LEARNING TO LEAD:
A NATURALISTIC EVALUATION OF TWO SECONDARY SCHOOL
EXTRACURRICULAR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

by

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for the degree of Master of Arts
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated two extracurricular leadership development programs offered by one urban high school. The programs were evaluated through an examination of the ways in which students understood their experiences in the programs in terms of their own leadership abilities, their leadership role with others and their perception of good leadership. The six study participants were observed facilitating groups of their peers through interactive activities at the programs’ multiple-day events. In the three months following the programs, the participants were interviewed twice. The participants reported that their experience in a leadership development program helped them to feel confident in their leadership abilities. Also, the participants valued their relationships with their peers in their roles as leaders. Finally, the participants believed that good leaders exhibit caring behaviour towards others. This study provides information to assist the improvement of youth leadership development programs.
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This thesis is dedicated to all my past, present and future students. May you continue to develop as leaders throughout your lives.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the bridge between childhood and adulthood and is the time during which individuals prepare for adult roles. This preparation includes developing a wide variety of social and cultural skills that will enable adolescents to become future leaders. Leadership is a discussion topic that continues to be prevalent in business, political and education circles (Day, 2001; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006; Knotter, 1990). An ongoing focus on leadership in the adult world is reflected in the increasing presence of leadership theory in adolescent development models (Klau, 2006; MacNeil, 2006). A variety of methods and curriculum address adolescent leadership development. Many of these methods involve participatory programs that occur beyond the confines of a traditional classroom setting and after regular school hours (Fertman & van Linden, 1998; McNeill, 1995). Leadership education events can include single or multi-day conferences that cover a range of topics and involve students from different ages, backgrounds and experience levels. Such conferences can take place on or off school sites and may or may not be directly affiliated with the school. Also, the conferences most often involve small group activities and a mentorship component between older and younger students. These leadership education events are commonly referred to as leadership development programs, and are the context for this evaluative research study.
Personal Background in Leadership Education

As a shy tenth grade student, I attended a multi-day leadership conference organized by the senior students at my high school. That conference began to change my entire outlook on life and school. I loved the opportunity to become friends with different groups of students and participate in sessions on topics such as group dynamics, communication and conflict management. For the rest of my time at high school, I became involved in leadership conferences as a group leader and program coordinator at my school and for province-wide programs. The skills I gained from these conferences were useful during my summers at residential camp where I worked as a leadership counselor, canoe expedition leader and then eventually the director of all leadership programs. I believe the intensive nature of summer camp is an ideal venue for developing leadership skills. I feel strongly that these experiences had a profound effect on my development as a person. As I moved into adulthood, I began to question what specifically about these leadership development programs attracted me to them. Also, I questioned what I gained from the experiences, and if I could recreate these positive, life changing experiences for others.

I became a high school teacher and tried to recreate this unique camp experience for my students locally. During my first five years of professional teaching, I continued to question the aspects of the leadership programs that were most meaningful for my students’ social and scholastic development. The limitations of school funding had forced me to adapt the leadership program
models of my experiences to fit the restrictions of the school. Despite running the programs with less than ideal resources and locations, I have observed positive outcomes of the leadership programs. During the events, the students seem to demonstrate increased confidence in their leadership roles and to develop new friendships with students and staff. This research explores the student experience in extracurricular leadership development programs.

**Purpose of Study**

Some of the questions I have been pondering in the past 15 years as a participant and coordinator of extracurricular leadership development programs are addressed in this study. This research aimed to evaluate two extracurricular leadership development programs. The evaluation was conducted through an examination of the students’ understanding of their experiences in the programs. The following research question was answered by this study:

How do student leaders participating in one of two extracurricular leadership development programs at one urban high school understand their experience in terms of their own leadership abilities, their leadership role with others and their perception of good leadership?

Extracurricular leadership programs in high schools can require many resources to be run effectively (Fashola, 2001; Yeh, 2007). Teacher and administrative time and money are always in short supply in public schools (Crain, 1981; Fashola, 2001). Therefore, this evaluation is important because it
uncovers facets of the student experience in the programs that use the school’s limited resources.

In order to formulate the specific components of the student experience to be studied for program evaluation, I considered my own experience as a youth leader in leadership development programs. As a result, the components of the research are a reflection of my own experiences and beliefs. First, I believe that leadership is a personal quality that can be connected to how I feel about myself at a particular time. The feelings of assurance students may feel towards themselves might connect to their views of their leadership abilities. Therefore, the first component of the research addresses the students’ understanding of their own leadership abilities. By definition, leaders lead people; leadership in this study must be then be addressed in the context of others. For these programs, the students had an opportunity to lead a small group of their peers. It is reasonable then that the second component for the research is the students’ understanding of their leadership in relation to others. An explanation of how students understand their leadership abilities and their leadership of peers is only relevant with a clear description of the students’ depiction of good leadership and good leaders. The students inevitably measure and compare their leadership role with their image of a good leader. The image of a good leader may be deep within the students’ worldview. Hence, the students’ views about the nature of good leadership forms the third component of the research. The students’ image of a good leader and good leadership must be explicitly uncovered to
appropriately use their perspectives for the evaluation of the leadership
development programs.

Introduction to the Programs

This study involved gaining perspectives from volunteer adolescent
participants in two leadership development programs at Parklands High School.
(The names of the school and programs have been changed to protect the
identity of the study participants). These programs were extracurricular and so,
they were conducted outside of instructional class time under volunteer school
staff supervision. Parklands High is a medium sized school of 1700 students in a
large metropolitan area. The participants were selected because they served as
leaders to groups of their peers in one of two multi-day leadership development
programs offered by Parklands High School. The extracurricular leadership
programs are named Willow Winds and Girls for Change.

Willow Winds

The Willow Winds program involves planning and executing a four-day,
three-night excursion to an outdoor adventure facility in early September. It is co-
educational program and approximately 120 students from grades 9 to 12 attend
the four-day retreat. A total of eight teacher supervisors from Parklands High
School accompany the students on the retreat. Approximately 80 students in
grades 9 and 10 register for the retreat to experience the unique outdoor
activities offered by the camp facility. The activities include canoeing, kayaking,
rock-climbing, arts and crafts, archery, hiking and the development of wilderness
skills. For many of the campers, this is their first time trying many of the activities and attending an overnight wilderness camp.

The 40 participants in the Willow Winds leadership development program are students in grades 11 and 12. As part of the program, the students are appointed to roles of executive committee members, counselors or activity leaders. From the 40 senior students, 6 students make up the Willow Winds executive committee. Two school staff advisors select the executive team the previous spring by an application and interview process. It is the executive team’s job to plan, organize and facilitate the entire program under the guidance of the staff advisors. The activities are designed to build a sense of community for the younger grades 9 and 10 students that can be transferred to Parklands High School after the retreat. Another duty of the executive committee is to select the remaining peer group leaders. The selection process consisted of a written application and a private 10-minute interview. The selected peer group leaders are further divided into 14 counselors who rotate through the retreat activities in seven partnerships with an assigned group of younger students. The other 20 peer group leaders are activity leaders who remain stationed at one retreat activity to instruct the rotating groups. The counselors and activity leaders undergo training conducted by the executive team. The training is designed to help the leaders prepare to effectively lead the planned activities during the retreat. The training involves three, two-hour sessions after school where leaders practice playing games and instructing the outdoor activities. The team-
building activities and evening programs are also explained in detail by the executive team during the training sessions. The study participants from the Willow Winds program included an executive team member, a counselor and activity leader in grades 11 and 12 and were 15, 16 and 17 years old at the time of the study.

The program is designed for the students to experience leadership in a variety of ways. The Willow Winds retreat provides an opportunity for senior student leaders to hold a position of responsibility and care giving for the younger students. The wilderness environment and series of demanding activities challenge the leaders in the Willow Winds program to encourage younger students to try new things. Also, the leaders are required to rally their peers to emotionally and physically support the younger students in the completion of the retreat activities. An assumption underlying the Willow Winds programs is that through this experience of leading activities and counseling peer groups, the student leaders continue to develop their leadership skills.

**Girls for Change**

The Girls for Change program involves planning and facilitating a sleepover at the school on a Friday evening and Saturday morning in October. About half of the Parklands High grade 9 girls (approximately 100) attend the sleepover that is supervised by a rotation of 20 volunteer female staff from the school. The sleepover is designed as a welcome event for all of the grade 9 girls in the school. The hope is that during the sleepover, the grade 9 girls will
become friendly with each other so that a positive social community can continue for the girls throughout their time in high school. While at the sleepover, the girls have an opportunity to discuss issues from their lives in small groups of their peers. They also participate in a variety of active, creative and silly activities that are designed to break social barriers between the girls. Examples of the activities include: a scavenger hunt throughout the entire school building, decorating a cake and a group performance of a dramatic skit depicting an alternative ending to a fairy tale. The activities are designed to challenge the grade 9 girls to allow themselves to feel uncomfortable. This exercise in social risk is intended to help the girls feel confident about getting involved in new opportunities at Parklands High School.

The organization of the program follows a structure similar to the Willow Winds program. An executive team of six grade 11 girls plan and coordinate the entire event. The executive team is chosen the previous spring through an interview process conducted by the Girls for Change staff advisor. Two of the executive team members are given the task of hiring 20 grade 10 girls to act as group leaders during the event. The leaders are selected in September and participate in two, two-hour after school training sessions lead by the executive team. During the sessions, the leaders are briefed on the event’s activities and are given strategies to help manage upset, nervous and uncooperative grade 9 participants. The study participants from the Girls for Change program were group leaders in grade 10 and were 14 and 15 years old at the time of the study.
**Common program goals**

The Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs have a similar leadership structure but follow different planning schedules within the school year. Further, the itineraries of activities and school staffing arrangements differ between the programs. However, both Willow Winds and Girls for Change utilize student leaders to prepare and lead activities to help establish positive group dynamics and new friendships for the youngest students at the retreat and sleepover. Aims common to both of the leadership programs are to help student leaders develop their communication skills, leadership awareness, self-esteem and empathy. Overall, the programs are intended to create a community of caring students who have confidence in their leadership abilities and will continue to act as leaders at Parklands High School after completion of the leadership development programs.

**Personal Investment in the Programs**

It is important to clarify my personal beliefs and the personal investment I have made in the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs to adequately form a context for this investigation. As part of the research journey, I had to develop an understanding of how my personal beliefs have affected the study design and analysis. Also, readers of this study need to understand my personal beliefs so they can interpret the study findings with consideration of my perspective. As will be discussed in the methodology chapter, my personal involvement is a crucial consideration at each stage of this research process.
I am highly involved with the two leadership development programs that form the basis of this study. In the past five years, I have either started or reshaped the programs using a model of leadership development progression I learned from my experience working at summer camp. This progression follows an adventure leadership model of experiential education where groups first use activities to get to know one another and then build trust (Kolb & Fry, 1975; Rohnke & Butler, 1995). Then higher risk activities can be introduced that focus on communication or problem solving skills (Rohnke & Butler, 1995).

I believe strongly that the leadership development programs benefit the participants in many ways. First, I believe students who are usually shy and withdrawn show tremendous growth in confidence after engaging in the games and activities in the leadership development programs. The peer group leaders in the program feel valued because they are trusted to keep their group members safe and involved in the activities. Also, the leaders learn what specific strategies work to maintain the attention of their group mates. All participants in the leadership development program show stronger friendships and interest towards others who might usually exist outside their social circle at school. Finally, I believe these programs have lasting effects beyond the confines of the program. The confidence gained and friendships made continue in the hallways of school after the program is complete.
Implications of the Study

There is available literature that documents the outcomes of college and university leadership development programs. Studies at the university and college level have explored student perceptions of the increase to their self-confidence and capacity to change their community after participation in a leadership program (Durham Hynes, 2010; Jennings, 2009). This study can contribute to the smaller body of literature about the outcomes of leadership programs for adolescents in high schools.

The results of this study will benefit high schools that implement similar leadership development programs. The empirical data collected in this study provides a description of how students in one school perceive the benefits of leadership development programs in terms of their leadership abilities, relationships with others and their understanding of effective leadership. This information supports reform of the leadership development programs’ curricula for Parklands High School. The results of this study also have implications for broader leadership program design and reform at the secondary school level, beyond the scope of the regional school board. Therefore, I will present the study findings to the regional school board head office and additional other schools by means of a written documents and seminar presentation.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study is based on the work on care by Nel Noddings. The first way Noddings’ work informs this evaluation is by
providing a justification for the study. The purpose of this study is to understand the student experience in leadership development programs as a means to evaluate the programs. The programs provide opportunities for the students to lead their peers through the planning and execution of a multiple day event to build community. The aim of the programs is that through these opportunities the student leaders will develop and understand their abilities as leaders. The nature of leadership encouraged through the programs is one of care for others. Care is central to the work of Nel Noddings who proposes a caring alternative to character education for schools. The caring alternative education should “provide opportunities for them (students) to gain skills in care giving” in order to create a caring community (Noddings, 2005a, p. 25). The Willow Winds and Girls for Change evaluated in this study aim to provide opportunities for students to act as caregivers for younger peers. Therefore, the goals of the leadership development programs align with Noddings’ recommendations for care education in schools. From Noddings’ perspective, participation in the leadership development programs in this study is a way for students to experience the caring alternative. A more detailed discussion of the position of leadership development programs in Noddings’ caring alternative is included in the discussion of character education in the literature review chapter.

The second fundamental way Noddings’ work guides this study is to provide a way to think about the study participants’ perspectives of their leadership abilities and their leadership role with others. The positive description
of themselves and their interactions with others may be thought of as caring relationships. Noddings’ work details caring relationships within a broader concept of the “ethic of care”. The “ethic of care” has been defined as the “tie between relationship and responsibility” (Reimer, Paolitto, & Hersh, 1983, p. 173). Noddings’ ideas were founded on the “ethic of care” identified by Carol Gilligan. Gilligan argues that moral development from a feminist perspective (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan believes that moral development is “contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract” and unique to each individual (Gilligan, 1982, p. 19). Gilligan redefined moral reasoning as a process of responding to needs and relations (Gilligan, 1982). Building on Gilligan’s work, Noddings furthered the concept of responding to needs by advocating that everyone has a desire to be cared for (Noddings, 1984).

Noddings’ recommendations for educational change are driven by her focus on caring relationships. The moral education Noddings promotes is one that primarily focuses on establishing a culture of care in schools. To cultivate an ethic of care, schools must focus on relationships that are central to the lives of the participants (Noddings, 2002). Noddings (2002) describes how the ethic of care translates to moral education:

Ethical caring requires reflection and self-understanding. We need to understand our own capacities and how we are likely to react to various situations. We need to understand our own evil and selfish tendencies as well as our good and generous ones. Hence, moral education is an
essential part of an ethic of care, and much moral education is devoted to
the understanding of self and others. (p. 15).

Noddings believes that care is founded in an understanding of oneself.
Therefore, it is important for individuals to understand how they care for
themselves to determine how they care for others. This translates to the how
participants in this study understand their leadership abilities and roles as
leaders. As is suggested by Noddings, the care the participants believe they are
utilizing to lead their peers is a reflection of their understanding of themselves
and their own leadership abilities. Therefore, Noddings’ descriptions of caring
relationships and educational opportunities within an ethic of care perspective
provide a way to look at the study participants’ descriptions of themselves and
their relationships with their peers.

The final way that Noddings’ work guides this study is in analysis of the
data that reveals how the study participants believed they relate to other people.
Noddings (1984, 2002, 2005a) does not specifically advocate for a model for
moral education instruction. Instead, she describes four components of moral
education from an ethic of care perspective: modeling, dialogue, practice and
confirmation. Modeling occurs when educators create caring relationships with
learners as a way to demonstrate effective caring behaviour. This demonstration
is more useful than telling someone how to care because the ability to care is
dependent on the experience of being cared for (Noddings, 2005a).
Dialogue, Noddings (2002, 2005a) argues, is the most fundamental component of moral education from a caring perspective and involves conversations between people. Dialogue exists as open-ended discussions that allow for a deeper self-understanding through a process of trying to understand the other person (Noddings, 2002) and responding to their message (Noddings, 2005a).

The third component of Noddings’ moral education framework is the practice of caring. Simply, “to develop the capacity to care, one must engage in care giving activities” (Noddings, 2002, p. 19). In schools, this means students should be encouraged to work together and student cooperation should be valued. An example of care practice at Parklands High School is a tutoring program where senior students volunteer their time to tutor younger students in a variety of academic subjects. Successful tutoring requires both students to communicate and work together for improved academic achievement.

Confirmation is the final component of Noddings’ framework for moral education. This process requires one person to genuinely affirm the best attributes in another person with whom he or she already has relationship. Confirmation can be done by sharing the best people see in one another, rather than responding negatively to a singular incident (Noddings, 2005a). For example, the participants were asked during interviews to answer questions as if they were one of their friends. This experience was an example of an activity to support the confirmation component of moral education because the participants
imagined themselves from another person’s perspective. The participants had to understand their relationship with their friend in order to comfortably answer the interview questions. Data analysis for the participants’ descriptions of interactions with others follows the organizational scheme Noddings laid out through the four components of moral education. The application of this structure to the research process is described in the methodology chapter and is implemented in the findings chapter.

**Definition of Terms**

This section is intended to clarify the use of the terms in this thesis. First, leadership education is “the more formal and structured environment that purposely seeks to intervene in the development of leaders” (Brungardt, 1997, p. 83). An example of leadership education is leadership development programs. In the context of this study, a school-based leadership development program is a single or multiple day event that brings together students complete activities designed to enhance leadership skills. Teachers are used to help develop the program curriculum and supervise the event. The general goal a school-based leadership development program is to foster leadership skills. The term “leadership skills” is defined as the interpersonal, critical thinking and communication abilities that enable someone to set a direction for change, align people effectively and motivate people (Knotter, 1990).

A goal of leadership development programs can be to increase self-confidence and self-efficacy. Self-confidence in this study is defined as a
person’s belief in his or her own abilities or competencies, while self-efficacy is defined as a person’s belief that they have the ability to effectively apply their competencies to new situations (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2004; Deci et al., 1991; Lane, Lane, & Kyprianou, 2004). Self-confidence and self-efficacy are different terms, however they are often used interchangeably. The distinction is necessary to further evaluate leadership development programs intended to promote student confidence and leadership skills because it helps to clarify the language used for students’ perceptions of themselves.

**Organization of the Thesis**

The second chapter of this thesis is the literature review that situates this study with the available research on youth leadership education. First, the current role of leadership education in modern schools will be explored. This includes a description of the theory of youth leadership that grounds the programs in this evaluative study. Next, is a summary of the literature that documents explorations into leadership development programs at other institutions. The context of the leadership development programs for Ontario schools is presented as character education and Noddings’ alternative to character education. A discussion of the experience of student leaders available in the literature and how using student perspectives informs this study concludes the chapter.

Chapter Three describes the research methodology and begins with a description of the qualitative approaches of naturalistic evaluation and case study
used for this research. This is followed by an introduction to the research setting and the specific leadership programs in this study. The situation of me as the researcher and teacher in the school and research site is explored. Next is a brief discussion of how student voice is used as an evaluative tool in this study. The selection of participants, data collection methods and analysis are presented. Limitations of this study due to the design and analysis are described. Finally, the ethical considerations respected in this study are addressed to conclude the chapter.

Chapter Four is the presentation of the research findings. The findings are organized into three general categories of analysis and reveal the participants’ perspectives of themselves as leaders, their relations to their peers and their understanding of leadership after their time as leaders in the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs. Direct excerpts from the collected data are also included to provide a detailed account of the research findings.

The discussion of the research findings is presented as Chapter Five. The discussion is organized around central themes that emerge from the research findings. The themes parallel the study findings and describe the participants’ discovery of their own leadership abilities, the participant’s reported positive relationships with their peers at the leadership development programs and their understanding that good leaders care for others. The themes are grounded in the data and supported by additional academic literature. A brief summary of each participant that emerged in the data closes the chapter.
The sixth and final chapter concludes this research study. The research question is addressed in detail through a comparison of the participant portraits. The implications of the study are presented through the specific suggestions for improvements to the Willow Winds are Girls for Change programs. Recommendations for future research studies are also provided through a list of proposed research questions. Finally, my plans for sharing the findings with educators and educational institutions conclude the chapter.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Review

This review of literature addresses fundamental questions to provide background information for this evaluative study. First, what is youth leadership education? An overview of the context for the leadership development programs for adolescents is provided. More specifically, what is youth leadership and how does it differ from adult leadership? A discussion of traditional leadership models is followed by a description of leadership theory from a youth orientation. Further, how does youth leadership theory guide youth leadership education? Adolescent leadership theory is detailed and explained as a framework for the leadership development programs in this study.

What are examples of leadership education for youth? The next section summarizes a small selection of the leadership development programs documented in academic literature. This section also examines how programs share common goals, structures and outcomes.

How are leadership development programs presented in Ontario high schools? Leadership development programs are first situated in the literature on character education. Character education’s place in Ontario high schools, its recommendations and criticisms are discussed. Leadership development programs are next presented in the context of Nel Noddings’ caring alternative to character education. This section also addresses how Noddings’ perspective is a philosophical orientation for establishing a culture of care in schools.
What is the experience of student leaders and how are student perspectives used for educational reform? The final section of the literature review summarizes the student perspectives of their experience as leaders in their school and communities. The ways student leaders believed they gained personal skills, positively influenced others, expanded their social networks and identified themselves as leaders are presented. Also included are arguments for the benefits of using student perspectives for school and program reform. Specific examples of how students have enacted change in school programs are provided.

**Leadership Education in Schools**

The youth leadership education programs in this study are grounded in a youth orientation to leadership theory. This section introduces the theory to provide context for the leadership education programs in this thesis.

**Youth leadership models**

The academic literature of leadership theory is primarily for adults and specifically for the business world (Bass & Bass, 2008; DuBrin, 2013). Despite the leadership information, there continues to be a lack of leadership literature with a youth orientation (Klau, 2006; Whitehead, 2009). A youth orientation to leadership theory recognizes adolescents’ idealism, quest for independence and continual identity formation (Fertman & van Linden, 1998). The youth leadership literature largely draws from adult leadership theories and models.
Adult leadership literature can be divided into five general realms of leadership theory: trait, behavioural, situational, power influence and transformational (Brungardt, 1997). Trait-based leadership theory suggests that leaders need to possess a specific set of personality characteristics in order to demonstrate good leadership, while behavioural leadership focuses on leaders’ actions and the impact of those actions on a group of people (Bass, 1985a; Brungardt, 1997). Situational leadership describes the process of leadership under specific circumstances, such as in a large company or a small student team (Brungardt, 1997). A power influence approach to leadership involves a clear definition of the type of authority and control used by a leader (Brungardt, 1997). Finally, transformational leadership focuses on the leader’s role in the change of an organization or culture (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Brungardt, 1997).

MacNeil (2006) describes the evolution of leadership theory from trait based to a contextual nature of leadership. In the context of the five realms of leadership, a contextual approach combines the behaviour, situational, power influence and transformational approaches to leadership (Avolio, 2007; MacNeil, 2006). As a result, leadership in a contextual way can be described as a “relational process combining ability with authority to positively influence and impact diverse individuals, organizations and communities” (MacNeil, 2006, p. 29). With this viewpoint, there is more focus on interactions between people in specific situations rather than an individual’s broad abilities. To apply contextual leadership theory, individual situations and the relational aspects of organizations
need to be accounted for (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Bass & Bass, 2008). The contextual approach to leadership is the most applicable of the leadership theories for this study because the programs are evaluated using Noddings’ (2002) caring alternative to schools as a conceptual framework. Within the framework, caring relationships are central to the leadership development programs.

There are distinct differences between the literature on youth leadership and adult leadership. Youth leadership is best thought of as providing opportunities for youth to create supportive relationships (Klau, 2006; MacNeil, 2006). The literature situates youth leadership for future application rather than youth experiencing leadership in their current lives (MacNeil, 2006). Further, youth leadership programs are designed to fix a perceived deficit in youth behaviour by focusing on skill development, while adult leadership education often focuses on establishing authority (MacNeil, 2006). This difference in the goals of leadership education programs for youth and adults requires a unique approach to youth leadership education programs (Klau, 2006). Specifically, youth leadership education requires an adaptive approach that can be molded to serve the needs of unique groups of adolescents (Klau, 2006; MacNeil, 2006; Whitehead, 2009). This adaptive approach adheres to the contextual leadership theory because the programs are created to utilize the participants’ preexisting skills and personalities within a specific context or situation (Klau, 2006). In this
way, youth can participate as leaders and serve as problem solvers for their community.

Good leadership is a topic of countless business school seminars and boardroom meetings. For adults, good leadership has been defined as the process of getting others to perform at their best and complete tasks to a high degree of efficiency (Bass, 1985a). This is accomplished by the leader serving the needs of those they are leading (Bass, 1985a). The process of defining good leadership for youth requires a different framework because youth often act as leaders in situations with less clearly defined roles as their adult counterparts (Dobosz & Beaty, 1999). Whitehead (2009) writes about the necessity of adjusting good leadership definitions to a youth agenda in order to make successful leadership programs. Good leaders are nurtured as youth to become authentic leaders and complete social obligations for the benefit of society (Whitehead, 2009). An authentic leader is one who works towards a positive outcome for all participants (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Dobosz & Beaty, 1999). Whitehead’s (2009) model of authentic leadership for youth is based on the following four qualities: self (to know one’s self), empathy (develop concern for others), trust building (foster trust through moral and ethical behaviour) and community (participation in community events). Youth need to understand themselves if they hope to help themselves and others become resilient to challenging situations (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Whitehead, 2009). The empathy quality describes the need of authentic leaders to find ways to help others
achieve their leadership goals (Whitehead, 2009). Trust-building requires an authentic leader to exhibit reliable and predictable behaviour that would help others to feel safe and secure (Knowles, 1986; Whitehead, 2009). Finally, the community quality refers to the importance of authentic leaders to align their self-interests with those of the greater community (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Whitehead, 2009). The four qualities authentic leadership model can provide a structure for the design of good leadership education for adolescents (Whitehead, 2009).

**Youth leadership development program design**

Youth leadership development does not have to start with formal schooling. Leadership development refers to every stage of human development that might help to promote leadership potential (Brungardt, 1997; Roberts, 1981). This includes unstructured activities of childhood and later organized activities of adolescence such as school clubs and athletics. Brungardt’s (1997) leadership development theory is based on a continuum of life experiences matched to leadership education interventions. For example, adolescent students experience group discussions in everyday peer interactions alongside a leadership education intervention, like that of an athletic program. Leadership education interventions in college programs specifically target leadership development approaches that complement other higher education experiences, such as college courses. Then, after college, professional leadership training adds to on-the-job learning. Interventional leadership educational programs can
take a variety of forms, from one-time day seminars targeting a specific skill (Brungardt, 1997) to a liberal arts education with leadership training built into the degree (Brungardt, 1997; Gardner, 1990). The design of leadership education interventions can take a variety of formats while sharing the same goal of providing quality leadership education (Brungardt, 1997).

The design of a leadership education intervention, or a leadership development program, follows models for progression of leadership development. Fertman and van Linden (1998,1999, 2003) have outlined a process of creating effective youth leadership development programs. Their books detail checklists educators can make to help build a leadership development program for youth groups that follows their theory of youth leadership development. This theory is grounded in traditional theories of adolescent development (Fertman & van Linden, 1998). For example, it uses Maslow’s (1988) conflict of “being needs” (self-actualization, aesthetics, knowledge and understanding) with “deficiency needs” (self-esteem, safety and survival). Also influential to Fertman and van Linden’s creation of a youth leadership theory is Kohlberg’s (1976) six stages of moral judgment (heteronomous morality, individualism, mutual interpersonal expectations, social system and conscience, social contract or utility and universal ethical principles). The stages outline how a child develops to negotiate moral issues. For example, in the heteronomous morality stage a person makes moral decisions based on rules that correspond to a punishment that was established by an authority figure.
As a person develops through the later stages of moral judgment, he or she acts in accordance with their self-chosen universal ethical principles, even though the principles may conflict with a judicial law or rule (Kohlberg, 1976). A final significant influence of Fertman and van Linden’s theory of youth leadership development was the concept that moral decisions are decisions that are best for self, others and self, and others (Gilligan, 1982).

