the organization and come out and vote because a voteless people is a hopeless people.”

Group 8: Negative Music

This skit began with some group members in the audience singing lyrics to a common rap song, and trying to get audience members to sing along with them. They were interrupted by two other group members who told them to stop singing negative music. The group then started singing positive songs. Their proposal is to have a positive music concert followed by a march for cleaner music. One of the group members read a poem describing how you don't need negative music for your voices to be heard. The groups finishes their presentation by walking off into the audience singing a song, Never G-I-V-E –U-P and keep your H-E-A-D U-P (Observation Notes, 8/4/2007).

In addition to handing in a detailed strategic action plan, the groups demonstrate the creativity of the youth in developing presentations that include PowerPoint presentations, banners, creative group logos, and incorporating music, poetry, and powerful messages of youth unification. The guidelines for the competition also stressed the importance that everyone participate in creating some aspect of the project. Their presentations gave youth delegates in the program an opportunity to share what they had learned during the conference workshops about sociopolitical topics and leadership as a process and an action. The group entitled, “Move Ahead the N-word is Dead” won the \$500 venture grant for funding their project.

In order to understand the call to act within the LIA program, and the energy behind the creation of the venture projects we must also examine how young people internalize the empowerment process within the LIA program. In

interviews with the Youth Council members they were asked to describe their definition of the word “empowerment.” Some of the Council members spoke specifically to the feeling associated with being empowered:

Brian: One is truly empowered when they feel it. Ok I don’t know how this is going to sound, but after a [influential Black leader] is finished speaking to you and you truly feel as if there is a change that you can make and there is an effect that you can have on your community or at least your circle of influence you are truly empowered. When you can’t wait to get home and voice a lot of what you learned and act upon the things that you learned at the conference that’s when you are truly empowered. I think empowerment has to do with, the cause and the movement towards action. You can be inspired but, that’s when the ideas begin to formulate and when you know you feel as if you can do something. Empowerment is when you feel as if you can do something and you are moved to the point of doing it. That’s when you are truly empowered I think (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

Brian speaks specifically to empowerment as a feeling that one can impact change. This feeling is what he believes drives people to act. He gives examples of youth having conversations with guest speakers and being moved by these speakers enough to want to go home and act in their community. Khalilah also acknowledges how inspiring people can lead to them becoming empowered:

Khalilah: When I think of empowerment I think of inspire and just having that, you know being someone, something who inspires you gives you that urge to want to achieve something. I think of inspire (Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

In addition to being empowered by others, Reginald also believes that there is an internal component to empowerment.

Reginald: Empowerment... I think empowerment is just confidence really. Empowerment is at most it is a basic form of confidence, so that everyone is empowered to do anything that they really want to do. Basically I think that someone has to say the right thing to you or give you the right amount of guidance or support. But you [have to] actually believe in yourself. So I

mean that can come from within. You can empower yourself or you can go to the [McNeal Foundation] or a certain organization like that and be empowered to be a leader. Really you know it's really your confidence the way that I see it (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

As Reginald describes empowerment can come from others, but on a personal level, empowerment also involves moving from being inspired by others, to believing in yourself that you can actually be a leader. Brian, Reginald, and Khalilah's collective definition of empowerment involves hope, being inspired, and being confident in your own ability to act. In her definition of empowerment, Crystal describes how the LIA program seeks to empower youth by implementing the program's mission:

Crystal: I think that it's kind of similar to setting an example; to give people their own power, their own leadership feel I guess if you will... You know the mission to enlighten, empower, encourage all those put together is kind of like enabling somebody to be the best that they can be. So I think that that can lead to empowerment. Um to me it's just bringing out the best, I guess, in people, in young people, and it's a foundation. And just showing that by example, just showing that the power the confidence and the strength of being a leader (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

Crystal's comments suggest that the programs mission to enlighten, empower, and encourage is empowering because the program provides opportunities for young people to get a better "feel" for their own power to lead; thus the program enables empowerment because it allows youth to experience leadership. She refers to empowerment as "setting an example" or "showing by example," which supports Brian, Reginald, and Khalilah's belief that people can be empowered by seeing others who are empowered to lead. In this instance the role of the Youth Council becomes extremely important in providing a youth face to the

empowerment process, as youth delegates are able to see other young people who are empowered youth leaders organizing the LIA conference. Crystal goes on to describe the significance of youth empowerment in relation to only being exposed to empowering adults:

Crystal: I look at [Dr. Harrison] as an empowering person and you see him as an adult, a historical figure almost you know in our world. But putting that youth in front of there is just having that same level of power over a group of people over youth and just being that youth that powerful youth kind of leader is really how I see that being defined [in the LIA program]....I think when you put youth in front of a leader, an empowering leader, an empowering young person is really just kind of taking those different characteristics and personal... characteristics and putting them together...you can still be an empowering youth you don't have to be someone who is in a business or about something for years you can still have that same effect on people as a youth (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

Crystal describes the power of youth in the LIA program to be empowered youth leaders just like adults. She believes that empowered youth leaders can have the same positive effect in impacting change while they are young. Her comments identify the conviction that some youth leaders within the LIA program hold of their capacity to lead and impact change. Although the program may enable them to become empowered to lead, their ability to create the action projects and take them back to their communities to be implemented rest in their belief that they are empowered youth leaders.

Similar to Crystal, Shante also describes the LIA program's mission as an empowering process as youth become enlightened, encouraged, and empowered to act within their community. When asked, "What does it mean to be an empowered youth in this program?" Shante stated:

Shante: To me an empowered youth is one that goes out into the community and makes the positive expected change that they said that they wanted to do at the conference. They come to the conference and they take in all of the necessary tools that were given to them to enlighten them first of all. So the listen to workshops, they understand the purposes, and they gather from [Dr. Harrison] and [William Lee, another conference guest speaker] as much as they can gather and they become enlightened. Then they become encouraged because they see other people just like them and they network with other people around them so when they can't handle it maybe this person can handle it so they become encouraged. They are an empowered youth because they take the necessary action that once they leave, you know the safe haven because honestly the conference is pretty much a safe haven, we're all safe this is specifically done and we're all hyped off of each other's energy. But the empowered youth is the one that goes outside of that safe haven and creates a safe haven for others around. So I feel like they make their vision a reality. That's an empowered youth (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

The Youth Council members began by describing empowerment as a feeling of hope, being inspired, becoming confident of your own power as their comments gradually began to shift from this feeling of power to a recognition that being empowered also involves action. As Shante points out, you are empowered when you take what you have learned from the conference and apply it to your community; being able to act outside of the safe haven. Reginald uses the venture projects to provide an example of empowerment in action. In the following interview comments, he provides clear examples of what empowerment looks like in the LIA program from the perspective of youth delegates and Youth Council members:

Reginald: You won't know until you see the results honestly. An example of youth empowerment is a youth venture program you know. Once you see someone leave the program and they've established a venture or an actual program in their communities and that's empowerment for them. For us to leave the Leadership Conference of 2003, and come and be the [Youth Council] this year, that's empowering us to kind of pave forward and do what we can to help the next generation of leaders. So I mean, empowerment

takes a lot of different forms, and it's really hard for us to know at the conference whose empowered and whose not, you really have to look at the results to see you know what empowerment really is (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

The Youth Council members all describe the LIA program as an empowering program because it gave young people the opportunity to exercise their leadership power. The workshops and activities implemented throughout the LIA program sought to enlighten, encourage, and empower youth to lead in the program and within their communities. As Reginald describes, empowerment takes many different forms, and therefore looks slightly different for everyone. In the concluding chapter we will take a closer look at youth empowerment outside of the LIA program, and offer implications for further research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CALL TO ACTION & THE TOOLS NEEDED TO GO FURTHER

Never under-estimate the power of a few committed people to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. ~ Margaret Mead

The previous chapter on transformational leadership described the link between positional, relational, and transformational leadership by highlighting various workshops and activities that demonstrate the Leaders in Action programs focus on enlightening, encouraging in empowering young people. Chapter Seven will provide an overview of the research study, highlight the research findings, and link these findings to an evolving theory connecting leadership and social political development. The chapter will conclude with implications for further research and practice.

An Overview of the Research Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of power in terms of the experiences of participants in a youth development program that explicitly states that its purpose or mission is to empower youth leaders. The following research questions were addressed: How do participants talk about leadership, power and empowerment within this youth leadership development program? What is the process by which a participant becomes an empowered youth leader within this program? These research questions were addressed by analyzing triangulated data from programmatic documents, observation notes,

and interviews with Youth Council members and adult support staff in the Leaders in Action program.