The psychological development theories of Maslow, Kohlberg and Gilligan culminate to shape Fertman and van Linden’s (1998) three stages of youth leadership development: awareness, interaction and mastery. In the awareness stage, the primary task is to recognize a youth’s leadership potential. Next, in the interaction stage, the student may still need some guidance but is participating and committing to activities. This participation is described as doing transactional leadership. Transactional leadership involves the activities that are dependent on interacting with others (the doing of leadership) (Bass, 1985b; Fertman & van Linden, 1998, 1999; Hater & Bass, 1988). Finally, when adolescents enter the mastery stage of leadership development they begin to pursue self-guided pathways and create focused and deeply personal visions for completing goals (Fertman & van Linden, 1998). Also, they are responsive to feedback and can be critical of their own leadership process (Fertman & van Linden, 1998). This feedback is critical because reflection of leadership work is a key component of leadership experience and learning (Brungardt, 1997). Only at the mastery stage are youth beginning to express transformational leadership, or the process of
being a leader, rather than simply doing the tasks assigned to them in a leadership role (Bass, 1985b; Fertman & van Linden, 1998, 1999; Hater & Bass, 1988).

The stages of leadership development provide a structure for leadership development programs if the goal of the programs is to help every youth reach the mastery stage of leadership and participate in transformational leadership (Fertman & van Linden, 1998). A persistent problem in leadership development programs is a focus on the “transactional model of doing leadership tasks” (Fertman & van Linden, 1998, p. 16). In response to this problem, Fertman and van Linden (1998) suggest adults first need to create a nurturing leadership development model with a focus on group work. The students need to be made aware of group expectations and positive group dynamics. The adults must act as facilitators while being sensitive to the students’ diverse leadership styles and needs. The facilitation by adults can be challenging because in order for youth to develop leadership, “adults will have to share power and this renegotiation of power is fraught with challenges” (MacNeil, 2006, p. 34). This is because these leadership development programs exist in a society where youth are marginalized and adults hold the power (MacNeil, 2006). Peer-facilitated activities in leadership development programs is an option to change the power roles and provide authentic leadership opportunities for youth (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Therefore, in a peer-facilitated program structure the adolescents have a chance to practice transformational leadership by leading their peers.
Summary of Leadership Development Programs

A review of adolescent leadership development programs available in the academic literature provides background for the programs evaluated in this study. This section details commonalities of curricular goals, program structures, and the outcomes in leadership development programs. Program outcomes are further grouped for discussion into three general categories: academic improvement, relationships with others and relationship with oneself.

Curricular goals

The program reports reviewed for this study shared similar curricular goals. In general, these goals are to help students realize their own leadership potential and become more active, responsible and caring citizens that recognize the needs of others and act to satisfy those needs to the best of their ability (Carpenter et al., 2008; Caton, 2010; Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005; Durham Hynes, 2010; Geiger & Willis, 2000; Henry, 2009; Holt & Tink, 2008; Hughes, 2010; Jennings, 2009; Muno & Keenan, 2000). The leadership development programs described in the academic research literature are commonly oriented towards a single gender group. The programs are designed to support the perceived needs of either male or female youth participants. Therefore, the following discussion on curricular goals will group the female and male programs separately. The difference in the curricular goals of male and female programs may be because males and females have been theorized to experience psychological change, such as moral development, differently (Gilligan, 1982).
The male approach to morality follows a “justice orientation” where there is an implicit set of rights and restrictions for respect that govern people’s behaviour (Gilligan, 1982). The female approach is a “responsibility orientation” where morality is a sense of responsibility people have for one another (Gilligan, 1982).

The difference in moral development for men and women is echoed in the approaches to leadership. Men have been found to take on a more task-oriented approach to management while women take an interpersonal approach (Cleas, 1999; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). This means that when presented with a task and a team to lead, male leaders generally focus on the task completion and organize the work so that the task is completed (Cleas, 1999). Women are more likely to utilize the social connections between group members and the skill set of each individual member in order to organize and complete the task (Cleas, 1999). The documented and stereotypic difference in leadership style between genders may impact the curriculum design of small-scale gender targeted leadership development programs. Consequently, it was not surprising to find the curricular goals were different for the male and female-oriented leadership development programs reviewed for this study.

Peck et al. (2008) claim that female-oriented programs tend to express a desire to stop the cycle of low self-confidence and negative body image that continue to impede the academic success of many adolescent girls. Many leadership programs for adolescent girls documented in the literature aimed to increase self-confidence and self-esteem and encourage a positive perception of
body image (Caton, 2010; Jennings, 2009; Muno & Keenan, 2000; Whittington, 2006). The girls’ programs also focused on a group building process to create supportive peer-networks (Caton, 2010; Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005; Whittington, 2006). This could be a reaction to popular media portrayals, such as the film *Mean Girls* (Paramount Pictures, 2004), that show an unfriendly culture within adolescent girls groups (Hall & Brown-Thriston, 2011; Harris, 2004).

Male-oriented leadership development programs documented in the literature place more emphasis on improving the academic results of the participants. One area of academic intervention common in the literature is the crisis of boys’ falling rates of literacy proficiency (Freedmon, 2003). Even though recent studies suggest this underachievement of boys in literacy may be an overstatement (White, 2007), boys’ academic struggles are well documented. There has been an increase in boys’ drop out rates reported in many school boards across North America (Janosz et al., 2008; Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenberg, 2008; Sax, 2007). The male dropout issue is addressed by some schools through the implementation of leadership development programs focused on increasing student initiative and motivation. Leadership development programs encourage male participants to take ownership of group tasks and to work in peer-directed teams (Carpenter, et al., 2008; Henry, 2009; Holt & Tink, 2008). Increased self-motivation can positively impact academic school performance (Pullmann & Allik, 2008). Some of the leadership development programs reviewed specifically found academic improvement as an outcome for
participants (Carpenter, et al., 2008; Henry, 2009; Hughes, 2010). For example, in the Student African American Brotherhood at a college, African American students in the program are encouraged to support one another as peer mentors and then as mentors to youth in their hometowns in between college sessions (Hughes, 2010). While at school, the faculty of the college are alerted if any of their freshman members have a falling grade point average (Hughes, 2010). Once alerted, the student is given support, academic and emotional, to help improve (Hughes, 2010). This support helps the students to maintain academic standards and remain in the African American Brotherhood program. Additional examples of the role of mentorship relationships in leadership development programs are presented as part of next section.

**Program structures**

Many of the male and female-oriented programs have the goal of developing leadership and communication skills in the participants. The program objectives for leadership development programs can be attained through exercises in goal attainment, group dynamics, self-awareness, group discussion and role-playing (McNeill, 1995). These exercises can be used to schedule a leadership development experience for adolescents (Fertman & van Linden, 1998). There is variation in the format of leadership development programs. One example is a conference format with guest speakers directly instructing desired skills, as was the case for the Women’s Leadership Development Program at the University of Virginia (Jennings, 2009). Another approach to a
leadership development program structure is to divide the participants into smaller peer groups and assign specific tasks that require teamwork to complete (Carpenter, et al., 2008; Geiger & Willis, 2000; Muno & Keenan, 2000; Whittington, 2006). These tasks may be completed in several after school sessions (Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005; Henry, 2009; Holt & Tink, 2008) or in a multi-day retreat on or off school property (Caton, 2010; Geiger & Willis, 2000; Whittington, 2006). The outdoor adventure arena, such as a summer camp, is a recurring location for the team-oriented tasks (Geiger & Willis, 2000; Whittington, 2006). This may be because taking people into unfamiliar situations has been found to increase the speed of building group relationships (Forsyth, 2006).

Many of the programs reviewed are structured to encourage a form of mentorship relationships (Carpenter, et al., 2008; Caton, 2010; Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005; Geiger & Willis, 2000; Jennings, 2009; Muno & Keenan, 2000; Whittington, 2006). Mentorship in this study is understood as a relationship between two or more people of different ages or degrees of experience. The mentor is the person with more experience and offers guidance and coaching to the person with less experience. In this arrangement, the younger or less experienced person benefits from the guidance of their mentor. However, the mentor might also benefit from the leadership opportunity and further develop his or her own skill set (Daloz, 1999). An example of a mentorship relationship is for older students to serve as peer mentors to younger students in a program that helps students in their transition to high school. Adults serve in some capacity as
mentors to adolescents in all of the leadership development programs reviewed for this literature review. Generally, the adults create the program curriculum and provide supervision in the program meetings, sessions or expeditions. For both male and female-oriented programs there are adult mentors assigned to small groups of students (Carpenter, et al., 2008; Caton, 2010; Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005; Geiger & Willis, 2000; Jennings, 2009; Muno & Keenan, 2000; Whittington, 2006). The mentoring arrangements compliment a caring approach to leadership development programs. Noddings (2005a) suggests teachers or adults “not only have to create caring relations in which they are carers, but they also have the responsibility to help their students develop the capacity to care” (p. 16).

Mentorship structures are not limited to those between adults and youth in leadership development programs. Students in some of the leadership development programs reviewed took part in a form of peer mentorship (Carpenter, et al., 2008; Geiger & Willis, 2000; Holt & Tink, 2008). In a peer-mentorship arrangement students shared their recent and relevant experiences with one another. Students who serve as role models to younger students benefit because they gain a sense of self-importance (Forsyth, 2006; Ritter, 2008). Further, this peer-mentor structure builds supportive peer-networks, which helps to create a positive leadership development program experience for participants (Brungardt, 1997; Ritter, 2008).

Compared to the female-oriented leadership development programs, the male-oriented programs have more emphasis on one-on-one mentorship. These
are relationships formed between an adult male and an adolescent boy (Henry, 2009; Hughes, 2010). The prevalence of the one-on-one mentorship structure in male-oriented programs may be a response to absent male role models for young boys in communities for whom these leadership development program serve (Mills, Martino, & Lingard, 2004). The exploration of the goals and structures of leadership development programs detailed the way the programs went about serving the needs of the program participants. In the next section, the outcomes of the programs are discussed.

**Common outcomes of programs**

The review of leadership development programs revealed a range of program outcomes. The outcomes were measured using a variety of techniques and were categorized for this literature review into three topics: academic improvement, relationships with others and sense of self. It must be noted that the leadership development programs included in this literature review found varying degrees of success at meeting their goals, however all detailed optimistic plans for future program enhancements.

For many programs, there was a reported increase in academic achievement for students who completed the leadership development program. For example, in a study with the adolescent participants in a Baltimore area Big Brothers program “70% showed improvement in academic performance” since starting the program (Henry, 2009, p. 46). Although the criteria used to measure academic performance was not clearly outlined, the positive effect of the program
on the participants is encouraging. At the college level, leadership bridge programs are used to help prepare freshman students for the challenges of college academics. Hughes (2010) reported an increase in the number of African American males continuing in careers in academia since being in the bridge program at one American college.

Academic success can also be affected by relationships students have with peers, teachers and themselves. For the remainder of this section, the relationships formed for participants in leadership development programs are intersected with the literature that connects relationships with academic outcomes.

Some of the leadership development programs reviewed addressed a connection between participation in the program and better relationships with others. In a program for aboriginal youth, it was because of “this sense of respect for individuals and recognition for the strength in the larger group that the first year of mentoring programming flourished” (Carpenter, et al., 2008, p. 64). Also, the participants showed little respect for their teachers when they began the program, but reported and demonstrated they had more respect for all teachers at the time of program completion. Carpenter, et al. (2008) suggests that this shift in attitude is because the students behaved like teachers and learned to empathize with the challenges teachers face when working with students.

Another example of a program with that documented the formations of positive participant relationships was a study with 164 girls in an after school
leadership development program (Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005). The girls were given time to discuss issues and create community-based solutions (Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005). The authors believe that “a focus on youth-youth partnerships is essential to building youth-adult partnerships” (Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005, p. 97). They also detail practices used to create these supportive relationships, such as adults providing guidance rather than direct instruction and providing the girls’ groups locations where they can be authentic and speak freely.

In many studies, academic performances have also been correlated with caring relationships with others. In 2008, an analysis of 148 independent academic research studies concluded that students who reported more positive peer relationships had higher academic achievement (Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008). The influence of relationships for academic achievement extends to relationships between students and their teachers. Students who have stronger relationships with teachers feel more engaged and are more successful in schools (Klem & Connell, 2004). Teachers also gain satisfaction from investing in relationships with their students (Hargreaves, 1994, 2000). Therefore, participation in leadership development programs has been found to improve peer and teacher relationships and positive relationships have been correlated with academic improvement for the program participants.

The quality of students’ social relationships in the school environment can impact the relationship students have with themselves. Greater self-esteem is
correlated with students who have more positive relationships with peers and adults (Grunebaum & Solomon, 1987). This next section explores the connection between leadership development programs and participants’ sense of selves.

Adolescents have a complicated awareness of themselves that is described as a combination of self-esteem (worth) and self-efficacy (competence) (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2004). Many leadership development programs attempt to measure changes in students’ self-esteem or self-efficacy upon completion of the program (Henry, 2009; Jennings, 2009; Muno & Keenan, 2000). In the Baltimore area Big Brothers program, 80% of youth participants showed improved self-confidence as a member of the big brother program (Henry, 2009). There was also an increase in self-esteem and initiative reported in a case study of an adolescent boys’ soccer team (Holt & Tink, 2008). The team was also enrolled in a program that promoted leadership skills in addition to athletic performance (Holt & Tink, 2008). Another example is a study that measured attitudes of girls in middle school before and after a five-day leadership development conference. The goal of the program was to positively impact “attitudes toward gender equality, assertiveness skills, conflict resolution attitudes and skills, and body image” (Caton, 2010, p. 2). The conference was organized with theme days including “building community” and “promoting leadership.” Seminars and experiential activities were used to address the themes. The program sessions were lead by professors in a Northeastern American University’s Women Studies department and the conference counselors were undergraduate students. A
group of 34 conference participants were surveyed before and after their experiences in the program. The surveys were used to measure changes in the adolescent girls’ attitudes towards themselves, conflict resolution skills and communication styles. From the surveys, “statistically significant results were noted for attitudes on gender equality, assertiveness, body image, and conflict resolution skills” (Caton, 2010, p. 21). All of these attitudes became more positive after participation in the conference (Caton, 2010).

The impact on self-esteem and self-efficacy can also be found in programs with longer timeframes. One year-long after school girls leadership club in Seattle supported participants to collaborate with the community to identify, research and present solutions for issues that challenge young girls (Muno & Keenan, 2000). Although the limited scope of the program’s first community research project was disappointing to the program developers, the family members and community members believed that the program was “fostering development of peer support, leadership and decision making” (Muno & Keenan, 2000, p. 6). The study collected surveys and conducted interviews with the participants and participants’ families throughout the program. The findings suggested the girls experienced an increase in their leadership abilities, self-esteem and self-confidence during participation in the program (Muno & Keenan, 2000). Another example of a leadership development program found to impact self-awareness was a multiple day canoe expedition for adolescent girls. The participants reported after returning from the expedition an increase in
“perseverance, strength and determination” (Whittington, 2006, p. 4). This example suggests that challenging traditional female roles can result in an increase in girls’ self-efficacy (Weiss, Freund, & Wiese, 2012).

Higher self-efficacy, or an increase one’s belief in personal abilities, has been reported to influence a growth in self-esteem in leadership development program participants. This was shown in a case study at one college that measured program participants’ community involvement, their perceived experience in college and their attitudes towards themselves. Jennings (2009) found that for students who were already highly and moderately involved in community initiatives, participation in the leadership program lead to continued or increased community involvement. For students with low belief in their own abilities and community involvement upon entering the program, there was little increase to their self-confidence and plans for future involvement. The leadership development program was found to most significantly benefit students who were already involved in their community because they most readily reported an increase to their self-efficacy and plans for involvement in additional areas of the community. Therefore, there continues to be a need to find ways to engage students of all levels of community involvement in leadership opportunities. Through the leadership opportunities students can increase their involvement in the school and community. School involvement is important for students’ success in school since involvement has been positively correlated to students’
favourable impressions of the academic institutions and their likeliness to graduate (Cooper, Healy, & Simpson, 1994).

Students’ perception of themselves can also impact their academic accomplishments. Students whose academic performance is high generally have high self-esteem, and students with low academic performance have low self-esteem (Leondari, Syngollitou, & Kiosseoglou, 1998). This low self-esteem contributes to lower grades and keeps students in a cycle of underperformance. On the other hand, students with very low academic performance may resort to forms of delinquency that has been found to result in high self-esteem (Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989). Therefore, as a way to intervene a path to delinquency, students can use alternative means to increase their self-esteem. An opportunity for students to increase their self-esteem may be participation in supportive programs, such as leadership development programs.

**Context for Leadership Development in Ontario Schools**

Leadership development programs have a place in Ontario high schools for many reasons. In this section of the literature review, leadership development programs are first situated in the context of character education policy. The leadership development programs also have a place in Ontario high schools when schools are viewed from Nel Noddings’ ethic of care perspective. Therefore, the leadership development programs are next presented in the context of Nel Noddings’ caring alternative to character education.
Character education

Character education is traditionally defined from a values or virtues-based perspective. In a values definition, character education aims to teach “universal moral values- such as treating all people justly and respecting their lives, liberty and equality- bind all persons everywhere because they affirm our fundamental human worth and dignity” (Lickona, 1991, p. 38). Lickona (1991) describes respect and responsibility as the two great values to teach in character education. He believes “these values constitute the core of a universal, public morality” (Lickona, 1991, p. 43). Further, schools should teach “honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, courage and a host of democratic values” as additional moral values to the character education curriculum (Lickona, 1991, p. 45). Lickona’s (1991) values list could also be used as examples of virtues in character education. A definition of character education is offered by Ryan and Bohlin (1999) who believe that virtues, are “what orient us appropriately and strengthen our character” (p. 25). In virtues-based character education, a “teacher helps her students understand that character comes not from acquiring particular points of view or values but from developing a set of ideals upon which to base one’s life” (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999, p. 39). Both these definitions of character education share the view that character education is a necessity and needs to be integrated into all facets of a school curriculum (Lickona, 1991; Ryan, 1986; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999).
Character education curricula can describe the goals of leadership development programs (Fertman & van Linden, 1999; Lickona, 1996). The objectives and progression of activities in leadership development programs have similarities with programs for character education (Fertman & van Linden, 1999, 2003). Lickona (1996) states in an extensive review of the principles of effective character education that students need “opportunities for moral action” (p. 97) and “moral leadership from both staff and students” (p. 98). These opportunities may take the form of a leadership development program. Fertman and van Linden (1998, 1999, 2003) argue that character-building components are key aspects to leadership development programs. Also, developing both transformational and transactional leadership qualities can promote character development (Fertman & van Linden, 1999). For example, a transformational leadership quality is to value the contribution of others (Bass, 1985b; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Fertman & van Linden, 1999). This quality is also a demonstration of respect for others, which is a goal of character education (Lickona, 1996). As part of transactional leadership development, students learn to take charge to complete tasks (Fertman & van Linden, 1999). Further, students in leadership development programs demonstrate perseverance, a common component of character education, by their ability for youth to overcome personal insecurities and lead their peers (Fertman & van Linden, 1999; Lickona, 1996).

Character education is a requirement within the Ontario high school curriculum. The Ministry of Education mandated Ontario’s character education
policy in 2006. The policy, the Character Development Initiative, is outlined in plain language for use in schools in the document *Finding Common Ground* (2008). Leadership development programs are examples of extracurricular experiences that promote the key concepts of Ontario’s character education policy. In *Finding Common Ground*, leadership development programs are cited as opportunities for character development: “character development is clearly evident in initiatives that address areas such as … student-led conferences and student leadership development” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 12).

One of the Key Expectations for the implementation of the Character Development Initiative as listed in *Finding Common Ground* is for schools to provide “student leadership development and expanded opportunities for student voice and engagement in the education process” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 26). Specific structures of the leadership development programs reviewed in the literature are congruent with Ontario’s character education policy. For example, the mentorship arrangements in leadership development programs aligns with the Character Development Initiative that “recognizes the importance of mentoring relationships between students and caring adults” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 14). Further, the goals of the Character Development Initiative, such as the ability to recognize and act on the best interest of others, are mirrored by the goals of the leadership development programs reviewed for this study (Carpenter, et al., 2008; Caton, 2010; Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005; Durham Hynes, 2010; Geiger & Willis, 2000; Henry, 2009; Holt & Tink, 2008;
Hughes, 2010; Jennings, 2009; Muno & Keenan, 2000). Specifically, the Character Development Initiative promotes “civic engagement, participation in decisions about their education and service learning” because “it is the learning of the skills of positive advocacy for themselves and others” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a, p. 23). The leadership development programs in this study, as described in the previous chapter, satisfy many of the requirements of Ontario’s character education mandate.

Educators and scholars have made recommendations for the best format of character education initiatives. There is literature to suggest that schools take an integrative approach to character education programs and teach values or virtues, such as responsibility and respect, alongside subject curriculum (DeRoche, 2000; Revell & Arthur, 2007; Ryan & Bohlin, 1999; Stiff Williams, 2010; Winton, 2010). This means that character education does not need to be separate from the classroom content (DeRoche, 2000; Stiff Williams, 2010). Also, the literature recommends that character education, like other school programs, should continually be evaluated and adapted to better suit the specific needs of students (DeRoche, 2000; Lickona, 1996; Winton, 2010). Many of these recommendations and school examples are outlined in the Ontario Ministry of Education website (2013) as well as in the document Character Development in Action, K-12: Successful Practices in Ontario Schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a). One example from Character Development in Action is a school where students interpreted character attributes through photography and
then uploaded the photographs as screen savers onto school computers (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008a).

Ontario’s Character Development Initiative has been criticized since its 2006 release. *Finding Common Ground* defines character development as “the deliberate effort to nurture the universal attributes upon which schools and communities find consensus” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 3). However, scholars want to know which groups of people were invited to the discussions about the formation of the public policy (Bajovic, Rizzo, & Engemann, 2009). The document uses generalized language to allow for administrators to flexibly implement the policy’s recommendation, as in the case of leadership development programs in schools. It is argued that the way the document is written is problematic because the document has no clear definition of character or a theoretical framework that will guide administrators and educators in creating effective character education opportunities for students (Bajovic, Rizzo, & Engemann, 2009; Winton, 2008).

These criticisms of character education are addressed by alternative approaches to moral education. In alternative approaches the same overall goals of character education can be achieved, but through a different emphasis. In character education, emphasis is placed on an individual’s development (Winton, 2008). In Noddings’ (2002) alternative to character education, there is a greater emphasis placed on an individual’s relationship to others. Therefore, different educational strategies can address similar issues as character education
and provide context for leadership development programs. By way of example, the next section explores leadership development programs within Noddings’ caring alternative to character education.

**Caring alternative to character education**

Leadership development programs can fit in Ontario schools from the caring perspective described by Nel Noddings (1984, 2002, 2005a, 2005b). Noddings (2002) advocates for establishing a culture of care in schools as an alternative to a virtues-based moral education curriculum more traditionally associated with character education. The moral education Noddings envisions involves an “ethic of care” (Noddings, 1984). As mentioned in Chapter One, the “ethic of care” approach to moral education prioritizes caring for others. Several of the leadership development programs reviewed in the literature describe goals of their programs as recognizing and acting upon the needs of others (Carpenter, et al., 2008; Caton, 2010; Geiger & Willis, 2000; Henry, 2009; Holt & Tink, 2008; Muno & Keenan, 2000; Whittington, 2006). Noddings (2002) argues that recognizing the needs of others is fundamental to a caring approach to moral education:

Learning to care is not a sequential process like, say, learning mathematics. It is probably true that one must learn to be cared for and to care for oneself before learning to care for others, but the process is not linear. As we begin to care for others, we learn more about what is means
to be cared for. As we learn how to take care of ourselves, we become more discerning in assessing efforts of others to care (p. 32).

The outcomes of many of the leadership development programs reviewed include increased self-esteem or self-efficacy (Carpenter, et al., 2008; Caton, 2010; Denner, Meyer, & Bean, 2005; Durham Hynes, 2010; Geiger & Willis, 2000; Jennings, 2009; Muno & Keenan, 2000; Whittington, 2006). Self-esteem is also important in the caring perspective of moral education. Noddings (2002) believes, “in learning to care for oneself, self-image and self-esteem are, of course, important” (p. 34). Also, for implementation of moral education, “a wiser approach (to teaching self-esteem) recognizes that a measure of self-knowledge is necessary for self-esteem and that there are features to deplore as well as to admire in most selves” (Noddings, 2002, p. 34).

In this caring alternative, the focus of moral education is to establish a school community of care and caring individuals. Extracurricular programs, like those for leadership development, need to “provide opportunities for them to gain skills in care giving” (Noddings, 2005a, p. 127). To promote care, schools must focus on relationships that are central to people’s lives (Noddings, 2002). These relationships exist as complex connections between individuals (Gilligan, 1982). This framework of relationships as networks with flexible power dynamics influences the understanding of relationships established during the leadership development programs in this study.
Voices of Student Leaders

This study uses perspectives of student leaders for evaluation of leadership development programs at one high school. Thiessen (2007) argues for the importance of using student perspectives in research as a means to, “document and support the engagement of students in decisions and actions designed to improve their own learning, the practices of teachers, or the organization and operation of classrooms and schools” (p. 6). Therefore, this study’s documentation of the student experience can be used to improve the youth leadership education and the leadership development programs at Parklands High School. As background for how student perspectives are used for evaluation in this study, this section of the literature review explores how students serve as leaders for changes to their education. First, the experience of student leaders is described. The summaries of leaders’ perspectives in this review are from a collection of academic studies with high school, college and university students. The specific skills students believed they developed in their leadership roles are detailed. Next is a description of how the student leaders believed in their role as leaders they were capable of serving others. Further, the increase in social connections that student leaders attributed to their leadership role is described. The students’ identification of themselves as leaders concludes this exploration of the student leader experience.

Following the discussion of the student leader experience, the ways the opinions of student leaders can be used for school and program improvement are
presented. Specific examples of how student voice has been used to support improvement to education initiatives are also included.

**Student leader experience**

Student leaders, for the purposes of this study and literature review, are students who hold a position of responsibility within academic institutions. There are different types of student leaders with a range of levels of responsibility. Student leaders are identified in the literature by their memberships in student governments (Kuh & Lund, 1994; Kustaa, 1993; Mayer & Feuer, 2008; Miles, 2010; Mulcrone, 1983; Robinson, 2004). Also, student leaders are identified by serving as organizers for large student committees such as: sororities or fraternities, youth outreach programs and marching bands (Brewer, 2009; Faber, 2009; Ouellette, 1998; Porter, 2009; Romano, 1996). Further, student leaders are identified in the literature by their mentoring of younger students in specialized programs. Examples of programs with mentorship by student leaders are as follows: transition to college programs (Dreyfuss, 2012; Logue, Hutchens, & Hector, 2005; Terrion & Leonard, 2007), community-building programs (Carielli, 1997; Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Karcher, et al. 2009; Karcher, 2010; Schwitzer & Thomas, 1998; Trela, 2001) and peer academic support programs (Good, Halpin, & Halpin, 2000; Parsons, 2012).

Student leaders may not accurately represent their peer group. For example, Mulcrone (1983) found in a study of 90 peer elected high school students in student government organizations that the leaders have a
significantly higher socioeconomic status and academic achievement compared to the rest of the student body. Student leaders in this study were more interested in an expanded curriculum compared to their classmates (Mulcrone, 1983). Another way student leaders can differ from their peers is by identifying a range of possibilities for their future (Morris, 1992). These possibilities include plans to attend university and realistic job prospects (Morris, 1992; Mulcrone, 1983). Further, student leaders more accurately identify reasonable strategies to acquire the skills they need to meet their career goals compared to their classmates (Morris, 1992). This brief description of the ways student leaders differ from their classmates cautions the use of generalizing student leader perspectives for research. The opinions of student leaders can be very useful for educational reform because they are easily accessible to the individuals who direct policy and curricular decisions. As student leaders are motivated to be a part of the reform processes, they volunteer for opportunities to share their opinions (Mulcrone, 1983). However, the opinions of student leaders may not be a true reflection of the opinions of the entire student population of a school or program. For this study, the unique perspectives of student leaders participants are appropriate data sources because the student leaders’ opinions are used to form recommendations for the improvement of programs designed to serve future student leaders. In other words, the student leaders in this study represent the targeted student population for the leadership development programs.
The student leaders documented in the research reviewed for this study believed their experience as leaders helped them to develop new skills. Consistently, the student leaders believed they became better communicators because of their leadership role in a school organization (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Logue, Hutchens, & Hector, 2005; Ouellette, 1998; Schwitzer & Thomas, 1998). For example, upon completing a conference for the California Association of Student Councils, a grade eleven female student leader was reported saying, “‘I learned so much, especially how to be a better public speaker, to voice my opinions and to hear out others’” (Mayer & Feuer, 2008, p. 18). In general, the students believed in their role as leaders they had the opportunity to speak to different groups of people, and this helped them to develop a more diverse communication skills.

The student believed they became more skilled mediating conflicts through their responsibilities in leadership positions (Miles, 2010; Porter, 2009; Robinson, 2004; Trela, 2001). These conflicts were described as between peers or the school administration and the student body. Robinson (2004) found students in school government positions often had conflicts with fellow executive members. The students leaders believed their ability to effectively manage conflicts to maintain productive working relationships improved throughout their term in the student government (Robinson, 2004).

In addition to communication and mediation, the student leaders believed they became more skilled working with groups of their peers (Dworkin, Larson, &
Hansen, 2003). Students believed their improvement in group work was related to their development of better social skills (Parsons, 2012). For an introductory science workshop at a community college, the peer group leaders believed their experience as workshop leaders improved their ability to work in a group because they effectively facilitated heated ethical discussions of science issues (Dreyfuss, 2012). The student leaders in this study believed they would have been unsuccessful facilitating a similar discussion one year earlier with their peers from high school and attributed their success with the better social skills they developed through in college (Dreyfuss, 2012). The skills student leaders believed they developed in their leadership roles suggest the importance of leadership positions for student learning.

The student leaders reviewed in the research literature believed as leaders they made a positive difference in the lives of others. First, student leaders believed their involvement in shaping large policy initiatives at their academic institutions would improve the lives of future students (Mayer & Feuer, 2008; Miles, 2010; Robinson, 2004). The students who spoke of their involvement in school and program policy decisions were primarily the leaders of large school organizations, such as the student government. In the case study of five elected student leaders at the University of Toronto, the student leaders believed they had a “positive influence on the university committees they were a part of” (Robinson, 2004, p. 96). Students were surprised by the influence they felt towards large-scale initiatives. For example, at the California Association of
Student Councils conference, after a discussion with the representatives of California Department of Education a grade 11 student said, “‘I learned that I can actually make a change. I thought an individual couldn’t really make a difference nowadays. But I was wrong’” (Mayer & Feuer, 2008, p. 18). In another study, a college president explained his appreciation for being including in the school’s administration decisions. He said, “‘we used to be told, no, we can’t. Now we’re told, why can’t we?’” (Miles, 2010, p. 7). The student leaders from the research literature spoke positively about their influence on school policy, however they were also frustrated with the slow pace of change (Porter, 2009; Robinson, 2004). Therefore, the student leaders were grateful for the small changes they implemented for their school within their term as student leaders (Porter, 2009).

Another way student leaders believed they made a positive difference for others was by directly helping their peers. Primarily, students in roles that paired leaders with other students spoke of feeling satisfied helping other people on a individual level (Carielli, 1997; Dreyfuss, 2012; Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Good, Halpin, & Halpin, 2000; Karcher, 2009; Karcher, et al., 2010; Logue, Hutchens, & Hector, 2005; Parsons, 2012; Schwitzer & Thomas, 1998; Terrion & Leonard, 2007; Trela, 2001). In general, programs with student partnerships were designed to build community through connections between the leaders and the program participants. High school leaders in one program were matched with “academically disconnected” younger students and met regularly to discuss the younger students’ concerns (Karcher, et al., 2010). The student leaders in the
program believed they helped the younger students form better relationships with their teachers (Karcher, et al., 2010). The teachers in this study also reported an improvement in their interactions with their students who were individually counseled by the high school students leaders (Karcher, et al., 2010). Therefore, the teachers’ experiences support the student leaders’ beliefs that as leaders, they individually helped others.

Communication skills, group work skills and helping of others are aspects of the social connections the student leaders believed they made with others. In many studies, the student leaders believed their experience as leaders helped them to expand their social networks (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Karcher, 2009; Ouellette, 1998; Parsons, 2012; Romano, 1996). For example, all of the 21 student organization leaders in a study conducted at the University of Alberta reported an increase in the number of “lasting friendships” they made because of their leadership role (Ouellette, 1998). The student leaders also believed their new social networks included a more diverse student population than would have been possible if they were not student leaders (Parsons, 2012; Porter, 2009). For instance, the students on the organizing committees of sororities and fraternities at four institutions in South Carolina had more interactions with students from different academic disciplines and backgrounds compared to students who were not a part of the organizing committees (Porter, 2009). Therefore, the unique social connections the student leaders made in their roles are important aspects of the student leader experience.
A final way the students commonly reported their experience as leaders was by their challenge to balance their identities of themselves as leaders and students. First, student leaders felt pressure to complete their duties and goals in their positions of responsibilities within the short timeline of the school year schedule (Brewer, 2009; Miles, 2010; Ouellette, 1998; Robinson, 2004). Also, student leaders found it difficult to balance the responsibilities and expectations of their leadership role with their active social lives (Dreyfuss, 2012; Ouellette, 1998; Parsons, 2012). Brewer (2009) found in a narrative case study of the experience of three marching band drum majors that, “the participants spoke of ways in which they negotiated seemingly complicated social interactions and felt required to make sophisticated decisions as they balanced their public role as leader and a desire to just be themselves” (p. 7). The challenge for student leaders to exist both within and separate from their peers groups is a part of the students’ identification of themselves as leaders. In the marching band majors study, one student said, “I can understand what the uniform is, in one way, a form of stature. You’re in a different in uniform so obviously you’re different from everybody else” (Brewer, 2009, p. 9). Student leaders explained how their experience as leaders helped them to identify themselves as leaders in others areas of their lives (Dreyfuss, 2012; Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Faber, 2009; Kustaa, 1993). Further, student leaders reported feeling empowered because of their roles as leaders (Carielli, 1997; Faber, 2009; Karcher, 2009). With this sense of personal empowerment, student leaders were open to sharing
their opinions and contributing to school change. In the next section, the ways student perspectives are used for school and program reform are presented.

**Student perspectives for research and education reform**

The academic literature documents benefits of using student perspectives, known as student voice, in research and school reform (Bragg, 2007; Pollard, Thiessen, & Filer, 1997; Smyth, 2007; Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007; Yonezawa & Jones, 2007). Thiessen (2007) argues that the “researchers who study student perspectives develop more complicated and changing portrayals of how students make sense of their lives at school” (p. 54). The inclusion of student voice can add richness to descriptions in a research study and provide an authenticity to the writing that would not be available without the students’ own words.

Student perspectives offer a useful contribution to discussions on school reform (Fielding, 2001; Pollard, Thiessen, & Filer, 1997). Cook-Sather (2002) states, “authorizing student perspectives is essential because of the various ways that it can improve educational practice” (p. 3). The insights from students thus can help to improve the structure and execution of school programs. Further, there is the potential for teacher to learn from the voices of students. When including students in discussions with teachers, the teachers are challenged to evaluate their efforts from students’ viewpoints (Fielding, 2001).

The students also benefit directly when student perspectives are used in research and the process of school reform. By participating in professional learning communities with staff to create school reform, students gain a rich
learning experience and “opportunities to develop social and cultural capital” (Mitra, 2008, p. 12). Additionally, this engagement helps students build a sense of belonging to their school community and gain self-worth and agency (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Pancer, Rose-Krasnor, & Loiselle, 2002). This rise in personal agency may lead to increased involvement in school activities. School involvement can enhance student learning and improve the staying rate of students in undergraduate college programs (Astin, 1984). Using student voice in research or reform projects can offer benefits to everyone involved in the process.

Student voice has been a source to develop recommendations for changes in a variety of educational settings. Smyth (2007) provides an example of recommendations that emerge from research using student voice in a summary of two studies that investigated the reasons students left high school prematurely. What emerged from interviews with students was a mosaic of responses about five general themes: individual responsibility, opportunities to express views, care, respect and consistency, quality of teaching and maturity of treatment. Based on the student justifications for leaving school early, Smyth (2007) suggests educators should “re-think the issue from the vantage point of schools being place in which students want to be” (p. 646). Smyth (2007) argues this involves creating a climate of trust that enables the students to see school as a place that can assist in their short and long-term goals. Smyth (2007) describes a “pedagogically engaged school” (p. 653) as a school with a culture
that promotes student involvement to establish the overall direction of the school. Also, the school uses an academic curriculum and teaching approach that engages the most disenfranchised students. Smyth (2007) recommends for schools to support educators in “giving up some control and handing it over to the students” (p. 655). In this way, students are involved in decisions and can shape the curriculum and school culture in directions that are more relevant to their lives. The generalized recommendations made by Smyth to create “pedagogically engaged schools” are an example how student voice in research can be used to in educational reform.

Student voice can also be used for targeted improvement of a single institution or program. De Jesus (2003) completed a study with the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice in New York City. The 150 students enrolled in the inaugural school year were involved in creating the guiding philosophy of the school. The school population consists of 87% of students who identify themselves as Latino. As a result, all aspects of the school are designed to serve the needs of the Latino community as described by the students. In the school, there is an emphasis on caring relationships between the teachers and students. De Jesus (2003) found the school administration believed these close relationships enables for continual feedback from the students to the teachers that can be used to inform school change. Specific changes were made to the school because of the student feedback. These changes included using informal titles, or first names, for the staff and the hiring of more Latino teaching staff.
Also, the amount of physical space in the school was decreased so students cannot hide in empty common spaces to skip class. The curriculum was made to be more responsive to the school culture and emphasize Latino writers and history. Further, mediation between students involved in a conflict has been used instead of disciplinary measures, like school suspensions. The principal of the school described how student voices guide the school: “El Puente’s ethic of care is organized around the principles, curriculum and support mechanisms that facilitate the transformative caring relationships described by the students” (De Jesus, 2003, p. 143). Although El Puente has been successful integrating student perspective with the school reform, other research studies and school reform projects have encountered challenges incorporating student perspectives.

The challenges with using student perspectives in research can be mediated by the research approach. One challenge is that students describe themselves and their personal experiences in school using references to specifics of their school life (Connolly, 1997). To address this, the researcher must place themselves in the context of the students school life in order to understand observations and statements made by the students (Connolly, 1997). There is also a historical stigma that adults do not intuitively trust what students have to say (Cook-Sather, 2002). Therefore, in educational discussions, such as school reform debates, student perspectives have traditionally been excluded (Fielding, 2004). This study challenged this stigma and gave the students authority over their viewpoints.
Student voice can be a powerful tool in school reform and students’ perspectives are necessary to provide a complete picture of the nature of schooling (Cook-Sather, 2002). A challenge to including student voice in school reform is the power and authority differential between teachers and the students (Cook-Sather, 2002; Fielding, 2001; Mitra, 2008). Mitra (2008) completed a case study on a group of high school students and staff involved in a school improvement council. Mitra (2008) found that the teachers took offence to suggestions made by students regarding their classroom practice. Further, the superintendent claimed to have listened to the students, but ultimately still made the final decisions. Fielding (2001) ran a similar group case study over three years in one secondary school. The results of this study showed that structural and procedural changes in the school were made to reflect the students’ opinions of the school to more clearly support the changing cultural affiliations of the students in the school (Fielding, 2001). As the culture of the school community changed, the student perspectives helped the school to amend their procedures and programs to better support the new student population. Fielding (2001) recommends that student voice be included in school changes and for schools to create an “inclusive emancipatory community” (p. 132) where legitimacy is given to both teachers’ and students’ perspectives. Students thereby act as a combination of data sources, active respondents and researchers to help improve their school. In this study, the student perspectives are used as the data source for evaluation of the leadership development programs. The specific
approach of using student perspectives in this study is described in the methodology chapter.

**Chapter Summary**

This literature review informed this evaluation of two leadership development programs through an examination of how the student leaders at Parklands High school understand their experience in terms of their own leadership abilities, their leadership of others and their perceptions of good leadership. The literature review also described how the student perspectives are used in evaluation of and recommendations for the leadership development programs.

First, an introduction to the theories of leadership and youth leadership provided described how youth understand and learn leadership. In addition, the recommendations from the literature for the design of leadership development programs support the conclusions made in this evaluation. These recommendations also served as an introduction to the research of youth leadership development programs represented in academic literature. The programs presented provided a background for the leadership development programs evaluated in this study. The programs from the academic literature were reviewed and organized based on commonalities between programs’ goals, structures and outcomes.

This study evaluates two leadership development programs in an Ontario high school. Therefore, the subsequent section examined the context for
leadership development programs in Ontario. Two perspectives were presented: character education and Noddings’ caring alternative to character education. The character education section explored the placement of leadership development programs in the Ontario Ministry of Education’s character education policy. The caring alternative presented another way that leadership development programs could be supported by Ontario high schools. The programs in this study were described as responding to Noddings’ vision of caring schools. As a result, the student perspectives provide information for how students experience educational programs designed to promote care.

The student experiences in this study are situated within the documented experiences of student leaders from the academic literature. Therefore, the common reports of the student leaders’ experiences were presented. The literature review concluded with a summary of the role of student voice in research and school reform. This provides justification for how this study can be used to change the leadership development programs at Parklands High School.

Based on the information presented in the literature review, the students in this study would likely have experienced confidence in their leadership abilities after completing a leadership development program. The students would describe their leadership role with others in terms of their leadership actions, such as providing instructions. Also, they would describe feeling like a leader to others and serving as a positive role model. The information in the literature review also suggests that the students in this study would describe a good leader
as expressing empathy towards others. Also, a good leader would be described as confident to make decisions and share their opinions to reform policies and programs.

The next chapter details the research methodology used in this study. The chapter explores the theoretical foundation for the research approach, the procedure for collecting data and the additional considerations demanded of this study.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the research methodology used in this study. The chapter begins with the theory supporting the research approach. This includes an overview of qualitative research, naturalistic evaluation and case study methods. The benefits of using a method of naturalistic case study evaluation for this study are detailed. This is followed by a description of myself in the study process. The following section contains a description of the research location at Parklands High School and the Willow Winds and Girls for Change leadership development programs. The approach used in this study to incorporate student perspectives is described. Also provided are participant descriptions for the students in the study. The next section outlines methods of data collection and analysis. Next, the limitations of this study due to the data collection and analysis are examined. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations of this study.

Research Approach

A qualitative approach to the research was the most suitable for this study. Merriam (2009) describes the purpose of qualitative research as being “to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process of meaning-making and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 14). The purpose of this research study was to discover how the students who have participated in leadership development programs understand
their experiences in terms of their own leadership abilities, their role as leaders and their perception of good leadership. Therefore, the general aims of making meaning in qualitative research align with the purpose to understand the students’ experiences in this study. There are a variety of methods for conducting qualitative research and evaluation. Creswell (2007) summarizes the work of many qualitative research advocates and suggests five general approaches to qualitative research: narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. This study integrates a naturalistic evaluation and case study approach to the research.

**Naturalistic evaluation**

A naturalistic evaluation is fundamentally a natural approach to an inquiry that uses qualitative evaluation (Schwandt, 2001). In general, a naturalistic evaluation involves investigation that is inclusive of all aspects of the natural setting (Willems & Rausch, 1969). Naturalistic evaluations evolved from responsive evaluations that use naturalistic perspectives (Mathison, 2005). Stake (2003) describes responsive evaluation as a “search and documentation of program quality” (p.64) that is directed by the concerns of the people immediately involved in the program. Evaluation in this way encourages the participants in the evaluation to voice their concerns and influence the evaluative process (Lincoln, 2003). For a responsive evaluation, the aspects for the evaluation are “revealed in how people subjectively perceive what is going on” (Stake, 2003, p. 65). This means that the responsive evaluation involves identification of the
problems in the evaluation by the participants rather than exclusively by the evaluators.

Scholars of naturalistic evaluation argue that for an accurate interpretation of the participants’ opinions, the natural context in which the participants exist must be understood by the evaluators (Schwandt, 2001). Further, the problems identified by the participants are only significant in the natural setting that the evaluation was conducted (Schwandt, 2001). Therefore, naturalistic evaluation is a valuable approach for conducting a meaningful and responsive evaluation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mathison, 2005; Schwandt, 2001).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified essential assumptions of naturalistic evaluation. First, researchers from a naturalistic perspective are sensitive to the culture and needs of those they are working with in the evaluative process. This sensitivity is utilized in the interactions between the researcher and the object of the evaluation. The results of the evaluation are assumed to emerge naturally from the interactions of the researcher with others in the evaluation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mathison, 2005).

A second assumption of naturalistic evaluation is that the results of a naturalistic evaluation more accurately portray the perspectives of those involved in the evaluation compared to evaluations that do not use a naturalistic approach (Mathison, 2005). Researchers who use naturalistic approaches to evaluation believe people in their natural setting are more honest in sharing their perspectives throughout the course of the evaluation (Mathison, 2005).
Therefore, the most valuable results for people involved in the evaluation are obtained through a naturalistic evaluation (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

A third assumption of naturalistic evaluation refers to the nature of the results of the evaluation. The results of a naturalistic evaluation are interconnected and cannot be separated from the context of the evaluation. Lincoln and Guba (1986) explain that the need for naturalistic evaluation is because “multiple constructed realities cannot be studied in pieces, but only holistically since the pieces are interrelated in such a way as to influence all the other pieces” (pg. 75). In other words, the people in the evaluation cannot be controlled to provide predictable outcomes, and the learning from a naturalistic evaluation must be understood within the setting for which the evaluation was conducted. Also connected to the results are the researcher’s personal beliefs. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that an understanding of the researcher’s beliefs is essential to naturalistic evaluation because the researcher’s beliefs guide the investigation and subsequent interpretation of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The interpretation of the results is described as a fourth assumption of naturalistic evaluation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that because naturalistic evaluation is performed in the subjects’ natural state, causal relationships cannot be concluded from the data. The natural experiences of the participants are being shaped simultaneously, and thus one experience cannot reasonably be identified as solely affecting another experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 1986;
Mathison, 2005). A naturalistic evaluation therefore offers a complex account of the experiences of evaluation participants, and is not the best choice for research aimed at identifying the causes of the participants’ experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Naturalistic evaluation was an appropriate research approach for this study for several reasons. First, the content of the study was explored in a way that allowed for the concepts that emerged throughout the study to be incorporated into the findings (Williams, 1986). In this way, the study was flexible to the needs of the program and participants, which is a critical component for an effective evaluation (Stake, 2003).

The second way naturalistic evaluation was appropriate for this study was because as the sole researcher, I had a unique position in this evaluation. I am highly involved with the planning and design of the leadership development programs and thus, I served as both the evaluator and the one being evaluated. In a situation where both the sponsor and participant in an evaluation is a part of the study, then a naturalistic evaluation is most appropriate (Williams, 1986). Also, as the developer and teacher supervisor of the program, I was well prepared with the necessary background information and for the physical demands of the observation periods, which is necessary for a naturalistic evaluation (Wolcott, 1975). I had full access to the programs and “gain insiders perspectives as they naturally manifested” (Williams, 1986, p. 89). Further, this full access enabled me to observe the complete time period of the program and
immediately note any variations within the observation data. This ability to observe the entire program for evaluation is a major strength of naturalistic methods (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

A naturalistic evaluation was essential to gather data about how the participants naturally experienced the leadership development programs (Williams, 1986). Once the data for a naturalistic evaluation is gathered, the inquirer for a naturalistic evaluations can “establish plausible inferences about the patterns and webs such as shaping in any given evaluation” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 75). The outcomes of a naturalistic inquiry can be similar to those in a case study. Also, naturalistic inquiry and case study research share approaches to ensure authenticity in the data. Addressing criticism of the authenticity of naturalistic evaluation and case study methods are discussed as part of the next section that outlines the case study approach to qualitative research used in this study.

**Case study**

Within the approaches to qualitative research, a case study was used to focus this naturalistic evaluation. A case study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). This means that the case is a single unit or phenomenon of study around which there are boundaries (Yin, 1984). Beyond the boundaries are things that will not be a part of the study. For example, the unit of study could be a group of teachers, a policy or a program. The boundaries for the system can help to clearly define what information is
relevant to the specific case study, and what information is not immediately
relevant to the case study (Merriam, 2009). When using a case study approach
to research, Stake (1995) suggests the first step must be to assign the unit of
study. The unit for evaluation in this case study is the leadership development
programs at Parklands High School. The evaluation of the programs is further
bounded within the specific domains of the student experience in the programs.
The domains are identified in the purpose of the research as the participants’
understanding of their own leadership abilities, their leadership role with others
and their perception of good leadership.

A case study can also be defined by the method of inquiry used to
approach research. For example, the research process is the way Yin (2009)
defines a case study: “case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a
contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the
boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18).
This study adheres to Yin’s definition of a case study. The case study approach
is used because the phenomenon of students’ understanding of their own
leadership abilities, their leadership of others and their perception of good
leadership could not be separated from the context of the students in their role in
the leadership development programs. Therefore, the setting and conditions of
the experience for the participants was intrinsically a part of the research.

The data gathered in a case study include communication by the
participants that the researcher interprets during analysis (Merriam, 2009). The
nature of case study research limits the number of research participants, the scale of phenomenon that can be adequately investigated and the ability to generalize findings (Creswell, 2007). There are many arguments in the literature that challenge the validity of case study research. Flyvbjerg (2006) outlines five misunderstandings that plague the case study research approach. Case study advocates present arguments to counter these misunderstandings. The first misunderstanding is that general, context-independent knowledge is more valuable than specific context-dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The counter argument to value being placed on general knowledge is that universal conclusions cannot be found in human affairs, therefore context is needed to draw any conclusions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009).

The second misunderstanding is that a case study cannot contribute significantly to subject knowledge because generalizations cannot be based on a specific case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). It has been counter-argued that generalization of phenomenon is overvalued and the worth of a single case is underestimated (Merriam, 2009; Wolcott, 1990). Further, “qualitative researchers treat the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts as important to understanding” (Stake, 1995, p. 39). This means that the unique situations in a case study can be viewed as a strength, not a limitation, to case study research.

A third misconception is that case studies are thought of as useful to generate hypotheses, but testing the hypotheses requires other methods (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Scholars disagree and suggest that the case study can be
used to generate hypotheses, but can also be used to test them in a specific context (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 1984).

The fourth misconception is that case study research confirms the researcher’s pre-existing ideas (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, high quality case study research forces the researcher to be open to new and surprising findings (Yin, 1984). Also, there is no evidence to suggest there is more research bias in case studies than any other form of qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009).

The final common misunderstanding about case study research relates to the difficulty of summarizing theories on the basis of case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, this difficulty is not due to the case study research method, but the nature of the subject matter being studied (Denzin & Lincon, 2011; Merriam, 2009). It can be dangerous to summarize detailed case studies into simplistic generalizations because humans have complex behaviours and responses to their environment (Peattie, 2001). In conclusion, these counter-arguments for the misunderstandings about case studies help to form arguments for the power of the case study methodology.

Addressing the misunderstandings about case study research uncovers the strength of this method of qualitative research. Merriam (2009) describes the power of the case study as being because a case study accounts for human differences and does not attempt to simplify phenomenon that cannot easily be simplified. Part of this case study investigated what students believed about their
leadership role within a group of their peers. In case study research, there is an “understanding that important human interactions are seldom simply caused and usually not caused in ways that can be discovered” (Stake, 1995, p. 39).

Therefore, the results from this naturalistic case study evaluation cannot speculate the reasons that relationships formed between the study participants and others in the leadership development programs. Instead, the study can reveal how the participants understand their leadership role and relationships with others and their own leadership abilities. A case study methodology allowed for this study to provide an analysis of students’ perceptions that may have been more difficult to uncover if another method of qualitative research was utilized (Creswell, 2007). The choice to use a case study research methodology as part of this naturalistic evaluation required me to analyze my position as a researcher and my pre-existing beliefs prior to the initiation of the study.

**Location of Myself in the Study**

The researcher is an intrinsic part of any research study. All types of qualitative research are a situated activity that must locate the observer in the world of the research (Denzin & Lincon, 2011). The researcher attempts to make meaning of what happens around them, therefore an understanding of their position in the research world is very important.

As mentioned in Chapter One, at the time of gathering the data for this study, I was a teacher at Parklands High School and one of the staff supervisors for both the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs. I had a large influence
over the direction of the programs. I interviewed and hired the students to take on the executive leadership positions. Through this process, I looked for students who were exceptionally enthusiastic, dedicated and mature about their expectations for the program. With the executive team, I approved a schedule of events for the leadership development program. I trained the executive team on how to interview their peers and look for leadership qualities in others. We determined a list of the qualities we desired in our peer group leaders and designed interview questions around these qualities. Foremost, we sought out students who demonstrated initiative, which we defined as the ability to do helpful tasks before directly instructed to do so. We also looked for students who would serve as encouraging facilitators for activities and place the experience of the students they were leading as a higher priority to their own needs. Also, we looked for students who would act responsibly during the program by following the rules and would be capable of re-enforcing the rules with the program participants, especially in situations that held higher safety risks. Finally, we tried to find students who were fun, friendly and approachable. We selected students with different personality types and energy levels because we wanted every unique grade nine and ten student to feel comfortable approaching and connecting with the older student leaders. From background experience, I have found a diverse collection of peer group leaders helps to create an overall positive and welcoming group dynamic. Further, I supervised the executive
teams that hired student leaders and the subsequent after school training sessions.

The training sessions for both programs were completely facilitated by the executive team and began with playing get-to-know-you games with all of the leaders. Then, the program schedules were reviewed in great detail and all of the planned activities were clarified. These schedules can be found in Appendix A. Role-play was used in training for both programs as a tool to help the leaders practice engaging younger students in their leadership role. In the Willow Winds program, there were two types of student leaders: activity leaders and counselors. The activity leaders were each assigned a specific outdoor activity where they would be stationed for part of the program. During training, the activity leaders practiced providing direct instructions for their activity and planning how to aid future participants who might have difficulty with the activity. They also determined the important safety precautions for each activity and role played how to deal with participants who did not adhere to the activity guidelines. The Willow Winds counselors went through a similar training as the peer group leaders in the Girls for Change program. The counselors and leaders practiced initiating get-to-know-you games and other silly games that could be used continually to keep their group engaged during meal times or while waiting for a larger activity to begin. Also, they used role-play to practice helping younger students who are homesick or uncooperative. The leaders were encouraged to
treat their participants as good friends and to do whatever they could to help their participants to feel included in the group.

For the Willow Winds retreat and Girls for Change sleepover, I coordinated with the facility staff and planned the logistics of the events (transportation, meals, accommodations, medical care, etc.). Also during the program events, I supervised the activities and helped students cope with physical and emotional issues. At this time, logistical issues were communicated to the executive team, and I guided them through challenging decisions. Finally, after the culmination of the programs I ran a debriefing meeting with the executive teams to congratulate them on their efforts and plan changes for next year’s programs.

My position as a creator and supervisor of the leadership development programs influences my position as the evaluator of the programs. My personal connection to the programs means that this study is subjected to researcher bias (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993). Researcher bias is the adjustment of observations or findings by the researcher to align with his/her beliefs or preconceived notions (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009). Researcher bias is one of the common arguments against the validity of case study research (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993). To minimize researcher bias, Yin (1984) suggests that throughout the data collection process the researcher is flexible and is eager to “acknowledge those situations which, in fact, a totally new investigation may be under way” (p. 58). This means that the bias of a study can be tested by the level to which the researcher is open to accommodating contrary and surprising
findings (Yin, 1984). In this study, researcher bias is addressed by explicitly stating my pre-conceptions at the time when I first began to design. I stated my pre-conceptions in a written journal that included entries throughout the study planning and completion. An excerpt of this journal follows:

What is special about these leadership retreats? Why did I always come back full of so much energy and joy? Why do the hallways of school look different? Why do I feel the same magic as a teacher as I did when I was a student? Do the students feel the same way I do? Can they tune into and reflect on their feelings?

I think there is something to be said about the chance to work intensely with people in a secluded environment. Being cut off from other distractions and pressures increases the intensity of the friendships I have formed. Summer camp is the best example. Even better is a canoe trip at summer camp. Overcoming hardships that are palpable and affect our most basic human needs I believe most greatly impacts the level of trust I have for those friends with whom I have shared those experiences. For example, I trust Jessica with my life (and have had to actually trust my life with her many times on the rivers of northern Ontario). I may have spent maybe six months living with Jessica compared to three years with some of my University roommates, yet I wouldn’t trust some of my roommates with twenty dollars. I also trust myself more after these intense experiences. Can you have an intense experience inside your regular life?
I haven’t felt it yet. What needs to be stripped away from life to create these trusting relationships? Do my students feel this way in the school leadership opportunities? Are those opportunities intense enough and how does the experience impact their relationships? (October 3, 2011)

As is described in the journal entry, I believed that the school-based leadership development programs would help the participating students to develop intense and trusting relationships with their peers. I also believed these experiences would help the students to become more self-confident and to feel accepted in their social worlds. Further, I thought the removal of the regular routines of school and family helped to foster these relationships. Therefore, I believed the program curriculum that challenges students to have new experiences beyond their everyday routines would have the greatest influence on the intensity of the social relationships. I based my assumptions on my personal experience. This evaluative study is a way I could explore my pre-conceptions about leadership development programs while understanding the student experiences in the programs.