The previous chapters explored the process to becoming an empowered youth leader by highlighting leadership experiences of program participants and analyzing these experiences in relation to the power and capacity of youth to lead within the LIA program. The findings suggest that Leaders in Action participants talk about leadership in the context of their situated-learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) experiences as positional, relational, and transformational leaders. As opposed to selecting a single stance or approach to leadership development, their perspectives on leadership within the LIA program describe positional, relational, and transformational leadership as three interconnected parts of the LIA youth leadership development process. These three approaches to leadership development were interwoven using problem-posing education (Freire, 1970) and scaffolding (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978) leadership in situated learning experiences (Lave and Wenger, 1991). However they did not emanate from a formal curriculum but rather were situated in the activity contexts of the LIA program, different situations called for different approaches to leadership (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Youth leaders communicated about the different kinds of leadership in situations that called for them. As such, they helped each other learn and also learned with adult assistance.

The leadership development process emphasized the importance of youth awareness, youth voice, youth networking, and youth activism. To this end, the

youth leadership development process within the LIA program also resembles similar components of the sociopolitical development process.

An Evolving Theory on Sociopolitical Leadership Development

By expanding sociopolitical development theory to include youth leadership development theory a working conceptual framework for empowering youth that links positional, relational, and transformational leadership is formed. As stated in Chapter Two, sociopolitical development (SPD) provides a framework for investigating issues of power and empowerment within a youth leadership development program. In theory, SPD challenges youth to explore their identity in relation to the larger sociopolitical context of power in which they exists. This study of the Leaders in Action program connects theories on youth leadership and sociopolitical development to practice.

Youth delegates and Youth Council members explored their leadership identity through positional, relational, and transformation leadership experiences. Chapter Four described the positional leadership experiences of Youth Council members as they transitioned from their role as delegates into the Council. Chapter Five and Chapter Six provided examples of the numerous workshops and activities geared towards helping youth understand the importance of networking and negotiating as relational leaders and described how these relational leadership experiences were used as an opportunity to empower youth to create action plans as transformational leaders. The Leaders in Action

program situated leadership learning and leadership identity within a larger sociopolitical context of power by raising awareness about issues such as HIV/AIDS and Darfur and challenging youth to use their leadership power to address these issues through venture projects.

Whereas positional and relational leadership can be used to describe initial stages within the SPD process, transformational leadership expands leadership learning by incorporating the empowerment component. By interconnecting oppression, social justice, and youth development, transformational leadership within the Leaders in Action program embraces the essential components of SPD which have been described by some theorist as a more critical approach to youth development (Watts & Guessous, 2006). The workshops and open forums increased youth awareness about HIV/AIDS, the elections, and Darfur while simultaneously urging them to act through leadership workshops like “What’s Your Leadership Style?” and “Got Issues? Get Organized!”

In this study sociopolitical leadership development is described as a hybrid process between SPD and transformational leadership. This process includes helping youth develop an understanding of their positional and relational leadership roles in order to become transformational leaders. As Bass (1985) and Northouse (2006) argue transformational leadership is empowering when people are made conscious of their ability to impact change by focusing on the needs of others.

The Youth Council members and the LIA program's mission both support this notion that the empowerment process should extend outside of the leadership learning environment into the world of activism. It is herein that we find implications for practice and further research.

Empowered Youth Leaders

Often times when people talk about a leader they talk about the person who is in charge, running things, the one with all the power. Leaders are usually described as individuals as opposed to a group of people collectively leading together. That individual is sometimes glamorized because of their role in the organization, country, group, etc. Leaders are envisioned as people you look up to, and many people aspire to be just like them. When asked what typically attracts people to a leadership role most speak of the idea of stepping up to the plate, taking charge, and doing all of those grandiose things that they believe leaders do. They seek to be admired and adored in the same way in which they adore and admire the people they consider leaders. The only thing missing from the glamorized view of leaders in leadership roles is the actual leadership experience. What does this experience entail, and how do you know that you have developed the skills and have the capacity to lead?