**Site Selection and Program Access**

This study took place at one urban high school, in a major metropolitan area. The data for the study was collected from September 2012 to December 2012. Compared to the surrounding schools, Parklands High School is considered medium in size with approximately 1700 students enrolled. The school offers a range of academic programs, however two thirds of the students
are in the academic and university stream. The students at Parklands High School represent a diverse racial population. In order of highest prevalence in the school population, the students identify themselves as the following (with accompanying dominant home countries in the Parklands High population): Asian (China, Korea), South Asian (India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan), Middle Eastern (Lebanon, Egypt, Bahrain), South East Asian (Philippines, Singapore), Eastern European (Russia, Ukraine, Latvia), Western European descent and Caribbean descent. A large number of the students immigrated to Canada when they were young children and return to their home countries for school vacations. Most of the students born in Canada are first generation Canadians, and their families are active members of their respective cultural and religious communities. The majority of students at Parklands High School do not speak English as the first language at home. The students have low to middle socio-economic status.

Parklands High School completely covers the cost of the Girls for Change program and subsidizes the Willow Winds program. In addition, the student leaders in the Willow Winds Program fundraise during the summer to financially support grade nine and ten participants who may otherwise not be able to attend the retreat.

Parklands High School was chosen as the site of this case study largely because it was accessible to me as a full-time teacher at the school. Also, the purpose of this study was to understand the student experience as a means to evaluate and improve the leadership development programs. Therefore, the
research did not require more than one school site to be involved in the study. The leadership development programs were not limited to the school building or school hours. The Willow Winds program involved planning and training during the school day, however the four-day, three-night event took place in an outdoor education facility several hours north of the school. The Girls for Change program also involved planning and training at the school and the two-day, one-night event took place at the school facility. Physical access to the program and participants was within my role as a teacher in the school. As one of the leadership development programs’ advisors at Parklands High School, I had access to all the details of the programs, yet I was aware of the information that could not ethically be included in the study. Specific ethical considerations are detailed further in the “Ethical Considerations” section of this chapter.

**Student Voice as a Research Tool**

This research study interviewed high school students to understand their experience in extracurricular leadership development programs. Student voice can have many meanings, but in the framework of this study, student voice includes observable actions and interviews of the student participants in the study. The previous chapter presented evidence of how student voice was used in educational reform. In this section, the approaches for using student voice in research are detailed. Also, the method this study used to engage with the student perspectives is described.
Approaches to student voice for research

There are different orientations to research that help to make student voice data supportive and engaging in research. Before starting research with student voice, the researcher needs to decide the orientation that best suits the research project. Thiessen (2007) outlines three orientations to research that are useful to understanding how student voice is used in this study. The first orientation is how students make sense of school. There has been a “growing effort to understand how students make sense of their varied and changing contexts and situations in classrooms and schools and in relation to their lives (past and present) outside school” (p. 24). The second orientation to research is who students are and how they develop in school. This can include the family background information and documentation of a student’s school progress. Thiessen’s third orientation to research with student voice is how students are actively involved in making change. This orientation complements the school reform case studies described in the previous chapter because the goal of the studies was to utilize students voice for lasting school change.

Fielding (2004) describes a transformative approach to involve student voice in school change. This approach tackles the traditional presumptions that impede student voice from making lasting impressions on school reform. One problem is when a more powerful group speaks for a less powerful group (Fielding, 2004). In a traditional school model, the authoritative powerful group is the teachers and the less powerful group is the students. When an authoritative
group speaks for others, as in teachers speaking for students, the authoritative
group can generalize the meaning of the others’ opinions (Humphries & Truman,
1994). The issue of the teachers speaking and generalizing for students can be
overcome by not succumbing to oppressive structures intuitive in the student-
teacher relationship (Humphries & Truman, 1994). This involves using creative
means to convert ideals from a less powerful group, the students, into the
dominant group ideal (Humphries & Truman, 1994). This can be accomplished
by generating a “dialogic alternative” (Fielding, 2004). With a dialogic alternative,
the students create legitimate knowledge by speaking directly to researchers and
that students need to be fully engaged in every step of the research process for
meaningful school reform.

This study attempted to use ideas from a transformative approach to
research for the evaluation of the leadership development programs at Parklands
High School. The students were encouraged to freely share their experiences in
the leadership development programs during interviews. By using the students’
own words as the data for this evaluation, the issues most important to the
students in the programs are examined. In this way, the students are an active
part of the research process.

**Incorporation of student voice data in research**

The student voice data were utilized in this study by adapting Thiessen’s
(1997) three levels of engagement with student perspectives. Thiessen’s (1997)
levels were adapted for this evaluative study into a method that helps to provide meaningful inclusion of student voice in research studies or school reform projects. The first step of the method is for the researchers to recognize the value of including student perspectives. This includes understanding how student perspectives can be gathered and how they can inform policy, teaching practices and reform projects. Once data from students have been gathered, the researchers need to understand the content and interpret the information from the student perspectives. In this study, the gathering of student voice data is presented as the “Findings” chapter and the interpretation of the student voice data as the “Discussion of Findings” chapter.

The next level of engagement, or the second step, is to act on behalf of the student perspectives. This includes advocating for recommendations that derive from the information gathered from the students. This process may require additional academic evidence, such as comparable studies, to inform the adult researchers of the benefits of including student perspectives in their research projects. The recommendations that emerge from the student voice in this study are presented in the “Conclusions” chapter.

The last level of engagement, and the final step in the procedure, is working with the student perspectives. This can include having teachers involved in gathering data and building portfolios of students’ perspectives to facilitate lasting school change. Involving educators in research with student voice will help them find the best way to “interconnect the intended taught and experienced
"curriculum" (Thiessen, 1997, p. 195). The levels of engagement are used in this study as the process of incorporating student voice into the data and planning ways to share the study findings with additional educational communities. This section detailed the approach to using and incorporating student voice data in this study. The next section provides a description of the specific Parklands High School students who shared their perspectives of their experience in a leadership development program.

**Participant Information**

The six participants in this study were a sample of student leaders or executive committee members for either the Willow Winds or Girls for Change program at Parklands High School. Student leaders were selected as the study participant group because in their training and role as peer group leaders, these students had more exposure to leadership concepts compared to the students they were leading. The participants were in grades 10, 11 and 12 (ages 14-17 years old). There was no selection of the participants based on any additional characteristics such as race or gender, however, the three Willow Winds study participants selected were male and the three Girls for Change participants were expectedly females. Further, there was no preference given to students who had been involved with the program for more than one year.

Participants were recruited on a volunteer basis through announcements made during the leader training sessions for the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs. In order to volunteer for the study, students and their parents
completed and returned the consent forms. If the volunteer was also a current member of my class, the application was considered void and not included in the collection of available applicants. This was done to minimize any power differential between the study participants and me. The three participants from each program were randomly selected from the pile of eight collected consent forms for Willow Winds and ten for Girls for Change. In addition, four volunteers, two from each program, were randomly selected to be on the wait-list for participation. The additional volunteer participants not selected were contacted at school and informed that they were not needed for the study. The selected participants were contacted individually and privately at school. At this time, they were informed of their enrollment in the study and we arranged interview times. The four wait-listed students were also contacted privately and individually at school and were informed of their wait-list status. The wait-listed students were not required to take part in the study because the original six participants completed the study.

**Participant descriptions**

The following are brief descriptions of the study participants grouped by the programs for which they served as student leaders.

*Willow Winds*

Adam: A grade 11, Eastern European male who was a member of the Willow Winds executive team as the activity coordinator. He attended Willow Winds the previous year as a grade 10 student participant. In the role of activity
coordinator, he was in charge of all of the activity leaders and the running of the evening games at Willow Winds that involved all the 120 program participants. Adam is in the university stream, plays on the school volleyball team and has a part-time job as a lifeguard.

Ruben: A grade 11, Asian male who was an activity leader, stationed at canoeing for the duration of the Willow Winds program. He also attended Willow Winds the previous year as a grade 10 program participant. Along with a female peer, Ruben provided canoeing instruction and helped the participants in and out of the boats. Ruben is in the university stream and helps in many volunteer fundraising organizations at school.

Vijay: A grade 12, South Asian male who was a counselor to a group of ten peers at Willow Winds. This was his first year in the Willow Winds program. During the days at Willow Winds, he rotated with his group through the activities and led activities with the younger males assigned to his cabin. Vijay is one of the top students in the university stream and serves as the chairman for the schools’ two largest volunteer organizations: the Environmental Council and Free the Children.

Girls for Change

Rena: A grade 10, South Asian female who was a group leader for the grade 9 students. The previous year, Rena attended the sleepover as a grade 9 participant. Rena is in the university stream and a former member of the Parklands High School elected student government. She has represented the
school in public speaking competitions and is an active member in many of the school’s volunteer organizations.

Sara: A grade 10, Middle Eastern female who was a peer group leader. Sara attended the sleepover the previous year as a grade 9 participant. She is in the university stream, volunteers in the Free the Children organization and is a junior editor for the school newspaper. Also, she is in charge of sponsorship for the Global Youth Conference that Parklands High School hosts annually for the surrounding schools.

Jenny: A grade 10, Asian female who was a peer group leader. Jenny attended the sleepover the previous year as a grade 9 participant. She is in the university stream and is a member of the school’s poetry and writing club. In addition, she volunteers for the Free the Children organization.

Data Collection

The data for this study are from three main sources. These sources include physical artifacts of materials from the leadership development programs, observations of the participants at the leadership development programs and interviews with the participants. Each of these data sources are described in more detail in this section.

Physical artifacts

The background information and context for each of the leadership development programs was documented by a collection of physical materials from the leadership development events. Physical artifacts were important to
collect because they helped create more reliability within the data (Yin, 1984). Also, they served as records for incidents in the program that could not be directly observed (Stake, 1995). In this study, event itineraries, leadership training manuals and other relevant documentation were collected. The training manuals are approximately thirty pages in length and were written by the student executive committees of the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs. They helped to provide background information for the observations and meaningful context for analysis of the interview data. They are too lengthy to appropriately include in this thesis. Instead, the itineraries of the leadership program events are a more concise summary of the programs and have been included as Appendix A. For each of these documents, all program names and identifying features were altered to protect the anonymity of the study participants.

**Observations**

The first data collection method that directly involved the volunteer participants was my observations the six participants in their role as student leaders during the leadership development program events. These observations helped to provide context for the leadership programs and specific examples of the study participants’ interactions during their time in the program. As a teacher supervisor at the events, I was able to complete this task without any disruption to the program. In this dual duty as a program participant and researcher I was acting within Yin’s (1984) description of a “participant-observer”. An advantage to being a participant-observer is that I had an inside view of the events and
access to the participants’ experiences that otherwise might have been limited to an outside observer. Observations were highly detailed in order to “provide a relatively incontestable description for further analysis and ultimate reporting” in the study (Stake, 1995, p.62). I observed each participant as a leader for two, one-hour periods during the program. I took detailed observations of the participants’ behaviours and communications on my computer using the criteria and document template provided in Appendix B. I looked for how the participants gave instructions to their group because this would potentially give insight into the nature of the participants’ understanding of leadership. For example, I recorded if a student was giving continual, direct instructions for an activity as an example of authoritative leadership. In contrast, I recorded if a student behaved as a facilitator if they provided only a few instructions and proceeded with encouraging students to find their own means for success in an activity. I also recorded the tone of voice and words the participants used to interact with the other students in the group. I was especially interested in moments when the leaders gave extra attention to younger students. My interest in these moments was because they were specific examples of the participants’ experience that I could recount for the participants as a way to encourage the students to speak of their experience during the interviews.

Following each observation period for the Willow Winds program, I completed a written reflection of my initial thoughts about the participant’s actions. This reflection included a description of the moments of unexpected
participant behaviour. Due to the time limitations in the Girls for Change program, these post-observation reflections were completed two days after the sleepover was completed. The templates for the post-observation reflections can also be found in Appendix B. Overall, the observation data were valuable and allowed me to ask participants during the interviews specific questions about their experience as leaders in the programs.

**Interviews**

Participant interviews were the most critical data source in this study. Stake (1995) describes the interview as “the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64) and is a first hand “description of an episode, a linkage and an explanation” (p. 65). The interview enables the gathering of information that could not be observed and is critical to this study because it is a spontaneous record of a student’s intrapersonal understanding (Yin, 2009). The purpose of this evaluative study was to understand the experience of student leaders in leadership development programs. Therefore, asking the students to describe their experiences in interviews was one way to achieve this purpose.

The interview process took place over three months, during which each study participant had two private interviews with me. Every interview was approximately 20 minutes in length and was conducted during the school’s one hour lunch period. The interviews took place in the school’s conference room to ensure privacy. The interview protocol was the same for all participants, and they were asked a series of preplanned questions. Also, I asked probing
questions that drew upon my observations of them at leadership development program. The observations were intended to serve as a reminder for the participants of their behaviour and help them to remember specifics moments of their experience. Any follow-up or observation-based probing questions were asked during a natural place in the question series. The interview protocol for all participants included, at minimum, the interview questions found in Appendix C.

The first interview was completed within three weeks after the leadership development program event. This first interview was intended to record the participants’ initial thoughts about their experience as student leaders in the leadership program in terms of their own leadership abilities. A second individual interview was conducted approximately one month after the first individual interview to allow time to for the participants to engage in further reflection. The second interview questions focused on how the experience as leaders in Willow Winds or Girls for Change has helped them understand their role as leaders and their perception of good leadership. The conclusion of the second interview marked the end of the student participation in the data collection process.

I recorded the two individual interviews using a digital recorder and transcribed the interviews in full. To protect participant identity, during the transcription process pseudonyms were used for the student names and any identifying comments were excluded or altered in the transcript. Observations made during the interview were done by hand on the interview question paper. It would have been logistically difficult while running the interview to socially
engage the students in a dialogue and record meaningful observations. Also, taking detailed notes while the students were answering may have made them feel uncomfortable and less likely to respond openly and honestly to questions.

Following each interview, I wrote a post-interview reflection that followed the template available in Appendix C. Stake (1995) suggests it is the meaning behind the respondents’ words that is most important in an interview. In order to capture this meaning, Stake (1995) recommends, “ample time and space immediately following the interview to prepare the facsimile and interpretive commentary” (p. 66). The interview needed be fresh in my mind in order to provide a detailed and accurate overview. In the post-interview reflection, I described the overall mood, tone and ease of conversation of the interview. Also, I recorded any incidents of unexpected behaviour or responses from the participants in the post-interview reflection. I highlighted in the reflection document comments in the participant responses that might assist me to develop categories for analysis for the data. Finally, for the first post-interview reflection I listed any possible follow-up questions for the next interview. In the second post-interview reflection, I listed any questions I felt were left unanswered. Each post-interview reflection document was completed within a day following the interview. The time constraints of running interviews during the lunch hour and then continuing to teach the rest of the school day unfortunately did not allow me to complete the reflection immediately afterwards. The transcripts and the post-interview reflection reports together documented the interviews.
Data Analysis

For the data analysis of this study, I first reviewed the data to find repeating scenarios and concepts. This initial search for repetition in the data and to find emerging concepts is an example of “categorical aggregation” (Stake, 1995, p. 74). In order to do this categorical aggregation, I used the anticipated codes of “friendship”, “self-confidence”, “leadership” and “community” to help frame the initial analysis of the observation reports, interview transcripts and collected physical artifacts. These anticipated codes were derived from my post-interview reflection documents. Within the observation reports and reflections, there is researcher interpretation. Interpretive data are an example of Stake’s (1995) “direct interpretation” (p. 76) because the documents indicated the quality of the incident observed and not the quantity of the phenomenon that appeared in the recorded data. In this initial overview of the data, an observed incident or interview response that was given clear emphasis of importance in the interpretation reports was given more intrinsic value compared to a frequency count of an incident or phrase. From this overview of the data, other codes emerged. The codes of “self”, “others” and “leadership” were identified as the three overall categories for analysis that had emerged from the initial review the data.

The three categories of analysis that emerged from the categorical aggregation were first applied to the interview transcripts. The interview transcripts were selected as the initial data to be analyzed because they
contained the students’ experiences in the students’ own words. The categories of analysis were then applied to the remaining data including the field observation notes and the physical artifacts from the leadership development programs. With the emergent three categories of analysis, I used a process of pattern matching of expected outcomes to compare actual patterns of codes with the pattern codes I anticipated to see before the analysis began (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). This pattern matching process helped to identify more specific subcategories of analysis.

For each of the three categories of analysis, I determined subcategories of analysis and assigned these to each relevant piece of data. The leadership category included data that described the study participants’ definition of good leadership. Further, the data related to leadership was divided into the participants’ descriptions of leadership of their peer groups.

The subcategories for the self and others categories of analysis were defined using the framework of Nel Noddings’ (1984, 2002, 2005a) caring approach to education. Noddings (1984) describes the importance of self-care for students’ development. The self category examines the participants’ understanding of their leadership abilities. For this data analysis, the self category was divided further into the participants’ sense of confidence and efficacy.

Noddings (1984) believes the opportunity for students to care for others is important for their moral development. The others category was analyzed and
organized using Noddings’ (1984, 2002, 2005a) four components of moral education from a caring perspective. A brief summary of how the four components of moral education were used to identify and interpret sample data for the others category of analysis is available as Table 1.

Table 1

*Noddings’ components of moral education as research data categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noddings’ Component of Moral Education</th>
<th>Examples of Field Observations</th>
<th>Examples of Interview Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modeling</strong></td>
<td>Physical assistance.</td>
<td>Explicitly helping others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrating care towards others in</td>
<td>Facilitating group discussions.</td>
<td>complete the activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a way that others can observe.</td>
<td>Conversations with younger students.</td>
<td>Making others feel welcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue</strong></td>
<td>Long conversations with others.</td>
<td>Stories of helping others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to others for deeper self-</td>
<td></td>
<td>deal with emotional issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understanding.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stories of asking others for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practice</strong></td>
<td>Encouragement of younger</td>
<td>References of helping younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for others in ways that are</td>
<td>students in activities in a</td>
<td>students in role as leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not readily observed by others.</td>
<td>subtle way.</td>
<td>Examples of cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with other leaders as a</td>
<td>with the other leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>team.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confirmation</strong></td>
<td>Increase in the number of</td>
<td>Descriptions of making of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing the best people see in one</td>
<td>interactions with all program</td>
<td>new friends from the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>another.</td>
<td>participants.</td>
<td>Description of friendships that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>continue after the program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the categories of analysis, followed by the subcategories of analysis, were applied to each piece of the data, the most interesting student quotations and observations were selected from their original transcripts and documents. The most interesting quotations were the participant responses that I believed had the most specific and unique descriptions of the participants’ experiences. I arranged the interesting participant quotations into another document by the categories and subcategories of analysis. This processes made it easier to view the data as a collective entity. Then, I made “naturalistic generalizations” about the patterns that emerged from the selected quotes and categories (Creswell, 2007; Erlandson et al., 1993). In this case study, “naturalistic generalizations” means I used the categories that emerged within repeated analysis of all the collected data to frame the thematic outcomes and conclusions for the study. The study findings are presented in the next chapter, Chapter Four, and the discussion of the study findings is Chapter Five.

Limitations of the Study

There are two identifiable types of limitations to this study. First are the limitations that are intrinsic to qualitative study research. Second are the limitations that are due to the specific methodology utilized in this case study. As is common to many case studies, the data were gathered from a small sample size (six participants) and included interviews, observations and the analysis of physical artifacts. This small sample size may be seen as a limitation, however it was chosen because it was reasonable for the methodology. The nature of this
research was to allow for a more in-depth understanding of the participants’ experiences (Eisner, 1991) and provide credibility to the interpretations made in the qualitative work (Wolcott, 1990). In addition, Yin (2009) suggests the term “sample size” for a case study is irrelevant because the complexity of a case cannot be compared to an individual subject in an experimental environment. Therefore, no generalizable claims can come from the research about the experience of all students who participated in student leadership development programs (Stake, 1995). The research did not include any analysis based on the criteria of gender, class or ethnic identity of the participants. This may limit the applications of the study’s findings but, as is consistent with a case study methodology, the findings are specific to the context of the case study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Another limitation to this study is that specific causes can not be identified for the research findings. The participants were not interviewed about their understanding of leadership abilities and their role as leader before acting as a leader in the leadership development program. Therefore, asking for student perspectives only after participation in the program did not allow for a causal connection to be made between program participation and changes in students’ perceptions. However, even if a pre-participation interview had been conducted, a casual description could not be confidently inferred (Maxwell, 2004; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). The inability to isolate influencing variables means that participation in the leadership development programs could not be
confidently identified as the reason participants changed their perspectives. This limitation was identified at the onset of the study design. For that reason, the study did not aim to discover if participants had changed their perspectives after participation as leaders in the leadership development programs. Instead, the study aimed to understand the students’ perspectives of their experiences in the leadership development programs.

I was the sole researcher and a classroom teacher at the school site at the time of the study. My position as a coordinator of the leadership development programs discussed in this study contributed to potential researcher bias. It is important to identify this bias so that the readers of this study understand that my assumptions may impact the research (Merriam, 1998). My pre-existing involvement in the leadership development programs provided a certain view of the programs and interpretation of data that is unique to my experience (Merriam, 1998). I previously located myself in the research in the “Personal Background in Leadership Education” section to clarify my opinions. I understand that having been highly involved in the leadership development programs’ organization, I may have interpreted the observations or interview responses in a different way compared to a researcher who was not so invested in the planning of the programs. Despite these limitations, my involvement in the programs was possibly an advantage because it allowed me to easily incorporate highly detailed background information in this study.
There are limitations to the study that can be attributed to the design of the study. First, the study did not investigate other experiences or life changes that may have influenced the participants’ perspectives beyond their experience in the leadership development program. In the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on their experience as a leader in either the Willow Winds or Girls for Change programs. They were asked to comment on their relationships with their peers and their perceptions of themselves as leaders. The interviews were not designed to focus on other experiences that may have impacted the relationship students had with other members of the Willow Winds or Girls for Change programs. Even though the participants were encouraged to share their experiences and elaborate on topics that moved away from the interview questions, this study could accurately obtain a complete picture of the participants’ experiences (Wiebe, Durepos, & Mills, 2009). Therefore, the leadership development program cannot be credited with the participants’ understanding of their leadership abilities, their leadership role with others and their perception of good leadership.

Another limitation to this study was due to the selection of student participants. Inevitably, only highly motivated students would be picked to be leaders in the programs and then volunteer to be in the study. This is common with volunteer research projects (Wiebe, Durepos, & Mills, 2009). This study more accurately investigated highly motivated students’ understanding of their experience in leadership development programs. Further, this study did not
evaluate correlations in the findings with race, gender and age of the participants. Including the ethnographic information as part of the analysis could have helped to make this study more applicable to other leadership development programs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Finally, there were limitations in the data collection design. The data was gathered from a variety of sources, however the students’ perspectives were not “triangulated” (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Merriam, 2009). In triangulation, multiple sources are used as a validation strategy and the variety of data helps to shed light on a theme or perspective (Creswell, 2007). Although this study used field observation data and interview data to attain the participants’ perspectives, there could have been additional sources. For example, I could have asked the participants to write journals to document their opinions. Further, the participants could have been involved in designing the interview questions. It may have been valuable for the participants to begin a process of personal reflection that could have helped them to share their perspectives during the interview. As a final point, the data collection for this study took place over four months. A longer timeframe between the two interviews and including additional interviews could have given more information to help answer the research questions for this study (Merriam, 2009).

**Ethical Considerations**

The participants in this study were young adults; therefore, reasonable measures were taken to ensure their privacy and protection. The introduction
and consent to participate process was arranged to allow participants and their guardians time to discuss their participation. The study was formally introduced to the research participants in a letter sent home to all participants in the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs (see Appendix D). The study was also detailed for parents and guardians in the introductory section of the consent to participate form that interested student leaders voluntarily brought home (see Appendix D). The student leaders were also required to complete a separate consent form that was written in language appropriate to their reading levels (see Appendix D). This study was approved by the University of Toronto’s Research Ethics Review Board (see Appendix E) and the Ethical Research Office for the school board for Parklands High School. Therefore, the consent form content and consent process followed the appropriate standards set by both ethical review offices. The right of refusal at any time during the research process was written on the letter and readdressed at the beginning of each interview. When the participants returned both the parent guardian and student informed consent to participate forms, they were provided photocopies of the letters to return home with them. I was available any time during the school day to answer any questions from the participants’ parents or guardians. This information was also clear on the consent forms.

The study participants were proficient in English and were the initiators in choosing to participate in the study. A participant’s competency to consent was addressed when they returned their consent forms to me during the school day. I
asked them to verbally outline their understanding of the research and interview process. If a student could not display a reasonable understanding of their future role in the study, I would have informed them as such and not have included them in the random selection process. No student participants had to be excluded from the selection process on the basis of not understanding their role in the study.

There were minimal emotional risks associated with this study. Participants may have felt the normal level of discomfort common to an individual interview situation. The interview questions asked the participants about their interactions with peers and teachers, which may have caused some participants to have an emotional response. In order to minimize these emotional risks, participants were reminded that they had the right to refuse a specific question or withdraw from the study altogether at the beginning of each interview. At the time of the study, I was a teacher at the school and had a prior rapport with the study participants. I believe this rapport helped make the students feel more comfortable in the interview setting. Students were also reminded of the confidential nature of the interview. The interviews took place in the school conference room. The inside of the conference room cannot be viewed from the outside, so the identities of the participants were protected during this process.

Pseudonyms were assigned to the school and program names within the observational field notes and physical artifacts. Participants were also referred to by their pseudonyms in all collected data. These included field observations,
individual interview notes and interview transcripts. The pseudonyms only matched to the participant’s actual identity on a master list kept in a locked safe in my home and made available only to me. For the interviews, further identifiers (school, teachers, friends’ names) were reassigned during the transcription process. I transcribed all of the interviews and only my supervising professor, Dr. C. Elizabeth Campbell of the University of Toronto, was allowed access to the digital audio recordings. Dr. Campbell never requested to listen to the audio recordings. The audio recordings were stored on a password protected USB memory stick and kept in a locked filing cabinet at my home. No study information, digital or written, was ever stored at my place of work because that was also the research location. This study adheres to the University of Toronto ethical guidelines that recommend for research information to be retained for five years following the completion of the study. Also, this study followed the recommendation that after the five-year period of retention, the information is destroyed. A master list that matches the participants’ actual names to their pseudonyms is destroyed earlier using a paper shredder after the data analysis (April, 2013 for this study). Also, physical artifacts are destroyed using a paper shredder, and all digital information is completely erased within five years from the completion of the data collection (December 2017 for this study).

Throughout the process of this study, I was committed to keeping the process ethical in order to make this a valuable experience for the research
participants. Further, I took every reasonable step to ensure the participants’ perspectives were accurately recorded and interpreted.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter detailed the case study methodology used in this thesis. A discussion of naturalistic evaluation and the application of the approach for this study began the chapter. The relevance of also incorporating a qualitative case study approach to address the research question was argued. Then the position of myself as the researcher within the context of the case was detailed. Next was a description of my selection of the research site and access to the leadership development programs. The approach to using student voice data for this study was discussed. Also, the study participants were introduced through brief biographies. The methods of data collection were specified and justified with the case study academic literature. The procedure for data analysis was presented and included an application of the study’s conceptual framework. The limitations due to the nature of the study and the specific methodology used in the study were detailed. Finally, there was an examination of the ethical considerations made in this study.

In the next chapter, the results of the data analysis are presented. These results are classified as the study findings. The findings are arranged by broad categories of analysis that include the participants’ relationships with themselves and others. Also, the topic of leadership is defined as a broad category for analysis. These categories frame specific data presented in the form of direct
quotations from participant interviews and excerpts from field observation notes.

The chapter concludes with examples from the data that intersect all categories of analysis.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings from analysis of the study data. The findings are divided into three major categories of analysis: self, others and leadership. Within each of the major categories, there are a number of subcategories of analysis. In this chapter, the subcategories are a description of a phenomenon that was present in the data. The subcategories are supported with direct quotations from the interviews and excerpts from the field observation reports. The self category explores the students’ attitudes towards their own leadership skills and strengths. It is divided into a subcategory for self-confidence and another for self-efficacy. The others category is presented within the framework of Nel Noddings’ approach to moral education. Therefore, the ways that participants experienced modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation form the subcategories of the section. Finally, the leadership category compares the students’ contrasting views of leadership. The image of a leader that was presented to the leaders during the training sessions for the programs is detailed. The participants’ descriptions of respectful leadership are presented. Next, is a discussion of the different modes of leadership of groups as was identified by the participants. One mode is leadership of a group from a position inside the group and facilitating the group members to make their own decisions. In contrast, the other mode is leadership from outside the group and directing the group towards completion of tasks. The findings of this study paralleled the categories of
analysis presented in this chapter and exist as overarching themes that broadly relate to awareness of personal abilities, the nature of adolescent social relationships and perceptions of good leadership. Following this presentation of the findings, these themes are discussed in Chapter Five.

Self

All of the study participants spoke at length about their feelings towards themselves. These descriptions included how they feel they are capable and talented, as well as how comfortable they are utilizing their talents or skills. The beliefs the students had about themselves are classified as self-confidence and self-efficacy. In this study, self-confidence is defined by how secure one feels about his or her own talents, and self-efficacy relates to how effectively one believes such talents are used. There is overlap between these ideas of self, however for the purposes of categorizing the findings in this study, the data present a subtle distinction between the confidence and efficacy. This distinction is demonstrated in this section.

Confidence

The study participants discussed different forms of confidence. For Ruben, self-confidence manifested as the ability to speak in front of his peers. He said:

I am more confident speaking in front of a group of peers. Cause grade nines, despite the fact that they are two years younger they are still pretty much peers. I personally think it is much more intimidating speaking in front of peers who you are going to see everyday. So to talk right in front
of them and to lead them and to help them is much more intimidating than little kids and perhaps adults (Ruben, Interview 1).

For Rena and Sara, self-confidence meant the ability to be in front of a group of people with lots of energy and not feeling afraid to be oneself. Rena described herself as the following:

I am one of those people who like doesn’t really care about what other people think so not in a mean way at all. Just that I am going to do whatever I want to do and feel like doing (Rena, Interview 1).

Sara also shared an experience where she found that feeling self-confident and speaking earnestly to a crowd resulted in new people approaching her. Sara said:

A lot of people tell me that I am not scared to put myself out there. I remember we had an athletic spirit assembly, and one of the school council members told me, “hey Sara you are in charge of pumping up the rally because you are really outgoing and you can do that kind of stuff.” That’s really good and I know people can really admire the fact that I can kinda take risks. It makes me feel good. The more people talk to me the more I want to talk to them back even more (Sara, Interview 1).

Rena had a similar experience as Sara. Rena described feeling self-confident in response to being asked to predict what a hypothetical peer-group leader evaluation from Girls for Change would say about her. She said she would be described as being the following:

Out there. I think I expect myself to go out there in the sense I did before. I knew I might have to. Seeing all those different girls made me go out there so I guess they would say I was really outspoken and comfortable because girls were able to come up and communicate and feel okay speaking to me especially since it was the first time we met (Rena, Interview 2).
There were many ways the participants believed they experienced self-confidence. As described above, Rena and Sara spoke about the satisfaction of having other students approach them after they were the center of a group’s attention. In addition, Sara spoke of an increase in her self-confidence from seeing how other students believed she would make a good leader. Sara said, “And when the opportunity came to sign up to be a leader people were like, ‘are you going to do it’ and I was like, ‘sure!’” (Sara, Interview 1). Then in the second interview two months later, Sara spoke of her self-confidence with learning how other students positively viewed their experience with her as their leader. One way the peer group leaders at the Girls for Change Sleepover received feedback about their role from the younger students was during the last activity of the event when all the grade nine girls and grade ten leaders were given souvenir T-shirts. The girls were instructed by the Girls for Change executive members to use permanent markers to write positive messages on each other’s T-shirts. The following excerpt from the field notes details this activity:

The grade nine girls were all gathered in the big gym and given a white t-shirt with the sleepover logo and a permanent marker. The Girls for Change executive told the girls to write as many positive messages on the backs of as many of the others girls as they could in the next 30 minutes. These messages are called “warm fuzzies” because they should make the recipient feel warm and fuzzy inside. The girls quickly formed snaking, intersecting human lines with every girl twisting to write on another girls’ back while simultaneously being written on. The leaders, including Sara and Rena, had a long line of girls waiting to write on their backs. Sara and Rena approached the shyest grade nine girls first. I am impressed by this show of sensitivity by the leaders and their ability to recognize the potential for this activity to be socially uncomfortable for some girls. (Field Notes, Parklands High School gym, October 13, 2012, 9:45 am).
After reading the comments other students had made about her being a leader on her souvenir sleepover t-shirt, Sara felt a strong sense of self-confidence. She said:

   I feel like my ability to become a leader has changed. I would say I have always liked leadership roles, but in this the teachers were supervising, but we had the core of it right? So this one gave me more of a push. I felt really good you know? Afterwards I saw that t-shirt in my closet that we made and I see all the comments and it feels pretty good. It boosts up my confidence and self-esteem (Sara, Interview 2).

   The lasting feelings of self-confidence varied among the participants.

   Adam experienced feeling more self-confident until his second interview, which was three months after the completion of the Willow Winds program. He described how he felt:

   I feel better and stronger and I do have a lot more confidence going forward and tackling new tasks I do feel better. Now that I am 16 I am out there looking for jobs and I feel a lot stronger and more independent. So going to Willow Winds and working in that team environment and working with people really closely for a few months really helped because, you know, there are people you can go to for help. But also when you are in scenarios like job interviews, I have done a few lately, I draw a lot on Willow Winds experience and it has helped me get two jobs. So it was really good (Adam, Interview 2).

   The other two Willow Winds participants, Ruben and Vijay, spoke of feeling very self-confident and interacting with other students in a more outgoing manner while at the Willow Winds retreat and immediately after returning to school. However, Ruben and Vijay felt their outspoken behaviours at Willow Winds did not persist in the few weeks after returning to their regular school routines. Ruben noticed this transition:
Right after camp I feel like I was at my peak and pumped up with tons of spirit, but now I have gone a bit back. I am a bit more uncomfortable, but not as uncomfortable as I was before. I am not as comfortable talking in front of peers now. But it no longer affects me and I can still get up and say what I need to say. But it won’t be like camp where I would get up and joke on stage. Now it is more serious and I will have a couple of jokes and not be as completely open as myself (Ruben, Interview 2).

Vijay spoke in his first interview about being more extroverted in his role as a leader in the Willow Winds program than at school. As he commented:

At camp I am a lot more extroverted than I am at school. Over the summer I have become more comfortable, and my comfort zone has expanded. But at the same time at camp we had a cheer-off and there was a whole counselor cheer off and instinctively I started dancing in the cheer. Silly dancing to go with the cheer. These are the kind of things I normally wouldn’t do in the school (Vijay, Interview 1).

Then in the second interview two months later, Vijay spoke of feeling hesitant to be as outspoken as he was during the Willow Winds retreat:

It wasn’t that what I did at camp I didn’t bring back. The changes that I have experienced have continued throughout the year. It wasn’t just a one-time thing, but on a smaller scale. Now it is not just about my personal life because I have to balance it with my academic and in my role as a professional capacity (Vijay, Interview 2).

Vijay’s reference to his professional capacity is the many volunteer organizations with which he is involved. Vijay believes the extroverted personality he expressed while a leader at Willow Winds is suitable to his social life but not appropriate for managing his academic life and additional volunteer opportunities. This means the increase in self-confidence Vijay experienced at Willow Winds was situational. At the time of this study, Vijay did not comment on a similar situation where he had experienced feelings of self-confidence as he had at the Willow Winds retreat. The comments participants made about their self-
confidence were often interwoven with a discussion of their personal strengths.

In this next section, the participants’ self-efficacy is explored.

**Efficacy**

The six study participants spoke about their belief in their own capabilities and skills. They spoke of recognizing personal strengths and the potential impact that utilizing these personal strengths may have on achieving their life goals. Jenny and Adam believed they felt a better understanding of their personal capabilities while leading peers in the leadership development programs. While at the Girls for Change sleepover, Jenny was impressed by her interaction with other students. She said:

I guess I never really considered myself a social person. I am always kinda an introvert and I guess I was trying really hard to be extroverted for that day to make everyone feel included so I guess I would be pretty surprised about that (Jenny, Interview 2).

Adam also said that he learned about his capabilities while being the activity coordinator at Willow Winds. First, he described his abilities and personal drive as, “I am a very structured person and I understand what has to happen if I want to go somewhere and do something what it will take to get there” (Adam, Interview 1). Later, in the same interview Adam described what made him a good leader:

I guess one thing would be, being able to react to new situations being thrown at me. If something doesn’t go to plan like the schedule I am able to take like two seconds in my head and look over what do I have to do, what is the best way to do it and change things so it looks like it was planned. Just that leadership and being able to take charge when we needed to (Adam, Interview 1).
Vijay and Sara thought their actions and beliefs about themselves as leaders in the leadership development programs were consistent with their actions and beliefs about themselves in everyday school life. Vijay and Sara explained how they began the school year with a greater appreciation of their personal abilities.

Vijay spoke of a unique experience he had during the summer that helped to clarify his beliefs in himself. He said:

At the beginning of the year I came in with that new optimism. A lot of people feel that it’s back to school and blah. Actually I feel the exact opposite. The summer before camp I had just moved cities and was working full time and I really didn’t have a chance to see my friends. That summer was a time of change for me because I got to do a lot of things that I normally wouldn’t. I was a speaker at a TED x (Technology, Entertainment, Design extension) conference and it was interesting. It was neat because as I said before I was more of an introverted person and through this transition and doing that TED x talk, you know being selected and presenting and getting feedback that it was great an getting an invitation for another talk… so… that really gave me some self confidence (Vijay, Interview 2).

Sara believed she had experienced stronger feelings of self-efficacy during the transition from grade nine to ten. She described feeling secure in her leadership abilities, and that her abilities would help her succeed as a leader in the Girls for Change program. Sara shared this revelation during her second interview in response to the following questions: “Imagine you time travelled back to September 1st before the sleepover even happened and you had a copy of the sleepover film on your ipod or phone. When you watched the film would have been surprised at what you saw? Why?” Sara responded:

I think it was really important for me to stay who I was the entire time at the sleepover. I wouldn’t have acted any different before the sleepover or at the sleepover. From September to October when the sleepover
happened not much had changed, but my attitude changed from last year. That was pretty extreme this year. I think that I wouldn’t have been too surprised because I know who I am and I look at that as I have to be myself in those videos. I would have been more excited though (Sara, Interview 2).

Sara believed the Girls for Change sleepover helped her to experience self-efficacy during her grade nine year. This efficacy translated to an eagerness to sign up for a peer leader position at the sleepover in her grade ten year. The explanation of her change is as follows:

Last year I entered on a note that was like I am going to close my eyes and I am going and I am just going to get high school over with and go onto university. But then I went to the sleepover and I was like let’s try things out. And that was a building process. And I came into this year and people were like… they know me and were like, “hey Sara!” Going into this year I was thinking maybe university could come later and I can just focus on right now. The sleepover really made me realize… it could have changed how I felt about school but the sleepover made me realize how I have evolved (Sara, Interview 1).

The evolution Sara describes is a change in her attitude towards her time at Parklands High School. Sara believes her positive feelings about school translate to her desire to be involved with the extracurricular programs at the school. Although Sara described the change in her perception of herself occurred before the start of her grade ten year, her description of her experience at the Girls for Change sleepover in grades nine and ten suggests her experience in the program in some way was connected to her feelings of self-efficacy.

The participants expressed belief in their abilities in many ways. Three participants spoke of the high expectations they had for themselves and the challenge to meet these goals. Vijay was specific about his goals:
I am applying to American universities so when I came in I was like I will have all this done by September and then I will be ready and I will be completely on top of things, but then unexpected things happen and you can’t plan for anything. Do I find I am at the same schedule as I thought I would be? No. But at the same time I am optimistic and I have the self-confidence I have built up. Obviously there is stress build-up and activities, but you also have the privilege of having those bright moments where a certain reference letter comes in and you are like wow, someone thinks so highly of me and those kinds of boosts helps to guide me along the way (Vijay, Interview 2).

Sara also set specific goals for herself. She described her affinity for goal setting:

I do set goals and I feel like I have to achieve them. Because my agenda is full of goals I have to achieve this year and even full of after school goals even. Like I go to guidance almost every week because I want to make sure… I am really trying you know. I think what I give in is what I get back (Sara, Interview 2)

Rena, in addition to talking about goals, shared some of the strain she feels trying to meet the expectations she sets for herself. She said, “My mom is always telling me to relax. But I can’t because when I get into something I really like I can’t really relax I guess. I get so into it I just have to finish it and do my best” (Rena, Interview 2). The participants’ beliefs in their leadership abilities were particularly evident in the responses to the following interview question:

“Imagine Parklands High School is a small town (like Springfield in the television show The Simpsons) and each student and teacher has a job in the town. What would your job be?” (Interview 2, Question 7). Sara believed she would be the following:

Mayor. I would try out to be mayor or prime minister. Because I really feel like if there is something bigger to do, why can’t I do it? I am always looking for the next step to things. For example if I am a member then I
can apply for leadership and then head office. There are always steps to climb. Plus I like leading other people and leading in other communities. I follow rules and I like being there when the rules are being made to compromise. Not just something to be given to me, but something that I have a say in as well... To be there to set the things and not just have them be handed to you (Sara, Interview 2).

Despite Sara’s exclamation of self-efficacy, she expressed doubt in her assessment of her abilities. For example, after describing an experience where she helped a friend to feel more confident academically, she was asked if she thought she realized her abilities. She replied:

Sometimes I think I realize it too much, but then I don’t realize it. Like sometimes I am like why can’t I do that? I see people leading things and people doing so many things I am like I can do that. I have so much faith in my abilities and then one test comes and I don’t do so well and then I am like, oh that’s why I can’t do it. So it switches on and off (Sara, Interview 2).

Adam also expressed a belief in his leadership abilities when he assessed his role at Willow Winds if the program was transformed into a small town. Adam believed he would be the following:

Judge. Any time that something went wrong or there were problems people would come to me and see if I could help them. As the judge I would help make decisions on how to fix a problem. A lot of people did come to me for decisions. That’s why I am the judge there (Adam, Interview 2).

However, Adam felt he played a less classically authoritative role in the school community. He said about his position at school, “I would do something to make sure everyone is healthy so like running the community center or recreational center for youth to make sure everyone is healthy” (Adam, Interview 2). The ways the participants spoke about themselves was very interesting. They most
often referred to themselves in relation to their friends and occasionally their family. In the next section, the participants’ interactions with others in their roles as leaders are presented.

**Others**

Analysis of the data that illustrated how study participants engage with other people uses the work of Nel Noddings. As described in previously, Noddings (1984, 2002, 2005a) promotes a caring alternative to character education that emphasizes the need to be cared for and learning to care for others. Noddings (2005) advocates that extracurricular programs, like those for leadership development, should “provide opportunities for them to gain skills in care giving” (p. 127). From Noddings’ perspective, the extracurricular leadership development programs evaluated in this study should emphasize the building of caring relationships between the student participants. The participants in this study spoke of the connections they made with other students in their role as leaders at the leadership development programs. As a result, Noddings’ four components of moral education from an ethic of care perspective (modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation) are used as a framework to organize the analysis of the study participants’ experiences with others in the programs. Although, Noddings’ moral education framework does not perfectly apply to this study’s data, the framework does help to differentiate and clearly present the data about the participants’ experiences with others in the leadership development programs.
Modeling

Modeling was identified in the data by observations or descriptions of instances in the interviews of the participants demonstrating care towards others. At the leadership development programs, the participants in their role as leaders cared for others in a way that was observed and could be emulated by the other students in the program. In other words, the act of caring was modeled by the study participants for others. Modeling was identified in the data as the participants’ descriptions of feeling the younger students “admired” or “looked up to them”. For the participants, there were many instances when they modeled care for the younger students in their group at the leadership development programs. The participants were observed physically assisting the younger students. For example, at the high ropes climbing course Vijay assisted students to get into their climbing harnesses. Adam helped students by offering a hand to help climb up a steep and slippery slope during the hike. I saw Ruben in both of the hour-long observation periods helping students find appropriately size lifejackets and paddles. The observation report details this interaction:

Ruben at lifejacket hut with group of students standing outside. He passes out lifejackets to group leaders, who then pass them to younger students. Ruben does “lift test” (for fit test, lift the jacket by the shoulders, if rises above ears, then jacket is too big) for three grade nine campers. One girl is really tiny and Ruben exchanges her jacket for a child size. Then, Ruben explains to whole group how to size paddle with tip of paddle on toe and paddle butt to chin as proper size. Students crowd around Ruben and one at time he gives paddle and tests size (Field Notes, Willow Winds retreat canoe docks, September 15, 2012, 10:35 am).
He also assisted students while they got into canoes. Ruben spoke of another instance where he physically assisted students that I did not observe. He said, “When it comes to packing up there were some campers who could roll sleeping bags so I got them to help. I think my campers would say they were grateful for that” (Ruben, Interview 2).

The participants modeled care towards others by eagerly helping others who needed assistance in understanding the procedures for the activities during the leadership development programs. Adam described his commitment to helping others in this way at Willow Winds:

People look to me if there is something they need help with or are unsure of. They come to me to see if I can help them out or be there in the situation. So I think that is the number one thing. I want to make sure people are okay and happy. So that is why a lot of people come to me for help and advice (Adam, Interview 2).

The modeling component was also identified as instances when the participants took extra effort to welcome and engage all the younger students in the programs. I consistently observed Vijay at Willow Winds talking at length with younger students. One instance that stands out from my field observation notes is when Vijay started a game of “alphabet” (listing famous people within a category in alphabetical order) with a grade nine student who did not want to participate in the high ropes course. Vijay passed up his turn to go on the high ropes course in order to stay with the grade nine student and continue with the game. The excerpt from the field notes is as follows:

Vijay goes over to small grade nine camper and encouraged him to try the zipline. The camper looks scared and says he does not want to go.
Everyone in the group collectively encourages him. The camper still refuses. Vijay does not press the camper further, but instead plays the alphabet game with famous writers. Other group members join in while waiting for their turn on zipline. The scared camper takes over game and has impressive knowledge of authors and later politicians. My immediate interpretation is that Vijay can keep group entertained and is responsive to individual students’ needs (Field Notes, Willow Winds retreat high ropes course, September 15, 2012, 3:40 pm).

Vijay recognized the opportunity at Willow Winds to engage with new people. He spoke about this in an interview:

I think it was generally just the mood of camp that being very talkative, but not just talkative. Willow Winds was one of my most engaging activities and I got a chance to literally talk to everyone and get to know everyone and they got to know a bit more about me. I think it was that genuine nice feeling that you get from meeting someone and I would say the same for all of them. Like that person was really nice and went out of their way to do this for me or all the other campers (Vijay, Interview 2).

Rena also commented on the importance of making others feel welcome. She shared how she tried to make the students feel welcome at the Girls for Change sleepover:

There were two girls in our group who were kinda out of place and after I was able to connect with them and now I kinda talk to them more than I talk to the other girls too. So yeah, the fact that I was able to talk to them along with my partner and we were able to get them involved even though they didn’t feel like it at first. I would admire that if I saw somebody doing that (Rena, Interview 1).

The leadership development programs were not the only time when the participants experienced modeling as leaders. Rena also went out of her way to make students feel welcome at school. Rena explained this in the context of being asked to describe her occupation if the school community was a small town. She said:
I would be in the Welcome Committee for some reason. I think I am really happy all the time and as soon as a new person comes I am like trying to make friends with them and show them around. Not only to make friends with them, but to make sure they make friends too (Rena, Interview 2).

Later in the same interview, Rena shared a story of how she recognized and supported a new student in his transition to Parklands High. She recounts:

In our urban dance club there is a student who is new to our school and he is kinda outside of everyone else. He doesn’t seem to be economically at the same level or he just feels uncomfortable because he puts on a mask basically in front of other people that he doesn’t always have when he is around me so I know there is a mask. So I guess I had to make friends with him and introduce him to the other guys I was hanging out with and the other girls as well. I felt sorry for him because he didn’t know how to be himself in this new school and he’s a pretty shy person too. Urban dance club is where everyone there is pretty out there and excited by things. He might have felt out of place I guess (Rena, Interview 2).

The modeling component of moral education demonstrates the participants’ effective use of verbal dialogue. This use of dialogue by the participants is explored in the next section.

**Dialogue**

For the purpose of this study, the dialogue component of Noddings’ (1984, 2002, 2005a) model for moral education was identified in the data as the participants’ conversations with others that the participants believed helped them to better understand their personal strengths as leaders. One way the participants experienced dialogue was through conversations with younger students. Sara experienced dialogue as a peer group leader at Girls for Change. Sara discussed personal issues with the younger students and was given insight into their lives. She said, “All the girls were really comfortable at the sleepover.
They would tell me stories about their parents and everything. I saw their lifestyle in a way and they were like unveiling” (Sara, Interview 1). These relations with younger students are described as mentorship relationships. The participants described mentorship relationships that began at the leadership development programs and continued beyond the context of the leadership development programs. For example, Vijay experienced dialogue when he helped a younger student deal with a disappointing situation at school. To help the student with her situation, Vijay related to the student by reflecting on his own past experiences.

He recounted the way he met and helped this younger Parklands High student:

Through Willow Winds I have met a lot of students and a lot of younger students. Because I live out of town and have to wait for my parents I am always in the library literally everyday. I go to the library and I have to wait until six. I have found that a lot of younger students are in a similar position and they have to go to the library too. So through that I have got to talking to the kids who are always there and I have built a relationship with them. A while ago, you know stress builds up and I had a lot to do and I didn’t get a chance to talk with them for a while. One day I just passed by them and I saw them in the school hallway. A person who I have always seen as just so carefree and so relaxed and enjoying life had a very serious face: an almost grim expression on her face. I hadn’t talked to her in a while and so when I walked by it shocked me that someone I was so used to seeing in this different capacity was all the sudden, you know, what happened? It was hard you know starting that conversation again right? Thankfully, she felt comfortable enough with me to share what she had been going through and I could relate. What she was going through was something I had been through myself. So just going through a conversation like that… you know you never have the solution, even when you are talking with them and you have been through it, you don’t have a set out solution. It’s never really that easy, but just having someone to talk to. I personally have been in that situation many times where you are talking to someone to find out more and I never do it to get the gratification of being that person but I do it out of curiosity and also just of sympathy. I never feel like ohhh… I made a significant impact to her or I solved all their problems. But for some reason I am there to talk to a lot of these people who give me feedback like, “thank you, it was great to talk to
you. It was really appreciated and I really needed that right now.” That really motivates me to do this because, you know, not everyone is comfortable talking to you. And sometimes people lash out but when you are just trying be nice and trying to find out what is going on. But then having these moments when you are able to help someone motivates me to keep doing what I do.

She is doing better now, less serious, but it’s a process. There is no immediate solution. Anything that has an immediate solution is not really a problem. The problem wasn’t really that big, but it’s all contextual. It was huge for her and when I was talking to her she said, “you probably am going to think I am a drama queen.” But, essentially it was that she didn’t make it onto a certain team when she tried out. No, but I have felt that fear before and I have been cut before when I have tried out. But you know what I understood her passion for the sport. I play volleyball as well and I really wanted to play this year as well but because I live out of town this year I was asked to not try out because I couldn’t make morning practices. So I could completely relate with that feeling of wanting to get back into the game but being told that you can’t (Vijay, Interview 2).

The participants believed the dialogue they had experienced as mentors in the leadership development programs was similar to dialogue they had in conversations with friends of their same age. As previously stated in her first interview, Sara shared life experiences with younger students at the Girls for Change sleepover. Sara utilized her skills in listening and sharing to counsel a friend who was struggling to find motivation and confidence. Through the counseling process, Sara indentified some of her own traits. In her second interview, Sara described this experience of dialogue with a friend that mirrors her counseling conversations at the Girls for Change sleepover. She said:

My friend and I were talking and it’s been a tough time academically this semester so she has been talking about quitting academics and like, “I am not going to amount to anything, I am not going to get into university”. We were talking over Facebook and she was like, “there is so much to do right now, I don’t know how I procrastinated.” She was like, “procrastination is a psychological disorder” and she was going on and on about like being a loser. I had to step in. First of all I tried to relate to her and tell her it is not
just her. Because I was talking to a lot of people and this semester is really hard for lots of people. And I was talking to her about what I know of university and everything and what I know about how to help procrastination, because I procrastinate sometimes as well. But basically I just made sure I was there for her. So if you had questions about like math, text me about and basically we would call each other every night and talk about biology and everything. It gets better with time. We just had a quiz and she felt good about it. We shared some notes and stuff so. I felt bad that she would look down on herself because she is really smart, but she doesn’t realize it. That’s a problem with a lot of people. I hope I help people to realize what they can do (Sara, Interview 2).

The participants believed they had benefitted from experiencing dialogue through their involvement in the leadership development programs. Adam and Vijay both spoke of feeling grateful for conversations that had with new people at Willow Winds because they were able to see alternative perspectives. Adam shared his experience of becoming more familiar with younger students at Willow Winds. He said:

I got to know a lot of the grade nines because that is part of the trip and a lot of them are really interesting in what they like to do and how they think and stuff. Like, some of them are really abstract and some are shy and reserved. Like Angela (pseudonym), one of the campers who gave the leaders a hard time was actually really cool to be around, just what she liked to do and how she thought of things was really different and unique compared to how I think. She was really artsy and creative, but logical at the same time (Adam, Interview 1).

Also at Willow Winds, Vijay became acquainted with a younger member of his group. Vijay spoke of his interaction with the student:

He was the kind of kid that wasn’t involved. Because of his back we couldn’t go on the hike so we had the opportunity to actually talk and develop a bond and I found out a lot more about him. Afterwards I found out from campers and counselors that oh, he is a mischievous one, mainly because of his lack of involvement or enthusiasm. But I found that that was not the case he was just not comfortable to get as involved (Vijay, Interview 1).
Further, Adam found that he gained new perspective from the dialogue he experienced with other leaders at Willow Winds. He said:

“Any of the leaders I didn’t really know beforehand, but I did get to know them after being stuck for four days in the bush. It kinda shows a different side to a person and you are kinda forced to talk and there is no other choice. I really have a lot more respect and you get to grow with them. You are there to help them out (Adam, Interview 1).”

The participants experienced dialogue in their role as leaders during the leadership development programs. The dialogue process was also identified in the participants’ experiences counseling their peers beyond the leadership development programs. The participants considered dialogue as making connections to other students outside of their usual social circle. The act of caring observed and described by the participants extends beyond assistance with physical activities and verbal dialogue. This practice of caring is explored further in the next section.

**Practice**

The practice component of Noddings’ moral education framework was identified in the data as the opportunities for the participants to care for others and improve their skills as caregivers. In comparison to actions categorized for the modeling component, the instances of the practice of care are subtle and may not have been easily recognized by other students in the leadership development programs. For example, Ruben helping students into the canoes is a clear example of modeling care. The confidential encouragement Ruben offered to a fearful student at the canoe docks is an example of Ruben practicing
the act of caring for his own development as a caregiver. The participants practiced care in many different ways. Sara and Rena identified care as helping everyone in the group to feel included. I observed Sara during the first observation period at the beginning of the sleepover leave the circle of her group members, walk over to the other side of the gym and lead a grade nine student who was alone to join her group. The excerpt from the observation record is as follows:

Girls sitting in circle playing “name train” name game. Sara explains “2 truths and a lie” game. Grade nine starts the game. Sara walks to far side of gym near double doors. Sara talks to girl sitting on bag, on her phone. Girl walks with Sara back to group and joins circle. Phone still in the girl’s hand, but girl participates in game once it is her turn (Field Notes, Parklands High School gym, October 12, 2012, 6:15 pm).

For the remainder of the sleepover, the grade nine student Sara introduced to the group participated in all the activities. Sara identified this explicit welcoming behaviour as part of her role as a peer group leader. She explained her intentions:

I’ve been told by the students that I am really energetic and I always keep them... I always include them in things. A lot of people in our group didn’t really know each other, but some knew each other really well so it makes things kinda difficult. So I tried to make sure that everyone kinda new each other (Sara, Interview 2).