The participants within the Leaders in Action program describe leadership as an experience shaped slightly different for everyone based on the skills and opportunities that a person has or acquires. The Youth Council members initially

saw the Council and said, "Wow! We want to do what they did." But when they became Youth Council members their position changed and their perspectives on leadership were continuously shaped by their experience. They were faced with obstacles as leaders which made it difficult for them to replicate their experience as youth delegates such as financial constraints and issues of power based on their role as youth leaders. These experiences served as positional leadership experiences that would also help them learn about their own leadership capacity and power to act as relational leaders with their peers. Their relational leadership experiences involved learning from other Council members, adults, and youth delegates by negotiating and networking in situated learning experiences (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Through their own scaffolded (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978) leadership learning they were also able to scaffold the leadership learning of other young people. I argue that this leadership experience is transformational (Bass, 1985; Northouse, 2006), because it empowers young people to impact change within their own youth culture.

After 4 years on the Youth Council, the Council members described themselves as empowered not only as youth leaders but leaders of youth. In Chapter Six they described empowerment as a feeling of being inspired and confident enough in your ability that you act outside of the safe haven created for you. To this end, I conclude with some of their interview comments describing the numerous projects they have worked on outside of the LIA program. It is in these

projects and in their continued activism that we see the benefits of sociopolitical leadership development.

Interviewer: Since joining this program, have you participated in any new leadership experiences outside of this program? Explain.

Shante: I definitely have, when I first came apart of the Council I was a sophomore in high school. After that I became the president of my Student Union and I became the president of my Top Teens of America chapter, and I became a regional officer in Top Teens of America and I went on to you know attend [an Historically Black University] and I now am a member of the Campus Pal Organization....And that's a leadership role. I'm a news anchor... and I'm a member of Sister Stars, and that's basically an empowerment group on campus. We have each other's back and we uphold each other. I'm also working on different conferences for...and this has been a great experience and since then I definitely you know been in many leadership roles (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

Dominick: Yes, on campus I've taken many leadership roles in our campus regarding race and international relations. I've taken leadership roles in facilitating dialogue. I've taken leadership roles in being a member and officer in certain organizations. So I've definitely put myself out there on my campus (Interview Notes, 11/09/07).

Brian: Freshman year I was something called the Residence Hall Council and basically I was just one of the floor representatives and help put on programs for the residence hall. And at the same time I was a member of the United Universities Council of Students.... I served as the freshman representative my first semester, I moved up to vice president my second semester freshman year and then throughout my sophomore year I served as the presidential advisor. After during my freshman year I was approached by a close friend of mine to help re-found... [a public speaking organization]. [This organization] is a public speaking and leadership development organization, where members and guest are provided with the opportunity to better their public speaking skills and abilities. And, like I was saying, individuals are provided the opportunity to give impromptu speeches as well as prepared speeches. And I served, since freshman year I have served as the vice president for [the organization at my] college and more of a chief staff type role for the organization. Since freshman year I have served as a member of the logistics committee for homecoming. That was a much larger role and something that I certainly enjoyed doing as far as lending a hand. And now I currently serve as the class president for the junior class and that has been

something that has been certainly a challenge and something that I have enjoyed absolutely (Interview Notes, 12/18/07).

Khalilah: Yeah I've been a part of numerous organizations and clubs The African American Student Union, NAACP.... I give an etiquette class at the Boys and Girls club, so I mean being a part of organizations and clubs is pretty much full time for me (Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

Crystal: Well I have been a part of groups on campus, whether it's you know Black Student Union and just actually recently, I created a group on campus I initiated because my school actually doesn't have a PR [Public Relations] group, so I just took the initiative we are going to have a group I'm going to start one. And so this year, I actually got the ball rolling I got created a constitution, got people on the board, you know just really taking strides to you know make this group something that will be on [my universities] campus forever. I just really think that leaving a legacy on my campus. [My university] is a huge huge community and university and leaving my legacy on this campus is something that I wanted to do so that at least I have something I can say, you know what [Crystal] did that and people might not know that I did that but it can always be something that I can look back and know that I started. And so that has always been like my biggest accomplishment on campus. You know during my four years being in college because it was something that I think that a leader definitely does when you see something that needs to be changed or you want to establish something new and you go about and you find ways to do it and you do it. And you kind of you do it well too. And you find people who want to support you and I find people who interested in the same thing that I'm interested in who wanted to a part of this group and so I think that that has been maybe my biggest accomplishment (Interview Notes, 1/10/08).