Rena also believed that her role at the sleepover involved making every unique student comfortable. She said:

In our group there were several students who like didn’t like what everyone else was doing. And that’s normal right? So you just have to find something in common with you and the girls who aren’t getting along as easily so you can connect with them and they won’t feel so out of place or uncomfortable and stuff (Rena, Interview 1).
Another way the study participants experienced practice was when they supported others through an emotional struggle at the leadership development programs. Vijay said he assisted a grade nine student experiencing a tough time while a leader at Willow Winds:

I was asked by his friends to go and talk to him. We didn’t really know each other before, just by name. Interestingly he was dealing with issues that I had dealt with before. I got this opportunity to sit down and talk to him during this very critical time for him, where he was close to tears. Personally I found it really rewarding because I got feedback from not him, but his friends who thanked me for talking to him and said he really appreciated me talking to him (Vijay, Interview 1).

Finally, practice was identified in the data as the study participants’ supporting their fellow peer leaders in the leadership development programs.

Ruben was observed during the second observation period at the canoeing activity encouraging his female partner to provide the instructions to the group. He did this by starting the instructions and then signaling to her to finish the instructions. I wrote the following in the observation record:

Ruben standing on dock with Amy (pseudonym) and group gathers around dock ready to enter boats. Ruben demonstrates and explains forward stroke and j stroke. Group practices the strokes in air with their paddles. Ruben explains female partner, Amy will teach them the rest of the strokes. Amy explains c stroke, back paddle, pry and draw. The group practices again in air. Ruben organizes group into smaller boat groups and assigns boats to groups. (Field Notes, Willow Winds retreat canoe docks, September 15, 2012, 10:40 am).

Also, while canoeing on the lake Ruben encouraged his partner to sit in the stern position, which allowed her to steer the boat towards the students she believed
needed the most assistance. Ruben described the ways he believed he encouraged others to accept their leadership potential:

Well there are two ways to help them. First of all, there is a, “hi, hey, here is a good idea, this is what I do.” Stuff like that. There is also standing next to them when they are actually having to lead. Despite the fact that you might not actually say anything, it’s always good to have a friend’s presence next to you. It’s almost like support, but you can always jump in and fill in for them if they need it. That’s tricky because if you say, “no no no it’s not like that,” um… it’s like crushing for them. It’s more like encouraging them and adding on to what they said. Stuff like that (Ruben, Interview 1).

The study participants identified and practiced their skills as caregivers to younger students and fellow leaders at the leadership development programs. The caring interactions are described through the confirmation of caring relationships and are explored in the next section.

**Confirmation**

Noddings (1984, 2002, 2005a) describes the confirmation component of moral education as people recognizing the best attributes in one another. Confirmation was identified in the data as the study participants’ relationships with other students in the leadership development programs. Several of the participants spoke of making new friends because they spent time during the leadership development program together. Rena shared her experience of making new friends:

I only knew one person going into the sleepover last year and everyone who is there wants to, you know, make friends and everything but the minute you just let loose and you’re just yourself and you talk to people just girl to girls you start making friends and you feel that. It’s just something that happens. You just made new friends and it’s true friends too. So an example would be the obstacle course last year. It was
challenging for some people and I think I made a lot of friends in that area because you accept people for their abilities and what they can do and can’t do and then from there it just goes on from the acceptance to like talking to them and then you become friends eventually (Rena, Interview 1).

Jenny also agreed that the Girls for Change sleepover was an ideal time to make new friends. She said about the sleepover:

It’s a really good opportunity to meet girls and stuff. I know a lot of girls don’t really think highly of grade nines because they are like, “oh niners are in the way”, but that is honestly not the case. Some of them are really nice, some of them are really cool and you kinda miss that opportunity if you don’t go out of your way. Because on a regular day you don’t really encounter them because they are not in your class. If you have the sleepover then you get to meet girls that are younger than you that you will be spending the next three or two years of high school with. And if you guys share the same extracurriculars (activities) than you sorta have the same background to work off of (Jenny, Interview 1).

Further, Sara believed the sleepover helped her initiate new friendships with the younger students. She was excited by this result and said:

Actually now I can walk down the halls and speak to all the grade nine girls that I met there. Before that you keep moving up to grade 10 then 11 and you don’t get to know the younger grades that much. When I came into grade nine, I did a lot of things to meet a lot of new people because in grade nine no one really knows you. Before the sleepover I didn’t really know them or pay much attention to them. But now I can spot them in the hallways in two seconds (Sara, Interview 2).

The formation of new friends during the leadership development programs was not unique to the study participants. Other students who attended the leadership development programs were seen to have made new friends as well. Adam reported his observation of this phenomenon:

I see a lot of groups of grade nines and I can pick them out because I saw them at Willow Winds. There is one out that way by the staircase. There is probably like 16 kids there and everyone of them went to camp. I am
thinking that all of them went to camp, they are all sitting together two or three months later. If there were a bunch of kids who were at camp that didn’t want to be there this might not have happened (Adam, Interview 2).

The participants believed that sharing the experience in the leadership development programs helped friends to feel closer to one another. Jenny stated that she saw friendships become more intimate at the sleepover. I then asked her to describe what these close friendships looked like. She responded with a description of some of the activities that helped the friendships progress:

A lot of talking and we took a lot of pictures and we all were pretty physical with like hugging each other and all that stuff. I think the bonding was when the t-shirts were coming out and it’s like you should all sign books but then everyone starting signing t-shirts and I guess signing the t-shirts is like a more physical way of connecting than paper (Jenny, Interview 2).

Rena also believed that she developed closer friendships because of the sleepover. She spoke about her experience:

Yeah, a couple of the girls I saw them in the hall but we weren’t like close or anything. But then at night we starting talking and we were like, “whoa we weren’t like that in the halls,” and through that experience we got to know each other better. We really got to know each other. So even though the sleepover was for the grade nines it was kinda for like everybody who was there. So I feel like I was able to get close to different people. It wasn’t like a solo person thing. A couple of pairs, it wasn’t like the pairs I would usually be around, it was nice being around them and getting to know them. I talk to them more. And we talked about the most randomest things. It’s because it’s not like a school situation it’s like out of school. It’s not other friends where you see them in the hallways and then you talk and stuff and say hi to them. Its like a barrier if there was any, it’s now like gone. If not the majority, it’s like not even there (Rena, Interview 1).

Further, three of the students spoke about maintaining new friendships after the leadership development program was completed. The quantity and quality of her lasting friendships surprised Rena. She said:
I would be really shocked in a sense. I knew that I would make new
friends, but not to the extent. All programs are like oh yeah, you are going
to make friends and you do. But I didn’t expect it to be nearly as much as
now. So I would probably be really surprised at how many grade nines
feel comfortable talking to me even when I am around my friends and
things. I know it can be hard to talk to people who are outside your friend
groups when they are with their friends, it’s just a whole set of new people.
The fact that they feel comfortable enough to come up and say, “hi, what
do you have next period” surprises me because I wouldn’t have expected
us to get that close. I found there is this group of girls who weren’t from
our group but they are always around and we always end up in the same
places. It’s really interesting to see how close you can get with somebody
that to them it might seem like such a big age difference. Because like
they are already in high school and they are just getting into high school.
But when you actually talk to them it’s like the age difference just
completely destroys itself (Rena, Interview 2).

Adam thought the time he dedicated to talk to the other leaders during the Willow
Winds program helped them to establish lasting friendships. He described how
friends he made at Willow Winds became incorporated into his current social life.

Adam said:

After activities I would usually spend 5 or 10 minutes talking to the other
leaders, talking kinda one-on-one thing. Then we developed a mutual
trust. They can rely on me and I can rely on them. That really allowed us
to open up and give us a sense of comfortableness with each other.
Because now I know if I have a problem it’s not just one other person, but
thirty other people that I can work with. Now my group of friends is kinda
extended and especially the close group has doubled and tripled in size.
After this it was really a great experience and I am so excited for next year
(Adam, Interview 1).

Jenny also believed she had a different social circle of peers after participation as
a leader in the Girls for Change sleepover. In general, she had more new
acquaintances and felt closer with her pre-existing friends. She spoke of the girls
she spent time with during sleepover and their relationship since returning to her
regular school schedule. Jenny shared the following:
Sometimes you just make eye contact and then nobody says anything so the next time I make sure I say hi. Once you make that first greeting then the greetings continue and they come from both sides. It doesn’t matter who starts it because both still remember who each other are. It’s like who is brave enough to put themselves out there and make the first greeting. I guess with some of the girls who you don’t have classes with. I got to know them better. Or friends that you already had, because of the sleepover you are even closer (Jenny, Interview 2).

In the interview data, it was interesting that the participants’ consideration of the programs’ isolated locations and time away from school were often included in their descriptions of new friendships. For the Willow Winds program, both Adam and Vijay spoke more than once about program’s isolation with the rate and intensity of the friendships that were formed. Adam said:

Because it was a small group from the school we were really able to take the time and because we are stuck in the bush and the only source of entertainment for each other. When you are forced to talk to one another you can usually find some common group and work from it (Adam, Interview 1).

Vijay agreed that the isolation of the Willow Winds program helped participants to form new friendships:

I think that the physical isolation is necessary because you don’t have distractions anymore and you are forced essentially to interact with the people. So I think that isolation and bonding time not just with the grade nines, but with other members of the school is a necessary experience. When you start high school not everyone is confident coming in. In order to build bonds between them and get the friendships going for people who are not necessarily confident going into high school it is needed (Vijay, Interview 2).

Later in the same interview, Vijay reiterated his belief that the program’s isolation helped students build new relationships. Vijay believed the shared isolated
experience provided an opportunity for which new friendships could develop. He said:

For me that physical isolation was a big part of it. No matter what you do and you are in a setting you are already comfortable with and you already know then you obviously have differences. Some people are new, some not. There are people who have been living in the same area for a long time and some people just got here. Taking everyone out of their comfort level and taking them to a new place forces them to explore (Vijay, Interview 2).

The Girls for Change program took place at school, but after the regular school day. Rena believed the program being after school was necessary because it allowed time for new relationships to develop. In response to being asked why she thought she made new friends, Rena claimed:

I think that it was because it was out of school time and the fact that is was all girls too. I think you are able to be more comfortable around there and I guess perhaps but it would have to be an after school thing and something quite similar to this. Especially the timing of everything, you just had time to sit around and talk (Rena, Interview 1).

Finally, Adam described a phenomenon I had experienced at his age. He described the connection he believes he makes with his peers after an intense outdoor adventure. Also, the way the relationships formed in an outdoor adventure exist in everyday school life. Adam explained the underlying trust and mutual respect he shares with a student, even if they do not exist in the same group of friends at school. Adam said:

Me and Hannah (pseudonym) were in the same year at outside camp and I don’t really talk to her that much, even in the hallways I see her and I am like I know you, we could talk anytime because I spent four years with you. It’s something different that you had when you go to camp with people. Surviving a camping trip with someone is really life changing (Adam, Interview 2).
Noddings’ (1984, 2002, 2005a) four components of moral education from an ethic of care perspective (modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation) were used to organize the analysis of data about the study participants’ experiences with others. First, the participants modeled care by demonstrating caring behaviours for the other students at the leadership development programs. Through this role of mentoring younger students and working with peers at the leadership development programs, the participants experienced meaningful dialogue. The participants practiced the act of caring through their encouragement of their peers and younger program participants. There was an identifiable confirmation of the participants’ care through new and stronger friendships formed. The participants explored their roles as leaders through their relationships with other students in the leadership development programs. In the next section, the participants’ understanding of the nature of leadership and the ways to demonstrate good leadership are examined.

**Leadership**

This study revealed the participants’ opinions of leadership through discussing their role as student leaders in leadership development programs. The participants entered the study with different levels of leadership experience and knowledge. As described in the participant profiles in Chapter Three, the participants’ previous leadership experience includes active membership in additional volunteer groups at Parklands High School. During the Willow Winds and Girls for Change leader training sessions, the leaders were presented with
expectations of the leaders in their role. First, the student leaders were expected to continually have positive attitudes and motivate the younger students to try new activities. Also, the student leaders were told by the Willow Winds and Girls for Change executive teams to be attuned to the needs of the younger students in the program. This was described as being exceptionally friendly to someone who seems left out of the group interactions or is not fully engaged in the group activity.

A second expectation for the leaders was that they serve as effective facilitators of games and activities. This was reinforced through the Willow Winds and Girls for Change leadership training manuals that were written by the student executive team and given to each leader during program training. Detailed instructions for the back-pocket games that the leaders could play with their group were included in each manual. A back-pocket game is a short activity that requires little to no equipment, minimal instructions and can be played with a group in an open space. These games are usually used to keep people engaged in playful and positive interactions during brief transition times between activities.

Content in the leadership manuals reinforced the executive teams’ third expectation of leaders as to serve as emotional counselors to younger students in the programs. For example, there was the list of “camper types” that were accompanied by cartoon diagrams. Next to the pictures of the “homesick” or “angry” camper were descriptions of counseling techniques or verbal phrases a leader could employ to help the younger student with his or her issues.
The expectations of the leaders presented at the leadership development programs’ training sessions forms an image of a good leader. The image of a good leader presented is similar to a fun and talented older sibling. In terms of fun, a good leader was presented as being the most enthusiastic participant in any group. Leaders were expected to be eager to try new activities and make friends with all the members of their group. Also, leaders were expected to be outgoing and readily share their personal experiences with their group as a way to personally connect with others.

The talented aspect of the image of a good leader presented to the student leaders during training refers to the expectation that the leaders have expert knowledge in the programs’ activities. The leaders were expected to know how to play the games and provide instructions for the challenging physical activities, like rock climbing or canoeing. A component of expert knowledge is an understanding of the risks associated with each activity. Good leaders were expected to monitor the safety of the activities and encourage the group members to participant in activities that were known to be safe.

The image of a good leader presented to the student leaders has a level of familiarity and companionship that is comparable to an older sibling. The leaders were expected to behave like family members by comforting group members during times of distress. The leaders were also expected to make all the group members feel included in the group, like part of a family of peers, during the
Willow Winds retreat and Girls for Change sleepover. In this way, a good leader is the image of an older sibling for the younger members of the group.

The participants in this study all received similar instructions in their training to become student leaders in the Willow Winds and Girls for Change leadership development programs, however their personal views on leadership were varied. This section first identifies a selection of the participants’ definitions of respectful leadership. This is followed by an exploration of leadership of groups. The data is organized into different modes of leadership of groups as described by the participants. These modes include leaders who facilitate from a position inside a peer group versus leaders who direct from a position outside a peer group.

**Respectful leadership**

In the participants’ descriptions of leadership, there was the recurrent concept that leaders need to demonstrate respect towards others. Jenny addressed this notion of respectful leadership when asked to define good leadership. She believed good leadership is as follows:

> Being democratic. It doesn’t mean that everyone has to agree, but at least the majority. And trying to make everybody happy. But of course you can’t make everyone happy including yourself. So if I want to do something but no one else in the group wants to do it then I have to put my own personal interests aside and do the best for everyone else (Jenny, Interview 2).

She then elaborated on her definition by using an example of a negative experience with a leader of Parklands High School’s Free the Children organization. Jenny said:
Well actually since I have been experiencing different types of leaders in the various clubs that I go to. Some of the leadership is kinda questionable, in some of the clubs some of the leaders are kinda too lax and they talk really quietly and it doesn’t seem like they have any authority, while other leaders are a bit too much authority. She likes to use that and kick people out of the club. Bossing people around and “guys shut up!” I think that is a little bit rude, even though she laughs about it afterwards. I don’t really condone this behaviour, I don’t really like you. You have to find a balance between knowing them and being one with them. I also think that it’s really important that you don’t overuse that authority (Jenny, Interview 2).

From this negative experience, Jenny was able to identify the qualities and behaviours she believes good leaders possess. Jenny believes that leaders should balance respect for the opinions of others with a productive management of the organization. Rena also described good leaders as being respectful of the opinions of others. She gave advice for new leaders:

To accept all ideas and to maintain energy all throughout the time and not just at the beginning. To take charge and not to be afraid of using your voice if need me. You need to be empathetic and understand how other people are feeling as well. They have to be caring and be willing to communicate with everyone who is there. And they have to keep in mind that everyone who is there has different abilities. So they have to balance everything out and make sure that everyone is on the same playing field and they need to make sure that they are paying attention to everyone’s talents so they can make them shine out and use them. Because being a leader doesn’t mean you are taking control of everything. It means you are helping everyone else get to the same place you want the whole group to go to (Rena, Interview 2).

Overall, the participants described a respectful leader as a leader who values the opinions of others. Also, a respectful leader treats everyone as an equal regardless of differences in age or levels of experience.

In literature for business management, leadership styles are described as combination of task-orientation and relationship-orientation (Reddin, 1988).
Leaders who are task-oriented place the focus on obtaining results (Reddin, 1988). Leaders who are relationship-oriented focus on the team and support the team members to use their talents to obtain results (Reddin, 1988). The participants in this study described effective leaders by the respect they demonstrated to their group members. Therefore, the participants’ description of effective leadership aligns with a relationship-orientation to leadership. The variety of ways the participants experienced a relationship-orientation to leadership of a group of their peers is described in the next section.

**Leadership of groups**

The students recognized the flexibility of effective leaders who readily form relationships with the diverse members of a group. Jenny explained the need of leaders to balance roles in the group to establish a productive group dynamic.

She said:

I didn’t do a lot of extracurricular activities last year so this is kinda my first exposure to working with everyone else in a kinda team setting. You work both as a leader and as a team. With the sleepover you are leader but under a team and you are a leader towards the girls... You have to kinda learn how to balance that and learn when you are the one being lead and the one who is the leader (Jenny, Interview 2).

Vijay also recognized the importance for leaders to balance their approach to leadership of a group. Vijay expressed admiration for Jamie (pseudonym), one of the Willow Winds executive team members, who adjusted his style of leadership during the program to best suit the situation. Vijay describes this balance of leadership he observed:
For me you are very formal in an organization and you have regulations that go with it. Or you are not formal and you handle the situation and what comes with it. I thought Jamie was very unique in the way he handled the situation by combining both. At one time he was very friendly with everyone but at the same time he made sure that things got done. He was friendly, but he could still take on that more formal role and tell everyone to get stuff done. I thought that was an effective way to handle it and it surprised me because I had not seen him in that capacity. It was great to know he had that side of him (Vijay, Interview 1).

In the interview two months later, Vijay shared his first hand experience of the importance of embracing different forms of leadership in his own activities. Vijay shared that he usually likes to lead a group alongside his group members. In other words, he does not like to differentiate himself as the leader of the group. He detailed a recent experience when he had to step outside of his leader position inside the group to a leader position outside the group in order to be most effective as a leader. Vijay said:

How I treat my involvement is I like to stay in the background and I do what I do because I like to do it and I believe in the cause. I think my view for some reason was that if I come to the forefront than I would somehow be doing it for the looks or the show instead of the actual cause. But then through a lot of different experiences I came to realize that coming to forefront is not just about the show. It can be about both because you do have to show what you are doing to get other people to acknowledge it. Because unfortunately if you only stay in the background you won’t get recognized (Vijay, Interview 2).

Vijay admitted that he usually likes to stay in the background of a group and to support the organizational effort without necessarily receiving credit for his efforts. I have always known Vijay to be a very humble person and his leadership style is consistent of my previous experience working with Vijay in volunteer organizations.
The descriptions of leadership of a group in the data are organized for this analysis into two different positions of the leader relative to the other group members. First, Vijay’s leadership of a group by serving alongside his group members is described as leadership from within a group. Leadership within a group was identified in the study data as descriptions of a leader facilitating a group from a place of equality with other members of the group. The alternative to leadership inside a group is defined for this study as leadership from outside a group. For example, when Vijay takes control over the direction of a group, he is leading from outside the group. As a leader from outside the group, he decides on the strategy for the group, makes decisions and delegates tasks to the group members. The data presented in this section are evidence of how the participants understood effective leadership of groups.

The study data show leading through group facilitation can occur while the leader is an integrated member of the group. When working in groups towards a common goal, the participants identified times when not being in charge of the direction of the group would be appropriate. Jenny explained that a student who has had prior experience with the activity often fills the leader role. When she was asked how she planned to improve her leadership skills this year, Jenny said:

I guess leading opportunities- I didn’t really take them. When you are in clubs I feel like seniority is kinda a thing. On the clubs I joined this year I kinda hesitated taking on a leader position from people who have been in the club for a year (Jenny, Interview 2).
Although Jenny felt she was not in a leadership role because she did not hold the title of leader of the group, I observed her ability to lead a group from inside while in the role of a peer group leader at the Girls for Change sleepover. For example, during the sleepover I toured through the school with Jenny and her group as they competed in the scavenger hunt. The students received a written clue with a riddle. The answer to the riddle was a location in the school that held the next clue. The students had to travel as a group between the locations, and the first group to arrive at the last clue won the hunt. After Jenny’s group arrived at the finish and waited for instructions on the next activity, I recorded the following in my field notes as part of the observation record:

Jenny did not ever give the answer to her students or lead the way in the race. The group got lost trying to find the day-care office and wasted about 3 minutes running around the first floor of the school. She gave a hint that the arts office was next to the day-care office. Also, she had to tell the group that Parklands no longer had a football team, but used to. The students found the clue at the old team photos. One grade nine girl said she felt sick because of dinner and did not want to run between locations. Jenny walked with her at the back of the group instead of running ahead to the clues. The group finished second last in the hunt (Field Notes, Parklands High School, October 12, 2012, 8:45 pm).

Coincidently, Jenny spoke of this experience of leading the girls through the scavenger hunt when I asked her how she believed the girls at the sleepover would describe her as a leader:

Actually on the reevaluating myself as a leader on the scavenger hunt I know some of the leader girls would be telling them where to go! I just kinda didn’t say anything. If they wanted to run I would run with them, but if they got stuck I wouldn’t really say anything. My main role in that activity was to get the girls who got tired to keep urging on, but I would be like just a little bit more. That way I was more encouraging than leading. That was something that was worth more (Jenny, Interview 1).
Jenny noticed the value of leading the group from a position inside the group. Leadership inside the group involves encouraging the group to make their own decisions and find unique solutions. Adam also mentioned the importance of facilitating a group from a position inside the group instead of directing from outside the group. This was very insightful because, from my observations, Adam was generally a very directive leader. I never observed Adam using guided questions or providing opportunities for students to take the lead in an activity when he was present. Adam recognized this missing facilitative quality from his leadership. When I asked Adam what leadership skills he wished to work on this year, he said:

   Kinda want to learn to take a step back and let others take control. Kinda laissez faire. I remember that is what you have, I am here to help if you need but I prefer to sit back. That would be the thing (Adam, Interview 2).

The data show that the likeability of a leader helps them to facilitate group activities. Adam demonstrated his likeability during one of the field observation periods at Willow Winds. After completing a 30-minute hike through the woods, Adam and the group rested at a fire pit near the lake. It was raining heavily at this moment and so the students took shelter under the pine tree that surrounded the fire pit. The hike was not long, but some students looked very tired and all were cold and wet. The following is an excerpt from my observation record that I wrote while sitting with the group at the fire pit:

   Adam tells a story of the time while on a canoe trip with his camp, it rained so hard at night that they woke up in a pool of water at the bottom of the tent. Then, two female students are complaining of how all their clothes
are wet (they were not wearing rain jackets). Adam stands up and begins hunting the underbrush for appropriate sticks that can be used to spread out clothes and layout over smoke of fire we will have as a camp later that evening. He explains they used to do this all the time at camp on canoe trips. I am doubtful that the girls will follow through with this plan, but they seem flattered by the attention from Adam. The kids are all laughing about other things they could smoke over the fire (Field Notes, Willow Winds retreat hiking trail, September 16, 2012, 10:40 am).

Adam recognized the importance of likability for good leadership. He demonstrated this knowledge because as part of the Willow Winds executive team, he sought likable people in the peer leaders he selected. He described what he looked for in his peers when interviewing potential leaders:

One big thing was they were able to relate the kids and have the kids look up to them and be good examples for them. This is how you should be and you should strive for this. The people we picked are not only capable but really cool to be around and fun people (Adam, Interview 2).

A good leader for Ruben was the manifestation of a friendly, caring facilitator. He described the approaches to leadership he admired in others:

A good leader must never dictate. He or she should always make the people under them or the people who follow them... he or she should always get down on their level and be likeable. Because people will follow someone who is likeable even if they don't have incentives more than people who don't like the leader and are followed only because they have incentive. I guess I would work more on my patience as a leader because sometimes it gets frustrating (Ruben, Interview 2).

In addition to being well liked in the group, the participants believed a leader must also be able to socially connect with all the group members. Both Rena and Sara spoke about the importance of being friendly with the younger students in the group. Rena described being friendly as the way she addresses different personality types in a group:
I used to do a lot of leadership things in general and outside of school and this year. I think from the sleepover the biggest thing I have probably gained with regards to my leadership skills is how to differentiate how you are going to talk to one person versus another person. You don’t want to make it extremely obvious so they feel uncomfortable about it, but you learn to talk to girls who are really quiet compared to girls who are really outgoing. Girls that may not be comfortable with who they are. You work to make sure everyone is on the same base even if they are not on the same base (Rena, Interview 2).

Sara was sensitive to the amount of energy she exhibited to her group. She believed leaders should match the energy of the group members in order to effectively be integrated and lead from inside the group. She said:

I was like too excited and like “hello guys” but then later I had to remember that I am still an adolescent and only a year older than them. Some of them were scared to jump in, not that they might have been scared to jump in, but I was too forward. I was like, “hey guys jump in” and I think people like need their own time so when I like drop down and make the same kind of jokes as them for example and they get it then they are like, “oh- she’s the same. Alright.” (Sara, Interview 1).

One way the participants described effective leaders was by serving as the group facilitator alongside their group members. Alternatively, the participants described good leadership from a more directive position outside the group. A leader outside the group has role with more responsibility compared to other group members. The participants described the importance of many character traits and behaviours that would help leaders to be effective from the directive position outside the group. As with a leader from inside a group, a leader positioned outside the group needs to be likable and express genuine kindness to effectively make relationships with group members in order to lead
the group. Vijay described the importance of kindness and respect for a leader who will delegate tasks to members of a group. He said:

One of the most underrated things, and this is interesting because I was talking to someone about this yesterday, the most underrated skills for a leader to have is just being nice. A lot of people when they are in a leadership role tend to forget that they are leading people. People with their own thoughts, backgrounds and experiences. A lot of people in leadership positions, I have seen in my life, operate as if all the people they are leading are robots. They are all about efficiency and getting the work done and it is not about the psychology and the motivation of what is behind it. I think being nice and open to suggestions, to criticisms and to ideas, and generally being more available to communicate with are the most essential things in any leadership position. If you are just telling people what to do and that is all they are doing, then they won’t be motivated to do anything. I think this is one of the things I am better at. It’s because it’s one of the things I have realized is important and something that I do. I think one of my flaws or skills I need to work on is how to allocate tasks. All of the things that I am involved in are things that I personally believe in and have personally supported for a long time. They are deep rooted in my belief system and I am very passionate in everything that I do so I kind have that tendency to get more involved than I should and that takes away from an opportunity to do other things. There is also the fact that if I am taking on too much the people that I am supposed to be leading or helping are not doing as much. Then there is that feeling of disengagement and the feeling of not wanting to help because they don’t have as much to do on their own. I have the problem that even though I may not be doing that task I have a very specific image of how I want it to go. I do have a tendency of when I pass it on to someone else, even if I allocate them to do I will tell them how to do it. That is not really something you should do because if you tell them how to do it, they are essentially just doing what you tell them to do. Instead of supporting their thought processes. I need to learn that balance and do what I need to do while allocating to get more efficiency. This way the people that I am working with have a chance to practice their leadership skills. If they don’t have the autonomy, then they don’t care. When you have autonomy then it’s an intrinsic motivator. You have the opposite which is dumping it on people. That’s not exactly helpful either so you need to find the balance between the two (Vijay, Interview 2).

A leader outside the group can make decisions for the course of action of the group. In the participants’ descriptions of good leadership, this vision of an
effective directive leader emerged. Rena described the ability to control other students as a desirable leadership skill. She said:

> Another leadership thing I hope to work on is controlling older students as well, not just younger students. Sometimes you are the leader of a group. Sometimes this doesn't happen. But, in cases where it does I would like to know how to better lead in that situation (Rena, Interview 2).

Sara believed that good leaders could make decisions and convince others to adhere to those decisions. She spoke of a situation where the leader helped to keep all the group members safe as an example of a quality of a good leader. She said:

> I think maturity is really important. It is hard to find people who are going to say stop. When we went caroling for Free the Children it's good to be really loud. But you have to be like, “it’s getting dark now you should go home” or “we aren’t going to go down this street” (Sara, Interview 2).