The Youth Council members describe numerous empowering leadership roles they have taken outside of the Leaders in Action program, from assuming student leadership roles on their campuses and in their communities, to creating new programs and organizations when they saw a need.

Implications for Further Research and Practice

The LIA programs focuses heavily on youth agency and helping young people understand the choice they make to lead. In many ways the decision

young people make to lead also shapes the leadership experience that they have. For educators who believe that all we have to do is teach the skills and provide an opportunity, there is much more to be said about helping young people recognize their own agency in influencing their developmental process and the development of others.

Tammye, who believes that leadership is also a natural and nurturing experience, made these following comments:

Tammye: If I put a basketball in your hand Traymanesha and I said you know what you can just practice with this ball, you can learn everything about basketball you know I want you to dribble everyday and practice hoop shots. Probably you know a couple months you could be really good at basketball player. Do you not agree? [I nod my head] Ok, so then, if I put a microscope in your hand and I say to you, you know I need you to go look everyday through this microscope figure out you know who founded it, what people with microscopes do. Go around, look at some worms and stuff figure it out. Probably after a couple of months, you are gonna be like oh my God I can be a scientist or I'm gonna be a doctor or I'm gonna build microscopes. Whatever. It's all about exposure (Interview Notes, 10/4/07).

Tammye's comments describe an important ingredient within the LIA program; the belief that exposure and creating leadership opportunities was essential to igniting the interest of young people and engaging them in their own learning and development as leaders. If you were to close your eyes and imagine the soft tone of her voice you could probably envision how nurturing a young person with the right perception and understanding of their innate ability to lead could actually pull the leader within all of us to the surface. Khalilah cites the LIA program as influential in bringing her leadership capacity to the forefront:

Khalilah: [Leaders in Action] is a program that made me become conscious of a lot of the things... that are going around in my community

and opened my eyes to a lot of things... It just brought the leader out of me. I know that leaders are born, so I feel like I know I was a leader since my mom gave birth to me, but being a part of the program it kinda brought that leader out of me. It gave me the passion that I have to serve my community (Interview Notes, 12/21/07).

Khalilah describes leadership as a natural ability that was brought to the forefront based on her experience in a leadership program that nurtured her growth and development. As a member of the Youth Council, Khalilah and the other Council members were able to experience numerous leadership roles and experiences, leading other youth and organizing the LIA conference, which provided additional opportunities for their skills to be cultivated. As Shante and Reginald describe, the leadership experiences and opportunities for youth delegates and Youth Council members are different:

Shante: I guess in a way if I was a [youth delegate] I would still need more ways that I can market my leadership skills, but since I'm in the Council I feel that my leadership skills are being utilized day to day every day every hour of the day. But if I wasn't in the Council I feel like I guess, I would want more opportunities....I definitely feel that there are ample opportunities but maybe not enough, well maybe not in that aspect as far as more group work or more in-depth. I'm saying that they should be able to showcase their skills in different ways (Interview Notes, 12/11/07).

Reginald: So [my first] conference was a little bit more different than the one as a facilitator and a [Youth Council] member. That one you're actually, um, have a role in teaching and guiding the youth through the leadership process at hand. That to me is more rewarding then the former just because you really, you know, you can feel the difference you make in other people's lives. Whereas you're observing information in the first one kinda like as a sponge you know as you're learning, this one you have a chance to give it back that's really rewarding (Interview Notes, 11/21/07).

Shante describes the Youth Council as providing an opportunity for youth to utilize their leadership skills throughout the course of the LIA program. She

believes that because she is on the Council her skills are used in a variety of ways, whereas the youth delegates do not have these multiple opportunities to utilize their skills. Likewise Reginald compares his experience as a youth delegate learning information as opposed to being in a leadership role on the Council teaching and guiding the other youth. Both Reginald and Shante's interviews speak to the need for more leadership experiences for youth delegates during and following their participation in the LIA program.

Since this study focused primarily on the experiences of Youth Council members who were once youth delegates, more information is needed on youth delegates who leave the LIA program and do not return as Youth Council members as well as youth who participate in the program for more than one year only as youth delegates. Creating a comparative analysis of these divergent leadership development phases for youth participants would shed further insight on the significance of the role of the Youth Council and youth delegate to the leadership development process of Leaders in Action program participants. By tracking the leadership experiences of youth delegates, we might also get further insight on the success of the venture projects and the community resources needed to extend leadership development within the LIA program to the homes, schools, and communities of the youth participants.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.

The Study Design/Data Collection Method

What data did I want to collect?	How will I gather this data?	Why is this information significant to the study?
Program Public Documents -Website -Brochures -Event Program Booklets -DVD (featuring participants)	1. Research Public documents online, call for information packets 2. Ask staff/program coordinator 3. Observation (if I am not able to take the documents for thorough analysis)	♦ Understanding how the program is formally constructed ♦ Understanding perspectives of the program held by program staff
Program In-House Documents Student information packets Program hand-outs and assignments -Books, Pamphlets, Hand-outs from presenters 2006 and 2007 Program Booklets -Leadership Style Buttons -Mock Voting Ballot and Election Forms	1. Ask staff/program coordinator 2. Observation 3. Participant Interview: (Debrief think aloud)	♦ Understanding how the program is formally constructed ♦ Understanding how the program is enacted
Participant Observations of Program Activities/Events -workshops* -group and individual activities* -lectures/guest speakers* -Community Service Project -Conference -Headquarters -Fundraising Banquet Program Day to Day activities*	1. Observation notes on workshops, trips, mtgs. and day to day activity of staff and students 2a. Formal interviews “ask” staff and youth to reflect on these events 2b. Debrief think aloud (reflect on assignments, activities, event) 3. Program document Analysis of events/activities 4. Web search of pictures and articles. 5. Second hand accounts of Events	♦ Understanding how the program is enacted ♦ Understanding perspectives of the program held by program staff and youth
Participant Self-Reports: -interviews (audio)* -interview observation notes -Think aloud debriefing stimuli* -focus group meetings -Think aloud debriefing stimuli*	1. One-on-One Interviews 2. Focus Group Meetings with youth and staff 3. Debrief think aloud to discuss stimulating material/program documents	♦ Understanding perspectives of the program held by program staff and youth ♦ Understanding participant perspectives on how the program is formally constructed and enacted

APPENDIX B.
Research Questions

Research Interview Protocol

The purposes of the interviews are to:

- 1. Engage participants in conversation about their experience in the Leaders in Action Program.**
- 2. Gain understanding of how participants are viewing the program and their role within Leaders in Action as empowered youth leaders.**
- 3. Give participants an opportunity to provide relevant feedback about the program in terms of operation, curriculum, events/activities, experiences, and individual growth.**

GENERAL INFORMATION:

The General Interview Questions attempt to examine participants' current experiences with the program, and how they view their role in the Leaders in Action (LIA). These interview questions will be given to all participants in the study.

1. How long have you been in the Leaders in Action Program?
2. Why did you decide to participate in LIA? (Probe: Did a relative, guidance counselor, or a friend recommend you?)
3. In your own words, describe the purpose of the Leaders in Action Program?
4. How would you describe your overall experience in this program?
5. What do you like the most about the program? Why?
6. What do you like the least about the program? Why?
7. If you could change anything about your experience in the program what would it be and why would you change it? How would you change it?
8. Do you think that these changes are likely to occur? Why or why not?

Developmental Goals/Barriers

1. Did you have any initial goals for yourself when entering the program? Explain your initial goals? (Probe: When you first heard about the program or began participating in the program what did you want to gain from it?)
2. Are your goals being fulfilled? Why or Why not?
3. Did you face any barriers or obstacles while participating in the program? Where there any barriers to meeting your goals? Please explain.
4. Have you learned anything from participating in this program that you think you will help you in the future? Explain.

Program Structure/Participant Role

1. What is your title/role within the program? Describe your responsibilities/duties?

2. How did you feel about the responsibilities you were given?
3. Do you feel you have contributed to this program? If so, how?
4. Describe your experience working with other participants in this program (staff and youth)?
5. When expressing your opinion to others, were your thoughts and ideas being heard?
6. Have you ever planned, organized or facilitated a program activity in this program? Describe your role.
7. Describe the overall role (title/tasks/responsibilities) staff members play in planning/organizing events, activities, workshops and conferences in this program? (Give an example).
8. Describe the overall role (title/tasks/responsibilities) youth play in planning/organizing events, activities, workshops and conferences in this program? (Give an example).
9. If you could, would you change your role within the LIA program? Why or why not?
10. When problems arise when planning/organizing events how are these situations handled between program staff and youth participants?