Jenny also described leadership from a position of giving directions and good leadership as the ability to lead a group of people through physical activities. Jenny explained what she believed her role was in the Girls for Change sleepover as, “I'm tempted to say the pied piper. As a leader you are leading everyone around and you are like oh, we are going to have dinner here and it’s like how the pied piper would lead people” (Jenny, Interview 2). Along with the three female participants, Vijay also found that being assertive and clearly stating one’s opinions is an effective leadership tool. He described a quality of a good leader:

> Just for today, speaking up. Because through my commitments in organizations within the school, I am in a leadership position and I have decided to not speak up against certain issues. But today I did speak out
against issues and I found not only did it lead to self-satisfaction, but a better result (Vijay, Interview 1).

Vijay recognized that sometimes a more directive approach to leadership could lead to a positive outcome for the group. Jenny also described feeling challenged in being directive, but still respectful to other students. She said:

I have kinda reevaluated myself as a leader. It’s kinda different leading in a group. Like in class everyone is kinda like an equal so like leadership is a lot less totalitarian. So um... like... sometimes when you are leading girls younger than you, you kinda feel superior and that’s something that shouldn’t really happen. You should be giving them direction, but you shouldn’t be above them. You shouldn’t be condescending and you shouldn’t be thinking of the lesson. Sometimes I would get that but I would think, “ok, stop Jenny. They are capable of doing things themselves and I shouldn’t try to push them” (Jenny, Interview 1).

The participants believed leaders who direct groups from outside the group are held to higher standards of personal behaviour. Vijay described this expectation for a higher standard of behaviour for those who act role models for younger students. He warned:

You can’t just do whatever you want, but you are a role model for the campers and the actions and decisions that you take will have an influence on the campers you are leading. Realize that you are the same person and being a leader is part of your character but you are also separate from it. Form an image of a role model that you look up to and then fill that role; you need to fill those shoes (Vijay, Interview 1).

The participants believed effective leaders of groups sacrifice their own experience and well being to provide a positive experience for their group members. This sacrifice is an example of how the students believed leaders were held to a higher standard of behaviour. Adam described prioritizing the needs of others as important for good leadership:
Really put others before them. Make sure that the greater community is in the best possible state before you get yourself. Sacrificing is good and if you give something up to give to others it will be more rewarding for you so don’t be afraid to give something because it is going to be returned (Adam, Interview 2).

To reiterate his views of the importance for leaders to serve the needs of others, later in the same interview Adam said:

I didn’t mind if I had to look bad. You always have to show you care. I made sure that my team knew that if there were problems they could come to me and I would make sure they got dealt with. Putting myself aside and focus on the team to make sure we are fine and that everyone can keep going on their task. If you have one moment that is kinda off then you can focus on the greater scheme and that will make everyone’s job easier and run smoother (Adam, Interview 2).

At the Willow Winds retreat, I observed Vijay placing the needs of the younger campers in his group ahead of his own. While I was sitting by the shore of the lake, observing Ruben give canoeing instructions to a group of students, Vijay walked over with one of his campers and greeted me. Vijay and the grade nine male camper were supposed to be hiking during that time, but the camper said he had a sore back. My past experience as a caregiver for youth led me to believe that this camper did not actually have a sore back, but just needed some time away from the group. I believe for a lot of students, their time at the Willow Winds retreat can feel physically and emotionally overwhelming. I wrote the following observations in my field notes:

Vijay and young male camper have come over and sat on grass beside me. They are watching as the students load into the canoes. They tell me camper had a sore back so they are not going on the hike. Vijay asks camper about his classes and they discuss teachers. Vijay is demonstrating selfless behaviour and is sensitive to the needs of the
At the time I wrote the observation, I interpreted Vijay’s behaviour as being sensitive to the needs of the younger students in his group. This interpretation is based on the fact that Vijay did not have a chance to experience the hike with his group and would not have another opportunity at Willow Winds to do so. From my experience, the peer group leaders enjoy the variety of activities at Willow Winds just as much as the younger students. Also, Vijay did not take the student to see the Willow Winds nurse. Instead, Vijay engaged the student in a conversation unrelated to the camper’s complaint of a sore back. I interpreted this gesture as Vijay’s recognition that the camper primarily needed time away from the rest of the group and not medical attention. Therefore, Vijay acted to support the student in his care, even at the cost of his own outdoor adventure experience. Sara also believed that leaders should sacrifice their experience for the sake of the grade nine students at the sleepover and admired those that did so. She recounted her fellow leader’s actions:

I know when it was cozy time or pre-cozy time all the leaders went into their little groups, I guess cause it is more comfortable that way. But there were a few leaders who mingled and specifically they were really good leaders. First they spread away from their group and went to the grade nines and learned more about them. There was Janet and Rena. They stood out to me during cozy time. There were some people in a group taking pictures together and then there were two or three leaders talking to the grade nines so that was really good (Sara, Interview 1).

Adam’s description of effective leadership of groups includes a leader’s position from inside and outside the group. First, Adam spoke of his role as the
Activities Coordinator at Willow Winds as leading from outside the group because he gave specific directions through the training process to the activity leaders. He believed the activity leaders used their training at Willow Winds retreat and this helped them to feel confident in their leadership role. He said:

A lot of it was through the training and helping them get confident with the how to stuff. A lot of that was helpful because they knew what they had to do and what they had to cover. I saw that after they had done it a few times that confidence started to build up and then the energy goes up with the confidence and then everyone goes up with them. When one person steps up and gets to a certain level then everyone kinda steps up with them. It’s kinda a ladder (Adam, Interview 1).

Adam also spoke of a feeling more aware of his leadership capabilities after his time in the Willow Winds program. He believed his experience leading from inside a group helped him to form relationships with the other students in the program. It was the relationships that Adam believed helped him realize his abilities as a leader. Adam explained how he felt after the completion of the Willow Winds program. He said:

After I got back home I had some time to like reflect on the trip and think over it and I realized what sort of great relationships I was able to make with especially leaders because we were similar age and able to work together for so long. And even after campers who stepped out we were able to work together and bond I guess. And through those relationships it’s kinda given me better social communication skills. I’m really able to talk to people in a different way and able to have a different view on the way everyone works. That was actually really cool for me. Usually I am really hard-core and now I can take a step back and really be inclusive of the views of others. Usually, I am balls to the walls. Now I can take a step back and take in everyone’s point of view and accommodate it as much as possible to get the best result (Adam, Interview 1).

The participants’ descriptions of leadership of groups help to clarify their perspectives of good leadership. The students’ perspectives of leadership that
emerged from the data are part of a larger discussion on the students' understanding of leadership in the next chapter.

Chapter Summary

The data from this study are categorized as information relating to the participants' perspectives about self, others and leadership. The participants spoke about the leadership development programs in relation to their self-confidence and their self-efficacy. The participants demonstrated and reported experiencing relationships with others that fit into the framework of Noddings' (1984, 2002, 2005a) four components for moral education from an ethic of care perspective. The data provided examples of participants modeling caring behaviours for the younger students. Also, the participants' experiences of meaningful dialogue with their peers were detailed. The participants' reports of opportunities to practice the act of caring as leaders was presented. Finally, the confirmation of caring relationships was detailed with the participants' friendships with other students in the leadership development programs. The last section of this chapter began with the participants' identification of respectful leadership. The participants' description of leadership of groups was presented as leaders in a position inside and outside a group.

Although the data were compartmentalized in the self, others and leadership for this analysis, student responses apply to all the categories that were found in the data. For example, Adam's last quote of the previous section was a reflection made during his first interview of his time at Willow Winds. This
reflection includes a description of his beliefs in his own abilities, his newly formed relationships with other students and his understanding of good leadership. Adams’ statement intersects all the categories of data analysis examined in this chapter and is only one example of evidence that there are themes that run through all of the data.

In the next chapter, the three central themes that emerged from the findings are discussed. Notably, these themes reflect the categories used in the data analysis. The first theme is that the participants experienced many revelations in their sense of self and were learning to act upon these newly discovered abilities and strengths. Second, the student leaders who participated in the Willow Winds and Girls for Change leadership development programs highly valued their relationships with their peers. Also, that the peer relationships were fostered during the leadership development programs. The third and final theme is that the participants believed good student leaders can be identified by their caring behaviours.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter explores three overarching themes that weave through the student participants’ perspectives of themselves, their relationships to their peers and the nature of good leadership. The themes represent the conclusions made in this study about the student experience in the leadership development programs. The themes parallel the arrangement of the study findings in the previous chapter, but more distinctly describe the student experience in the leadership development programs in this study. The first theme involves the participants’ revelations in their attitudes towards themselves. The participants cited their experience as peer leaders in a leadership development program as contributing to changes in how they felt about themselves. The second theme was the importance of peer relationships for the student leaders in this study. The participants believed that during the leadership development programs they were able to make new friendships and strengthen friendships that existed for the participants before they began the program. Finally, the third theme is grounded in the participants’ beliefs of leadership and their understanding of themselves in a leadership role. What is apparent from the analysis of the findings is that the participants believe good leaders exhibit caring behaviour towards those they are leading. Ultimately, each theme forms a section for discussion in this chapter and is supported by examples from the data that were previously presented in
Chapter Four with connections to the academic literature. This chapter concludes with a summary of each study participant’s experience in the leadership development program in terms of their understanding of their leadership abilities, their relationships with others and their views of good leadership.

**Student Leaders Experience Changes in Attitudes Towards Themselves**

This section outlines the participants’ reflections of their experience as leaders in a leadership development program and their attitudes towards themselves as leaders. The reflections revealed the participants’ understanding of their personal abilities. The participants’ recognition of their own abilities is explored first in this section. Through the interviews, the participants reflected on their experiences as leaders and the performance of their peers as leaders. For the purpose of this study, this reflection is considered an informal process of assessment. The value of reflecting on personal experiences to understand more about oneself as found in the academic literature is also presented in the section. Specific examples of the participants’ reviews of their peers’ leadership and their own leadership are also presented.

Next addressed in this section are the participants’ comments on their feelings of self-confidence and belief in their own abilities. Evidence is also presented of changes of feelings of self-confidence for students in leadership development programs available in the literature. Finally, the participants’ actions in extracurricular activities that the participants believed were supported
by their feelings of confidence and belief in their abilities are explored. The participants’ actions are situated with literature that shows a connection between the belief in one’s personal abilities and taking risks.

**Understanding of personal abilities**

Reflection is a tool that can be used to help clarify a participant’s experience. Mainly, reflection is an experience that brings insight into the process of learning and can be a used as a form of assessment (Calderhead, 1987; Moon, 2005; Newman, 1991). In other studies, assessment has been found to provide a rich opportunity for learning for the person completing the assessment. Glover and Hoskyns (2006) completed a study of the evaluative practices of arts educators. They suggest it is necessary for educators as evaluators to first undergo a process of reflection and have a clear understanding of their own ideals before they can effectively evaluate others with the same criteria. Another advantage of conducting an assessment is that the process of assessment has been found to lead to better understanding of personal beliefs and capabilities for the evaluator (Parkison, 1987). This is because through the process of assessment, ideas are reaffirmed in the evaluator’s mind. This is similar to the positive influence of reflection on the process of learning that has been found for adults and teachers in training (Calderhead, 1987, 1992; Moon, 2005). Therefore, assessment in these studies was a reflective tool that helped people to better understand themselves.
In this study, the participants reflected on themselves as leaders in the leadership development programs. This reflection on leadership was recorded when the participants were invited to speculate how their friends, family and the students they led in the leadership development programs would accurately describe them. Also, the participants’ views of themselves as leaders were available in the participants’ descriptions of their peers as good leaders. There were examples in the data of the participants describing a desire to change their leadership behaviour to reflect their peers’ leadership behaviour. This was especially evident when the participants were asked to describe a peer leader they admired and outline the qualities that made the leader effective. In a description of Jamie, Vijay recognized the need to use a balanced approach to leadership in order to achieve the best result. One may be reminded of a selection of what Vijay said about Jamie:

At one time he was very friendly with everyone but at the same time he made sure that things got done. He was friendly but could still take on that more formal role and tell everyone to get stuff done (Vijay, Interview 1).

Vijay also clarified his belief of the importance of balance between facilitation and directive leadership styles in the development of his leadership. By the time of the second interview in early December, Vijay believed it was useful when altered his leadership style to take more control of the direction of one of his volunteer organizations. He realized there is an advantage to serving as the group’s spokesperson. He said:

How I treat my involvement is I like to stay in the background and I do what I do because I like to do it and I believe in the cause… I came to
realize that coming to forefront is not just about the show. It can be about both because you do have to show what you are doing to get other people to acknowledge it. Because unfortunately if you only stay in the background you won’t get recognized (Vijay, Interview 2).

Vijay recognized the skills of another leader and thus acknowledged his need for similar skills for success in his own leadership endeavours. Sara also reviewed the behaviour of other leaders and recognized the skills she shared with those leaders. In her description of leaders she admired at Girls for Change, she explained it was their sacrifice of their own experience for the sake of the grade nine girls’ experiences that convinced her they were good leaders. She said about Janet and Rena (the same Rena that is a participant in this study):

There were a few leaders who mingled and specifically they were really good leaders. First they spread away from their group and went to the grade nines and learned more about them (Sara, Interview 1).

In addition to recognizing sacrificing leadership behaviours in her peers, Sara recognized that she had this quality in her own leadership. She described one of her goals as a leader was to try to put the experiences of the grade nine students at the sleepover ahead of her own. She said, “So I tried to make sure that everyone kinda new each other” (Sara, Interview 2). In order to create a positive experience for the grade nine students, Sara forfeited opportunities to spend time with her friends who were also peer group leaders at the sleepover.

Recognizing agreeable leadership qualities in peers was not the only way the study participants expressed an understanding of their leadership abilities. Recognition of undesirable qualities of others also helped the participants to clarify desirable qualities for themselves. For example, Jenny had a negative
experience with the student leader of the Free to Children volunteer organization at Parklands High School. She identified the behaviour of this leader as aggressive and ineffective. Jenny explained:

She likes to use that and kick people out of the club. Bossing people around and “guys shut up!” I think that is a little bit rude... You have to find a balance between knowing them and being one with them. I also think that it’s really important that you don’t overuse that authority (Jenny, Interview 2).

As a leader at the Girls for Change sleepover, Jenny did not take on this authoritative persona that she disliked in the leader of the Free the Children volunteer organization. Instead, she facilitated the group in such a way that the grade nine girls could find their own success. Therefore, a practical example of how Jenny’s group thrived under her facilitative leadership was their success completing the scavenger hunt. Jenny understood her own leadership abilities through the contrast to approaches to leadership she did not agree with.

The participants were asked to reflect on their roles as leaders in the leadership development programs. Within their commentary is the participants’ identifications of leadership skills that they wanted to personally develop in future leadership roles. For example, Adam wanted to work on facilitating others by empowering others to control a group’s direction. In Adam’s words, he would like to behave in a way that conveys the following message: “I am here to help if you need but I prefer to sit back” (Adam, Interview 2). The participants’ identification of the skills they required suggests they understood the skills already possessed. Rena demonstrated she understood her own strengths and the skills she needed
to work on. She believed that she excels at being able to relate to different types of girls. She described this skill as, “how to differentiate how you are going to talk to one person versus another person… girls who are really quiet compared to girls who are really outgoing” (Rena, Interview 2). Rena’s ability to relate to girls with a variety of personalities did not go unnoticed by her peers. Sara reported in her interview, as mentioned previously in this section, that she observed Rena kindly conversing with girls during the cozy-time activity in the late hours of the sleepover. Rena also identified a skill that she wished to improve in her leadership. She said, “another leadership thing I hope to work on is controlling older students as well, not just younger students” (Rena, Interview 2). Although she used the word control, I believe she meant to lead a group of older students. My belief is grounded in Rena’s interview data where she repeatedly described herself as being motivated to make every student feel welcome and would be on the school’s theoretical “welcome committee” (Rena, Interview 2).

In addition to Rena, there were other examples of the participants’ understanding of their own leadership abilities. The participants were asked to describe how their friends, family and Willow Winds or Girls for Change students would write an assessment about them as leaders. Sara identified herself as a risk-taker. She said, “I know people can really admire the fact that I can kinda take risks. It makes me feel good” (Sara, Interview 1). Likewise, Rena believed she does not necessarily conform to social norms for girls her age. She thought the Girls for Change grade nine students would say she was, “out-there... really
outspoken and comfortable because girls were able to come up and communicate and feel okay speaking to me especially since it was the first time we met” (Rena, Interview 2).

It would be interesting to examine how closely the participants’ reflections of themselves as leaders matches an assessment completed by their peers. Unfortunately, this comparison of leadership assessments was not completed for this study. However, there is literature that documents correlations between self and peer-assessment. Turrentine (2001) conducted a study to evaluate the closeness of self and peer assessment of leadership skills with students living on two floors of a university residence building. The students were asked to assign a number value to different aspects of their leadership practice such as their ability to resolve conflicts or conduct a meeting. Then they completed the same survey to assess other students on their floor. The values of the peer-assessments matched, within a 95% confidence level, the self-assessments in 83% of cases. Further, an analysis comparing 48 peer-assessment studies at higher education institutes found that self-assessments closely matched assessments made by faculty in academic courses and projects (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). Also, students were found to make accurate self-assessments and peer-assessments for academic abilities such as writing lab reports (Stefani, 1994). Therefore for this study, the participants’ assessment of the leadership abilities of their peers and their predictions of peers’ assessment of their
leadership reveals the participants’ understanding of their personal leadership abilities.

**Feelings of confidence and belief in personal abilities**

In general, this study found that the student participants were surprised by their success as leaders in the leadership development programs. They shared their feelings of self-confidence and believed that they would be successful at other tasks. For example, Ruben was impressed that he could speak in front of others at Willow Winds. He said, “I am more confident speaking in front of a group of peers because grade nines, despite the fact that they are two years younger they are still pretty much peers” (Ruben, Interview 1). Although Ruben was surprised by his confidence, he accepted his talent of speaking in front of others. Jenny was also surprised by the amount of energy she had at the Girls for Change sleepover. One is reminded that she said, “I guess I was trying really hard to be extroverted for that day to make everyone feel included so I guess I would be pretty surprised about that” (Jenny, Interview 2). Similarly, Vijay was taken aback by his extroverted behaviour. He described a time when he was dancing in a group cheer-off at the Willow Winds retreat and how these actions were inconsistent with his regular character at school. This surprising behaviour for Ruben, Jenny and Vijay at the leadership development programs is an example of how the participants felt confident.

In the literature, feelings of confidence for adolescents in leadership development programs were reported for the adolescents after completion of the
programs. Whittington (2006) describes a phenomenon of adolescent girls being surprised by their physical capabilities and leadership skills during a canoe expedition. The girls in the study reported that after the expedition they felt more confident sharing their opinions in a group of their peers (Whittington, 2006). In a study with student athletes, students were surprised by the respect and cooperation they received from their peers when in a leadership role (Holt & Tink, 2008). The students believed the leadership and teamwork skills transferred to other aspects of their lives (Holt & Tink, 2008).

Two of the participants, Adam and Sara, reported feeling confident in their abilities as leaders. In Adam’s case, he believed he had strength for solving problems. He said, “I feel better and stronger and I do have a lot more confidence going forward and tackling new tasks I do feel better” (Adam, Interview 2). He believed his feeling of confidence in solving problems helped him in his role as the Activities Coordinator in the Willow Winds program. Adam said, “I guess one thing would be being able to react to new situations being thrown at me” (Adam, Interview 1). There is additional evidence that Adam felt confident and believed in his personal leadership abilities. Adam described himself as the judge of the Willow Winds program if it was transformed into a small town. This declaration of being the community judge is an example of Adam felt he capable of holding a leadership position among his peers.

Sara also felt confident in her leadership abilities. Specifically, Sara felt confident when she looked at the positive comments her peers at the sleepover
had written about her on her Girls for Change souvenir t-shirt. Those comments would not have been available unless she was regarded as an excellent Girls for Change peer group leader by the grade nine girls. My six years of teaching grade nine students and supervising the sleepover has taught me that grade nine girls can be ruthlessly honest in their comments about the leaders at the sleepover. I believe Sara’s large number of positive comments from the younger students suggest Sara was a well-liked and good leader to her group. For Sara, the confidence she reported to feel when reading the positive grade nine comments on her t-shirt was consistent with her confidence in her leadership abilities. Sara’s belief in her personal abilities was evident in the statement she made about her role at school. Sara declared that she thought of herself as the mayor of the school community. She explained why she thought she could be the mayor: “Because I really feel like if there is something bigger to do, why can’t I do it? I am always looking for the next step to things” (Sara, Interview 2). Further, the following reflection from Sara suggests that she believed in her abilities as a leader:

I feel like my ability to become a leader has changed. I would say I have always liked leadership roles, but in this the teachers were supervising, but we had the core of it right? So this one gave me more of a push (Sara, Interview 2).

Sara’s belief in her success as a leader at the Girls for Change sleepover was reflected in her description of feeling confident in her leadership abilities.

There are other research studies that measured leadership development programs participants’ perceptions of themselves that support the findings in this
study. Muno and Keenan (2000), in a study of an after school program for adolescent girls, found when the girls had autonomy and authority to make decisions for the direction of their community outreach program, they experienced an increase in self-confidence. Also, female university students reported an increase in self-confidence after completing a series of motivational seminars in a leadership development program (Jennings, 2009). In this study, the participants believed their feelings of confidence in their leadership abilities helped them in their search for new leadership opportunities. The next section explores the participants’ goals and plans to take on new extracurricular volunteer leadership roles.

**Plans for future actions and leadership roles**

The data showed the participants’ belief that the confidence they felt in their leadership abilities supports their future academic and extracurricular endeavours. The endeavours are shaped by the goals the participants set for themselves. Sara admitted she was a master at setting goals. She explained that she writes goals in her day planner and often goes to the guidance office to confirm she is on the right track to achieving her goals. She explained the justification for her drive was her belief in the following ideology: “I think what I give is what I get back” (Sara, Interview 2). Sara’s desire to set goals is consistent with the academic literature on student motivation. Students with high self-efficacy were found to construct more challenging goals compared to students with lower self-efficacy (Schunk, 1990). As students find success
reaching their goals, they increase in their self-efficacy and are motivated to make new and more difficult goals (Schunk, 1990, 2003). Further, people generally work harder to attain more challenging goals they set for themselves, given that the goals are reasonably attainable for the individuals (Boekaerts, 1999; Latham & Locke, 1991; Locke & Latham, 1994; Zimmerman, 2002). This goal setting strategy is a way for students to self-regulate their learning and is the first step for many students in an educational journey (Boekaerts, 1999).

The participants in this study articulated that setting goals is an important part of their plan for the school year. Vijay shared his dream of attending an American university. From my teaching experience, this is common goal for the top students at Parklands High School who view academic success as admission to one of the “ivy-league schools” in the United States or England. As mentioned previously in the participants’ profiles in Chapter Three, Vijay is the coordinator of the two largest volunteer organizations at Parklands High School: the Environmental Council and Free the Children. Vijay shared his vision for each of his volunteer organization’s yearlong projects. He believes his self-confidence is a motivator to keep him working when his organizations’ projects did not meet his planned targets. He said, “Do I find I am at the same schedule as I thought I would be? No. But at the same time I am optimistic and I have the self-confidence I have built up” (Vijay, Interview 2). Vijay’s self-confidence is evident his belief that he will accomplish his plans for his volunteer organizations.
The participants described how their feelings of self-confidence related to their actions in extracurricular opportunities beyond the leadership development programs in this study. For example, Vijay took a stance on an issue during a meeting in one his Parklands High School volunteer organizations. He described the positive result of his insistence on the issue: “Today I did speak out against issues and I found not only did it lead to self-satisfaction, but a better result” (Vijay, Interview 1). Jenny shared in her second interview that she was impressed by her ability to be more outgoing at the Girls for Change Sleepover. She said, “I guess I was trying really hard to be extroverted for that day to make everyone feel included” (Jenny, Interview 2). Jenny’s belief that she could succeed in new social settings was also part of her description of joining in new clubs at Parklands High School. Despite Jenny having joined new clubs, she expressed hesitancy in taking a leadership position within the clubs. She said, “On the clubs I joined this year I kinda hesitated taking on a leader position from people who have been in the club for a year” (Jenny, Interview 2). Jenny explained her lack of interest in the club’s leadership position was because she did not feel she was old enough, as a grade 10 student, to hold leadership positions in the clubs at Parklands High School. For Jenny and Vijay, their feelings of self-confidence were expressed differently in their leadership positions in Parklands High School volunteer organizations.

Two of the study participants specifically mentioned seeking leadership opportunities outside of Parklands High School. Vijay spoke about speaking at
conference about his approach to volunteerism. He said, “It was great getting an invitation for another talk… so… that really gave me some self-confidence” (Vijay, Interview 2). Also, Adam explained he felt courage to start applying for part-time jobs because of his experience in the Willow Winds program. Adam said, “I feel better and stronger and I do have a lot more confidence going forward and tackling new tasks I do feel better” (Adam, Interview 2). Further, he explained that he used his experience as the Activities Coordinator to answer scenario-based questions during job interviews. The academic literature suggests that Adam’s ability to take risks, such as seeking new job opportunities, is a reflection of his beliefs in his own abilities as a leader. In a research study examining the decision making process for business executives, individuals who had more confidence in their decisions took greater professional risks (Krueger & Dickson, 1994). These risks include finding new roles and opportunities for leadership. Further, studies of students who completed a leadership development program and reported an increase in self-confidence more actively sought out new opportunities to volunteer in their community (Jennings, 2009; Muno & Keenan, 2000).

In this study, the participants demonstrated an understanding of their personal abilities as leaders. The participants described feeling confident in their leadership abilities. Also, the participants shared their plans for future leadership endeavours. The findings from this study are not exclusive to participants’ interpersonal relationships. The relationships between the participants as
leaders in the leadership development programs and their peers were part of the study’s findings. In the next section of this chapter, the student leaders’ descriptions of the importance of their peer relationships are explored.

**Student Leaders Value Peer Relationships**

The participants in this study emphasized their relationships with their peers in their descriptions of their experience as leaders in the leadership development programs. The data includes the relational experiences of the study participants during the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs. Also, in the data are the participants’ descriptions of new peer relationships that have continued until the time of the second study interview, approximately two months after completion of the leadership development programs. This section begins with a presentation of the types of relationships the participants mentioned in their descriptions of their experience in the leadership development programs. The relationships include mentorships between older and younger students, as well as friendships between adolescents of the same age. Next, the participants’ descriptions of the connections between peer relationships and their experience in the leadership development programs are explored. The participants believed they made new friends, became closer friends with pre-existing friends and maintained new friendships after the completion of the leadership development programs.

The participants suggested the structure of the leadership development programs was important to their peer relationships. The structure of the
programs refers to the isolated locations, timeframes and types of activities at Willow Winds retreat and Girls for Change sleepover. This section concludes with a discussion of the research literature of adolescent peer relationships and adolescents’ experiences in peer groups in leadership development programs.

**Types of relationships**

The participants spoke primarily of relationships with other students during their interviews. There was little mention of relationships with their family or the Parklands High School staff. The two general types of relationships that emerged for the participants were relationships with other students of the same age and with younger students at Parklands High. The participants referred to the students of their same age as friends, but spoke about their relationships with younger students differently. The language used in the participants’ responses suggests that they believed they were in a mentorship relationship with the younger students. This belief is consistent with the training the participants received as leaders in the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs. In training, they were encouraged to serve as positive mentors to the younger students. The participants believed this role continued after the completion of the leadership development programs. Henry (2009) found that mentorship relationships can grow over several years, and that both parties benefit from the lasting relationships. For example, mentorship relationships between students and university faculty have been found to provide the students guidance and support and provide the faculty feedback and job satisfaction (Hughes, 2010).
The participants spoke of their roles as mentors for younger students. While at Willow Winds, Vijay offered advice to a student who was struggling emotionally and helped him through a tough time. Vijay recalled the following:

I got this opportunity to sit down and talk to him during this very critical time for him, where he was close to tears. Personally I found it really rewarding because I got feedback from not him, but his friends who thanked me for talking to him and said he really appreciated me talking to him (Vijay, Interview 1).