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

1. What does the word leadership mean to you?
2. Do you have leadership skills? If so, please describe them.
3. Have you had any leadership experience before entering this program? Please explain.
4. What do you think it means to be a youth leader in this program? (Think aloud using stimuli "In the program leadership is described as x, y, and z") Please give an example.
5. Do you consider yourself a youth leader? If so, please explain using an example.
6. Have you ever been placed in a leadership role in this program? Please explain why you consider this role a leadership role?
7. What leadership experiences/opportunities did you participate in, in the LIA program?
- 8a. What was your first leadership role like in comparison to your current leadership role in this program?
- 8b. In comparison to other leadership roles you've had outside of this program?
9. Since joining this program, have you participated in any new leadership experiences outside of this program? Explain.
10. How well do you feel you performed as a youth leader in this program? Explain.
11. If you could do it all over again, what would you change or do differently as a youth leader in this program?

CURRICULUM ANALYSIS/REFLECTION

1. When you think about the way the program is structured (conferences, projects, trips, etc.) would you change anything about the way the program is organized?

2. What leadership skills and opportunities do you think are offered in this program?
2. Describe what you have learned about leadership in this program using examples of activities, workshops, events, etc.
4. Are there any leadership skills you think the program should offer that it does not offer?
5. Are there any leadership opportunities (experiences/activities) needed in your program that do not currently exist?
6. What additional assistance do you think is needed from staff?
7. What additional assistance do you think is needed from your peers?

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT/SOCIOPOLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

The youth empowerment/sociopolitical development questions will uncover the participants knowledge of socioeconomic issues, how they see their role/power in addressing these issues both in and outside of the program.

1. What does the word empowerment mean to you?
2. What does it mean to be an empowered youth in this program? (Think aloud using stimuli "In the program empowerment is described as x, y, and z")
3. Can you give an example of youth empowerment in this program?
4. Do you consider yourself an empowered person? If so, please explain why.
5. Has the LIA empowered you? If so, please explain how you have been empowered.
6. Describe some of the topics or issues addressed in the program during conferences, workshops, activities, events, etc. (What are the topics, who selects them, why do you think the program discusses them?)
7. Do you feel these topics/issues are relevant to today's youth and society? Explain.
8. What have you learned from participating in discussions about these topics or issues?
9. What seems to be the major problems underlining these topics/issues?
10. How can these problems be solved?
11. Whose responsibility is it to address these problems?
12. What role do youth in this program play in addressing these issues?
13. Have you played a role in addressing these issues? Explain.
14. Have you participated in any projects or activities that address the topics/issues described in this program?
- 15a. Please explain your level of involvement in these projects?
- 15b. What did you do? Why? How? Who assisted you? What did you learn from your participation in this project? What was the result of your participation in this project/activity? Who did it benefit? How? To what extent have you followed up on your project/activity? What skills did you use in performing this activity (leadership or other skills)? Who decided which project you would work on? How was this decision made? What role did you play in making this decision?

Complete these sentences

1. To have power in this program means_____
2. In my program I feel _____ has the most power.
3. In my program I feel _____ has the least amount of power.
4. In this program I feel I have the power to _____
5. How is power distributed in this program????

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Astin, H. S. & Astin, A. W. (1996). *A social change model of leadership development*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, University of California.
- Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectation*. New York: Free Press.
- Bass, B. M. (1990). *The Bass handbook of leadership: Theory, research & managerial applications* (3rd ed.). London: Collier Macmillan Publishers.
- Brice-Heath, S. (2000). Making learning work. *Afterschool matters: Dialogues in Philosophy Practice, and Evaluation*, 2000, 1(1), 33-45.
- Brice-Heath, S. & Street, B.V. (2008). *On ethnography: Approaches to language and literacy research*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3rd ed., pp. 505-526). New York: Macmillan.
- Fisher, B. A. (1974). *Small group decision making: Communication and the group process*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury Press.
- French, J. R., Jr., & Raven, B. (1959). The Bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in social power*. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research.
- Glense, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Planes, NY: Longman.
- Ginwright, S., & James, T. (2002). From assets to agents of change: Social justice, organizing, and youth development. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 96, 27-46.
- Ginwright, S., & Noguera, P. (2005). Introduction. In Ginwright, S., Noguera, P., & Cammarota, J. (Eds.), *Beyond resistance! Youth activism and community change*. (pp. 3-19). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Glasser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Halpern, R. (2000). Youth programs as alternative spaces to be: A study of neighborhood youth programs in Chicago's west town. *Youth & Society*. 31(4), 469-506.
- Hersey, P. & Blanchard, K.H. (1969). *Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hirsch, B., Roffman, J., Deutsch, N., Flynn, C., Loder, T., & Pagano, M. (2000). Inner-city youth development organizations: Strengthening programs for adolescent girls. *Journal of Early Adolescence*. 20(2), 210-230.
- Jago, A. G. (1982). Leadership: Perspectives in theory and research. *Management Science*, 28(3), 315-336.
- King, Martin. (1963/1981). *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Strength to love*. Cleveland: First Fortress Press.
- Klau, M. (2006). Exploring youth leadership in theory and practice. *New Directions for Youth Development*. 109, 57-87.
- Komives, S., Lucas, N., McMahon, T.R. (1998). *Exploring Leadership for college students who want to make a difference*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kress, C. (2006). Youth leadership and youth development: Connections and questions. *New Directions for Youth Development*. 109, 45-56.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Towards a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32 (3), 465-491.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives: Preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 206-214.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, UK: University of Cambridge Press.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1996). Practice, person, social world. In Daniels, H. (Ed.), *An Introduction to Vygotsky*. (pp.143-150). London: Routledge.
- Lewis-Charp, H., Cao Yum, H., & Soukamneuth, S. (2006). Civic activist approaches for engaging youth in social justice. In Ginwright, S., Noguera,

- P., & Cammarota, J. (Eds.), *Beyond resistance! Youth activism and community change*. (pp. 21-35). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Libby, M., Sedonaen, M., & Bliss, S. (2006). The mystery of youth leadership development: The path to just communities. *New Directions for Youth Development*. 109, 13-25.
- London, J. (2002). Youth involvement in community research and evaluation: Mapping the field. Discussion Paper for the Wingspread Symposium on Youth Involvement in Community Research and Evaluation. Racine Wisconsin.
- MacNeil, C. (2006). Bridging generations: Applying "adult" leadership theories to youth leadership development. *New Directions for Youth Development*. 109, 27-43.
- MacNeil, C., & McClean, J. (2006). Moving from "youth leadership development" to "youth in governance": Learning leadership by doing leadership. *New Directions for Youth Development*. 109, 99-106.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, C. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Matsudaira, J. & Jefferson, A. (2006). Anytown: NCCJ's youth leadership experience in social justice. *New Directions for Youth Development*. 109, 107-115.
- McLaughlin, M. (2000). *Community counts: How youth organizations matter for youth development*. Washington, DC: Public Education Network.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Northouse, P.G. (2006). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Nui, R. (2008). Learning to leave no child behind. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Quinn, J. (1999). Where need meets opportunity: Youth development programs for early teens. *The Future of Children When School is Out*. 9(2), 96-116.

- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis: Qualitative research methods series 30*. Newbury Park: Sage.
- Rubinstein-Avila, E. (2006). Publishing "Equinox": Broadening notions of urban youth development after school. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. 37(3), 255-272.
- Sabo, K. (2003). A Vygotskian perspective on youth participatory evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*. 98.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching on social change*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Stake, R.E. (1995). *The Art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Watts, R. & Guessous, O. (2006). Sociopolitical development: The missing link in research and policy on adolescent. In Ginwright, S., Noguera, P., & Cammarota, J. (Eds.), *Beyond resistance! Youth activism and community change*. (pp. 59-80). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Watts, R., Williams, N. & Jagers, R. (2003). Sociopolitical development. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 31(1/2)
- Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of Practice. Learning as a social system. *Systems Thinker*, http://ewenger.com/pub/pub_systems_thinker_wrd.doc Retrieved October 28, 2008.
- Zeldin, S. (2004). Youth as agents of adult and community development: Mapping the processes and outcomes of youth engaged in organization governance. *Applied Developmental Science*. 8(2), 75-90.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 1293 03062 4633