After Willow Winds, Vijay believed he still acted as a mentor to younger students he had met at Willow Winds. This was evident in the long story Vijay told about helping a grade nine female student who attended Willow Winds deal with her disappointment of not making the school volleyball team. Vijay said, “Thankfully she felt comfortable enough with me to share what she had been going though and I could relate” (Vijay, Interview 2). Vijay recognized his role as a mentor to other students and was grateful for the positive feedback he received from those he mentored. In the same interview response, Vijay explained he was motivated to help others despite the cost of some students being rude in return. As mentioned previously, he said:

But for some reason I am there to talk to a lot of these people who give me feedback like, “thank you, it was great to talk to you. It was really appreciated and I really needed that right now”. That really motivates me to do this, because you know not everyone is comfortable talking to you and sometimes people lash out but when you are just trying be nice and trying to find out what is going on. But then having these moments when you are able to help someone motivates me to keep doing what I do (Vijay, Interview 2).

Rena also shared her experience mentoring younger students. She believed it was her duty to welcome students to Parklands High School and help
them to be included in the school’s social fabric. Rena described a time in the urban dance club when she went out of her way to help an awkward and shy student make new friends. She said:

In our urban dance club there is a student who is new to our school and he is kinda outside of everyone else… So I guess I had to make friends with him and introduce him to the other guys I was hanging out with and the other girls as well. I felt sorry for him because he didn’t know how to be himself in this new school and he’s a pretty shy person too (Rena, Interview 2).

Rena’s assistance of the new student is consistent with the mentorship relationships she described having with grade nine girls she met at the Girls for Change sleepover. She expressed being surprised by how the younger students were able converse with her in the hallways after the sleepover. She said she felt the following:

Really surprised at how many grade nines feel comfortable talking to me even when I am around my friends and things. I know it can be hard to talk to people who are outside your friend groups when they are with their friends, it’s just a whole set of new people. The fact that they feel comfortable enough to come up and say hi, what do you have next period, surprises me because I wouldn’t have expected us to get that close (Rena, Interview 2).

Rena described closeness with the grade nine girls and a continuation of offering guidance to the girls. This evidence suggests that Rena sustained mentorship relationships with the younger students she met through the Girls for Change program at the time of the second interview for this study. Threading throughout Rena’s interview transcripts is a desire to welcome students she believed were excluded from social groups. Therefore, Rena’s mentorship of younger students
after completion of the Girls for Change program is consistent with her beliefs she shared during her interviews.

The participants described relationships between peers of the same age as friendships. Academic evidence suggests the study participants spoke of the relationships with their peers of the same age as friendships because of the respect the participants held for their peers. Respect between individuals has been measured as an important aspect of meaningful friendship (Du Plessis & Corney, 2011). In a school setting, respect in friendships is important for the welfare of the students because students with higher levels of reciprocity between friends report a higher sense of school belonging (Vaquera & Kao, 2008). Although there can be a feeling of respect towards others in an absence of friendship, the evidence of respect by the participants in this study is taken to mean a demonstration of friendship. For example, Vijay respected Jamie’s style of leadership and expressed delight in Jamie’s success as a leader during the Willow Winds program. As Vijay said:

I thought Jamie was very unique in the way he handled the situation… I thought that was an effective way to handle it and it surprised me because I had not seen him in that capacity. It was great to know he had that side of him (Vijay, Interview 1).

Adam also described the sense of respect he felt for the other leaders whom he considered to be new friends from the Willow Winds program. From talking with other Willow Winds leaders, he believed he learned to respect their opinions. Adam expressed he was grateful for the opportunity to be exposed to other leaders’ perspectives. He shared how he learned to respect the other leaders:
Any of the leaders I didn’t really know beforehand, but I did get to know them after being stuck for four days in the bush. It kinda shows a different side to a person and you are kinda forced to talk and there is no other choice. I really have a lot more respect and you get to grow with them (Adam, Interview 1).

Also in the same interview, Adam referred to the trust he developed with the other leaders in the Willow Winds program. He said, “Then we developed a mutual trust. They can rely on me and I can rely on them. That really allowed us to open up and give us a sense of comfortableness with each other” (Adam, Interview 1). The level of comfort and mutual reliance between peers Adam described are additional evidence of the friendships formed between Adam and the other leaders in the Willow Winds program. Noddings (2005a) includes trust in her descriptions of caring relationships. In reference to achieving confirmation of caring relationships, Noddings writes that “a relation of trust must ground it” (2005a, p. 26). Adolescents describe trust as an important component to meaningful and lasting friendships (Fraley & Davis, 2005; Jantzer, Hoover, & Narloch, 2006; Monsour, 1992). Therefore, the respect, comfort and trust described by Vijay and Adam are evidence to support the participants’ claims of new friendships that developed through their experience in the leadership development programs. In the next section, the connections between the leadership development programs and the participants’ friendships are examined.
Leadership development programs and peer relationships

The study participants spoke of their experience as leaders in the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs in terms of their peer relationships. There were several ways that the participants experienced relationships with their peers in their role as leaders in the leadership development programs. First, the participants believed they had developed new friendships during their time in the programs. Rena believed she made new friends at Girls for Change the previous year, as a grade nine student, because she spoke honestly to other girls. She described her experience of making new friends:

I only knew one person going into the sleepover last year and everyone who is there wants to, you know, make friends and everything but the minute you just let loose and you’re just yourself and you talk to people just girl to girls you start making friends and you feel that. It’s just something that happens (Rena, Interview 1).

Rena claimed that the promise of making new friends is a motivating factor for attending the Girls for Change sleepover. This expectation by the students at the sleepover may have facilitated their new friendships. In studies with first year college students, the students who reported higher expectations for making new friends upon entering college were more likely to make new friends (Karp, Holmstrom, & Gray, 1998; Smith & Wertlieb, 2005; Stieha, 2010). As mentioned previously, Adam described making new friendships with the other leaders in the Willow Winds program. He said that because of the program, “my group of friends is kinda extended and especially the close group has doubled and tripled in size” (Adam, Interview 1). Adam considered meaningful friendships as
relationships that are close. In this context, a close friend is understood to mean a friend with whom one could trust, share secrets and rely on for comfort when dealing with personal issues. Adam’s new friendships that began at Willow Winds were important to him because he considered these new friends part of his close group of friends.

The participants felt close to their pre-existing friends in their role as leaders in the leadership development programs. Several participants described strong bonds with their friends who had served as group leaders with them in the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs. For example, Jenny described how she considered girls who were her acquaintances before the sleepover as friends after the sleepover. She said, “With some of the girls who you don’t have classes with. I got to know them better. Or friends that you already had, because of the sleepover you are even closer” (Jenny, Interview 2). Jenny made that comment two months after the sleepover, thus she could recall the closeness she felt with her friends after the completion of the program.

The continuation of new and close friendships after the leadership development programs is the final connection of the participants’ peer relationships and the programs. Sara described friendships with younger students that persisted after the Girls for Change sleepover. She said:

Actually now I can walk down the halls and speak to all the grade nine girls that I met there… Before the sleepover I didn’t really know them or pay much attention to them. But now I can spot them in the hallways in 2 seconds (Sara, Interview 2).
Likewise, Adam observed extended friendships amongst the younger students who attended the Willow Winds retreat. He believed a group of grade nine students became friends at the beginning of the year because they had met at the Willow Winds retreat at the start of the school year. He described the group:

I see a lot of groups of grade nines and I can pick them out because I saw them at Willow Winds. There is one out that way by the staircase. There is probably like 16 kids there and everyone of them went to camp. I am thinking that all of them went to camp, they are all sitting together two or three months later (Adam, Interview 2).

The grade nine students Adam described may have become friends independent of the Willow Winds programs. However, Adams’ opinion of the group suggests that he believes intuitively participation in the Willow Winds programs helped facilitate the formation and continuation of the friendships for the grade nine students. As a final example, Rena expressed her surprise at the quality of lasting friends that began at the Girls for Change. She said:

I would be really shocked in a sense. I knew that I would make new friends, but not to the extent. All programs are like oh yeah, you are going to make friends and you do. But I didn’t expect it to be nearly as much as now (Rena, Interview 2).

Rena made this statement two months after the Girls for Change sleepover. Therefore, Rena’s reference to “now” in her statement implies that her friendships that began at the sleepover have continued for the two months following the sleepover.

The descriptions of lasting friendships provided by Rena, Sara and Adam provided are consistent with the academic literature about experiences that detail adolescent friendships. As mentioned previously, adolescent girls who
participated in a canoe expedition developed unexpected friendships that endured throughout the following school year (Whittington, 2006). In another example, adolescent aboriginal students in an after school outreach program that leads children in the community reported forming a trusting circle of friends with the other adolescents in the program (Carpenter, et al., 2008). The friendships formed and nurtured through the extracurricular leadership development programs may have lasting benefits for the students. Astin (1984) suggests that positive correlations between students’ participation in extracurricular activities with learning and overall positive school experiences. Therefore, experiences that promote friendships among members of a school community should be supported by educational institutions because friendships are interconnected with students’ success and persistence in school (Tinto, 1997). The leadership development programs in this study are examples of experiences that may provide opportunities for new friendships to be formed.

There are unique features of the structure of the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs that the participants connected with their peer relationships. The features of the programs include an isolated location, multiple day timeframe and socially challenging activities. Socially challenging in this context refers to the difficulty some students may feel when being encouraged to interact in intimate, yet appropriate ways with students with whom they are newly acquainted. These activities are challenging because students with low self-
confidence may be afraid to participate because of fear of how other students will react to them (Eccles, 1993; Krueger & Dickson, 1994).

One of the key features of the leadership development programs that the participants referenced in their descriptions of their friendships was the isolated location of the programs. The Willow Winds program took place at a residential camp for four days and three nights. The program participants were discouraged from contacting their family and friends at home so that they could focus their energy on their peers at Willow Winds. The reason for this welcomed isolation, as was explained by the teacher supervisors to all the students during the Willow Winds retreat, was because isolation is believed to be a way to quickly build community between people. Further, isolation was described as possibly helping the students to focus on the program so as to facilitate a greater learning experience. Although the Girls for Change sleepover took place over two days and one night at Parklands High school, it was after school hours, and the rest of the school’s students were not in attendance. The girls at the sleepover were also encouraged to focus on their experience and were given the same instructions and justification for the isolation as the students at the Willow Winds retreat.

The justification for the leadership development programs’ isolation, as was communicated to the students in both programs, is grounded in academic research. Studies have found that people who participate in an isolated group experiences report deep connections with the others and profound personal
learning experiences. In a study of an American wilderness guiding company, a socially inclusive community was formed during an isolated outdoor adventure experience (Sharpe, 2005). Also for adolescent participants in camp program settings, the experience in new environments and time to communicate with others, was found to increase the social well-being and the number of friends formed (Hanna & Berndt, 1995; Lien & Goldenberg, 2010; Smith, Steel, & Gidlow, 2010; Warber et al., 2012). The influence of isolated, extracurricular experiences is also felt in the relationships between teachers and students. As described by Hargreaves (2000), “the best chances of breakthrough, insight and positive relationship are achieved outside the classroom where teachers have a chance of seeing their students and being seen in a new light” (p. 821).

Vijay described the importance of the Willow Wind program’s isolation for his ability to focus on his role as a leader and enjoy the company of his fellow students. He said, “I think that the physical isolation is necessary because you don’t have distractions anymore and you are forced essentially to interact with the people” (Vijay, Interview 2). As Vijay is highly involved in Parklands High School’s volunteer organizations, it is understandable why he appreciated the sense of removal from his very busy everyday life as a student. Adam also described the remote location of the Willow Winds retreat as a contributing factor in his development of new friendships. He seemed grateful for the experience to talk to others from Parklands High with whom he would not usually interact with at school. He said:
Because it was a small group from the school we were really able to take the time and because we are stuck in the bush and the only source of entertainment for each other. When you are forced to talk to one another you can usually find some common group and work from it (Adam, Interview 1).

Adam mentioned the value of extended time with other students as an important feature of the leadership development programs. Rena also specifically mentioned time along with her descriptions of new and close relationships with her peers. She said, “I think that it was because it was out of school time and the fact that it was all girls too… you just had time to sit around and talk” (Rena, Interview 1). For Rena, the change in her peer relationships happened while she had uninterrupted time to talk to the other girls about personal issues at the Girls for Change sleepover. The extended time to converse with the diverse groups of girls is not available during the regular school day. Therefore, Rena believed the Girls for Change sleepover was a powerful context for unique friendships to develop.

The final feature of the leadership development programs that was connected to the participants’ descriptions of their peer relationships was the programs’ activities. The scheduled activities of the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs are different from the regular school experience for the students. The participants recognized this difference in activities and spoke of the activities in relation to their peers. Jenny noticed a level of trust develop at the final activity of the sleepover when the girls signed each other’s souvenir t-shirts with kind messages. She explained, “I think the bonding was when the t-
shirts were coming out… everyone starting signing t-shirts and I guess singing the t-shirts is like a more physical way of connecting” (Jenny, Interview 2). Rena recalled her experience as a grade nine student at the sleepover. She thought that activities like the obstacle course, during which students had to act silly and complete tasks as a group, helped facilitate new friendships. A reminder of Rena’s explanation of the friends she made from the activities is as follows:

You just made new friends and it’s true friends too… you accept people for their abilities and what they can do and can’t do and then from there it just goes on from the acceptance to like talking to them and then you become friends eventually (Rena, Interview 1).

Rena believed her relationships were formed on a foundation of acceptance. Confirmation of others in caring relationships involves acceptance of one another’s shortcomings and encouragement of their goals (Noddings, 2005a). Therefore, by accepting the other girls’ capabilities, Rena was able to form caring relationships. The activities in the leadership development programs were a possible opportunity for the participants to experience one another’s strengths. As suggested by Noddings (2005a), the participants’ experience understanding one another was an example of confirmation of caring relationships. It is reasonable then that this study found the participants valued their relationships with their peers as part of their experience in the leadership development programs.

**Good Leaders Exhibit Caring Behaviour**

The participants in this study described good leaders through the interactions of leaders with others. Leader interactions in the participants’
descriptions of good leaders were when leaders demonstrated care towards others. The participants’ perspectives about the topic of leadership, their peers as leaders and themselves as leaders suggest the study participants identified good leaders through the caring behaviour they exhibited towards others. This section begins with a discussion of the different ways the participants believed good leaders cared about others. The modes of caring behaviour include leaders offering physical assistance to others and placing the needs of others before their own. Also, a mode of caring behaviour is identified as good leaders helping others to achieve their own potential. The participants’ suggestion that good leaders practice care is discussed in relation to research that documents the experience of people working with caring, supportive leaders.

The participants described their experience with leaders who demonstrated caring behaviour. The experience of the study participants with leaders who exhibited caring behaviour is in agreement with other studies available in the research literature. The participants believed they liked and enjoyed the company of leaders who exhibit caring behaviour. Also, the participants described feeling admiration towards leaders who exhibited caring behaviour. To conclude this section, academic research is presented to show how leaders who are well liked and admired serve as role models to others.

**Modes of caring behaviour**

Noddings (2002) defines care as something that is fundamental to human life. Caring behaviours are the “acts in direct response to the needs of the cared-
The participants in this study identified caring behaviours in their peers who they believed were good leaders. The first way the participants believed good leaders exhibited care towards others was by assisting other students during the programs’ activities. This belief was also prevalent in the training for the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs during which the executive teams emphasized the importance of student leaders assisting younger students during the activities. One way assistance was offered to younger students was through physical support in the activities. I observed the participants at the Willow Winds retreat physically assist others in their roles as leaders. Examples include when Ruben helped to load students into the canoes and when Vijay helped students to put on climbing harnesses at the high ropes course. Ruben also believed that the younger students were thankful for his help preparing to depart the Willow Winds retreat. He said, “When it comes to packing up there were some campers who could roll sleeping bags so I got them to help. I think my campers would say they were grateful for that” (Ruben, Interview 2). This physically supportive behaviour is also a demonstration of Vijay and Ruben’s adherence to the criteria for good leadership presented at the Willow Winds program training. Physical assistance an example of a caring practice that is presented in leadership research. In outdoor education programs, the students experience leadership through helping their classmates to complete physical challenges (Brookes, 2002; Priest & Gass, 1997).
Another way leaders offered assistance as a way to exhibit care was through by sharing their expertise in the activities with other students. Adam believed helping others successfully understand each activity was fundamental to his role as a leader at Willow Winds. His description is as follows:

People look to me if there is something they need help with or are unsure of. They come to me to see if I can help them out or be there in the situation. So I think that is the number one thing (Adam, Interview 2).

Adam suggests that his expertise in the activities in the Willow Winds program helped to make him an effective leader. Adam’s belief is consistent with research about the impact of expert knowledge for business leaders. Effective leaders have been found to project a sense of trustworthiness and expertise (Conger, 1989). Also, in business leaders who are more effective have been documented as holding greater expert knowledge in their line of work compared to leaders who are less effective (Goodall, 2009; Goodall, Kahn & Oswald, 2008; Mumford et al., 2002). Therefore, the participants' belief that good leaders assist others by the sharing of expertise is relevant to this study’s discussion of the participants’ descriptions of good leadership.

Another mode of caring behaviour identified by the participants was the leaders’ prioritization of the needs of those they are leading. The participants classified this behaviour as a demonstration of good leadership. Specifically, Adam identified the willingness to sacrifice as an important trait for a good leader. He said, “Really put others before them. Make sure that the greater community is in the best possible state” (Adam, Interview 2). Adam believed the experience of
the younger students in the program was more important than the experience of the leaders. Sara also believed that good leaders would readily give up opportunities to spend time with their friends to guarantee younger students were having a positive experience. During her first interview, Sara shared an example of the social sacrifice she observed during the early morning hours of the sleepover. Sara said, “But there were a few leaders who mingled and specifically they were really good leaders. First they spread away from their group and went to the grade nines and learned more about them” (Sara, Interview 1). During the data collection, I interpreted observations of the participants’ behaviour Willow Winds and Girls for Change program as the participants sacrifice opportunities to socialize with their established friends or experience new activities in order to support the younger students in their care. For example, Vijay did not hike with his group so he could keep one student company. I wrote in my field notes an immediate interpretation of Vijay’s actions, “Vijay is demonstrating selfless behaviour and is sensitive to the needs of the campers” (Field Notes, Willow Winds retreat canoe docks, September 15, 2012, 10:50 am). As mentioned previously, I made this interpretation based on my experience that most student leaders enjoy the rotation of outdoor activities in the Willow Winds program. Vijay forgoing an activity to comfort a younger student was not likely the most enjoyable option for Vijay, but I believe his engagement with the student demonstrated his commitment to the student’s experience at the retreat.
The Willow Winds and Girls for Change student executive committees both operated with the notion that good leaders potentially sacrifice their own enjoyment at the leadership development program in order to care for others. This was evident in the interviews for the selection of the peer group leaders completed for both programs. The candidates were asked why they wanted to be leaders in the program. The executive teams highly favoured candidates who claimed creating a memorable experience for the younger students was a priority and their reason for applying to be leaders. Also, the executive committee members who facilitated the training sessions advocated that the leaders’ most important responsibility was ensuring a positive program experience for the younger students. The expectations for leaders in traditional roles may have been a source for the executive teams’ belief that good leaders sacrifice their own needs for the sake of those they are leading. For example, teachers are trained to serve as leaders of the classroom, and are expected to act as prudent parents and protect their students from harm by placing the needs of the students above their own (Baginsky & Hodgkinson, 1999; Rogers & Webb, 1991). Also, on a ship the captain is required to be that last person to leave the ship in case of emergency. Self-sacrifice by leaders has been documented to be effective leadership behaviour (Cremer & Knippenberg, 2004). A possible explanation is that the sacrifice by the leader is perceived by the subordinates as the leader’s commitment to the group (Cremer & Knippenberg, 2004). These commonly
accepted ideas about the self-sacrificing nature of leadership might have also influenced the study participants’ perceptions of good leadership.

The final mode of caring behaviour of good leaders identified by the study participants is leaders’ support of others to access their potential as future leaders. This approach to leadership is synonymous with the description of group facilitation in the leadership literature. It is the role of a group facilitator to respond to the needs of the group by helping group members find their own voice in the group and transferring their learning experience to their own lives (Priest & Gass, 1997; Schwarz et al., 2011). Leading by facilitation shares attributes with other accepted descriptions of effective leadership in the literature. It have been argued that leadership that focuses primarily on developing people in a group as individuals is a very effective approach to group management (Reddin, 1988). Further, Bass (1999; 1994; 2012) claims repeatedly that transformational leadership is more effective than transactional leadership. The transformative leader acts as a role model to subordinates and supports the subordinates’ growth while a transactional leader gives directions to the subordinates (Bass & Bass, 2008). In reference to youth literature, a transformative leadership approach is described as facilitation. A facilitator is a leader who supports group members in decision making and finding their own individual voices to speak about important issues (Fertman & van Linden, 1998). In this framework, Fertman and van Linden (1998) define effective youth leadership as moving towards the capacity to serve as facilitators. Therefore, achieving success as a
facilitator is the result of youth moving through the stages of leadership development. In Fertman and van Linden’s (1998) first stage, adults facilitate the youth to become aware of their leadership potential. Then, the youth experience leadership opportunities in which they learn to support others and balance their extracurricular school commitments. Finally, youth can achieve a mastery stage of leadership development and guide other youth to make decisions and pursue their own visions. Once at the mastery stage, the youth are considered to be acting as facilitators in their leadership roles (Fertman & van Linden, 1998).

The study participants identified the significance of leaders facilitating their group members in the activities at the Willow Winds retreat and Girls for Change sleepover. Jenny described herself during the scavenger hunt activity at the sleepover as running with her group, but not giving away the answers. She said, “That way I was more encouraging than leading. That was something that was worth more” (Jenny, Interview 1). Jenny acknowledged the value of successfully facilitating a group of people. Rena also believed that good leaders help others to utilize their skills. She said, “Because being a leader doesn’t mean you are taking control of everything. It means you are helping everyone else get to the same place you want the whole group to go to” (Rena, Interview 2). Reddin (1988) argues that leaders serve others as facilitators by recognizing the value in letting others lead and make mistakes. Vijay recognized the importance for the members of a group to have power over their own decisions. He said about students he was leading:
If they don’t have the autonomy… then they don’t care. When you have autonomy then it’s an intrinsic motivator. You have the opposite which is dumping it on people. That’s not exactly helpful either so you need to find the balance between the two (Vijay, Interview 2).

Also, Adam recognized that leading from a facilitative perspective is powerful. I did not observe Adam encouraging other students to take control of an activity during the Willow Winds retreat. Instead, he was directive in the way he gave instructions to other students and seemed to enjoy serving as an expert in the activities. However, during the interview he clarified his desire to work on his facilitation skills. This desire signifies that Adam had an understanding of the possible positive effects of leading through facilitation. He said, “Kinda want to learn to take a step back and let others take control. Kinda laisser-faire. I remember that is what you have, I am here to help if you need but I prefer to sit back” (Adam, Interview 2).

The research literature documentation of benefits of a facilitative approach to leadership includes a more positive group dynamic and productive task management (Amy, 2008; Hart, 1996). This is because leaders that act as facilitators are more approachable to the group members (Amy, 2008). An example is the case study where 120 students ranked their learning experience as higher with a peer facilitator compared to a teacher facilitator for the same activity (Steele, Medder, & Turner, 2001). Peer-facilitators were also identified as an asset to the quality of discussion in online learning communities for pre-service teachers (Ikpeze, 2007). Further, elementary school students reported feeling more personally motivated and had better relationships with teachers who
adopted a teaching style that supported students’ autonomy (Reeve, 2006). This leadership style enabled the students make their own decisions and act on their own ideas (Reeve, 2006). The supportive and facilitative nature of leaders identified in the academic literature connects to the study participants’ descriptions of good leaders as exhibiting caring behaviour towards others.

**Experience of caring behaviours of leaders**

The participants in this study were led by their peers on the executive committees of the leadership development programs, as well as served as leaders for younger students. Nel Noddings offers insight into the experience of leaders in their relationships. Noddings (2005a) argued that relationships between teachers and students are “necessarily unequal, but they are nonetheless mutual; the relationship is marked by reciprocity” (p. 108). In this relationship, students being cared for underwent a necessary process of “reception, recognition and response” (Noddings, 2005a, p. 16). In this study, the participants described their experience with leaders who they believed exhibited caring behaviour in terms of how they personally felt about them. The response of the participants was that they liked and admired the leaders who they believed exhibited caring behaviour.

The study participants identified leaders who lead through caring behaviours as being well liked by others. The participants also believed that likable, friendly leaders are more effective. For example, Vijay identified caring
behaviours of leaders as being nice and showing respect to those they are leading. Vijay spoke of the importance for leaders to be nice. He said:

The most underrated skills for a leader to have is just being nice. A lot of people when they are in a leadership role tend to forget that they are leading people. People with their own thoughts, backgrounds and experiences (Vijay, Interview 2).

Ruben also described the importance for leaders to be well liked by those they are leading. Ruben said:

He or she should always get down on their level and be likeable. Because people will follow someone who is likeable even if they don't have incentives more than people who don’t like the leader and are followed only because they have incentive. (Ruben, Interview 2).

Ruben believed the leaders who are more likeable would be more effective because others would be more willing to work with the leader. As mentioned previously in this chapter, Jenny believed the leader of the Free the Children volunteer organization was ineffective partially because she was unkind to the group members. In reference to the club leaders’ management, Jenny said, “I think this is a bit rude” (Jenny, Interview 2). The participants identified unfriendly leaders as ineffective and congruently characterized well liked leaders as being more effective.

The participants’ beliefs are consistent with a study done with college students where evaluations of the likability of a peer leader for a group task was compared to the perception of the leader’s effectiveness at managing the group to complete the task (Ingram, 2006). Leaders who were rated more likeable were also rated more effective independent of the actual outcome of the group task.
This idea has been evaluated in other areas of academic research. Leaders who are well liked are described as charismatic and are more effective at inspiring others to take risks (Conger, 1989). Further, leaders who exhibit more positive emotions can more easily make social connections with others (Bass & Avolio, 1994). A leader’s social connections to others was measured as being well liked and resulted in a higher degree of leader effectiveness in a study of 140 Information Technology professionals (Singh & Pathardikar, 2011). Further, students regarded their teachers as more effective when they thought the teacher was likable and friendly (Brekelmans, 1993; Marsh & Hocevar, 1991; Wise et al., 2004). Therefore, leaders who exhibit caring behaviour may be perceived more positively by others, and thus will be more effective in their leadership.

In this study, the participants explained how they admired the leaders who they believed exhibited caring behavior. Someone who is admired could serve as a role model to others. In a review of educational hiring practices in Great Britain, male teachers that identified themselves as role models positively correlated with students’ reports of admiration of those teachers (Carrington & Skelton, 2003). Also, students in a gifted academic program believed a role model was someone whom they admired (Pleiss & Feldhusen, 1995). Examples of how role models are admired leaders from this study include Vijay’s belief that good leadership is dependent on acting as a role model for others. The following statement is an excerpt from when Vijay explained that he feels he is a good
leader when acts as a good role model. Further, Vijay looked to role models as examples of how to behave as a good leader. He said:

You can’t just do whatever you want, but you are a role model for the campers and the actions and decisions that you take will have an influence on the campers you are leading. Realize that you are the same person and being a leader is part of your character but you are also separate form it. Form an image of a role model that you look up to and then fill that role, you need to fill those shoes (Vijay, Interview 1).

Adam also recognized connection of leaders as role models. In his explanation of what he qualities he looked for in the activity leaders he selected for the Willow Winds program, he said, “One big thing was they were able to relate the kids and have the kids look up to them and be good examples for them” (Adam, Interview 2). Adam therefore believed that leaders in the Willow Winds program would serve as role models if they behaved in a way that would enable them to make social connections with the younger students.

In other programs for leadership development, older program members were described as role models when they involved in supportive relationships with younger program members. For example, in a bridge program for African American males, university faculty were partnered with new students to help the students in the transition from high school to university (Hughes, 2010). Within this supportive relationship, the faculty members were serving as role models for the new male students (Hughes, 2010). Also, in a study of a five-day leadership program for female empowerment at an American university, college students were described as role models for youth enrolled in the program (Caton, 2010). As small group leaders, the college students offered counseling and emotional
support to the girls in the program (Caton, 2010). Therefore, from the perspective of the findings in this study, the college aged student leaders who exhibited care were viewed as role models by the younger female participants.

Noddings (2005a) recognizes the value for youth to experience serving as role models in the development of their expertise in care giving. She recommends that youth experience the mentorship of younger children as part of their education for care. Noddings (2005a) argues that in acting as a role model to younger children, youth can reflect on their own childhood experiences and the relationships that guide their own lives. Through this reflection, Noddings (2005a) believes students learn about the effective caring behaviour and an become better caregivers to others. Noddings presents a deeper connection between the findings in this study. The study participants admired leaders who exhibited caring behaviour and looked to them as role models. Noddings has argued conversely that serving as role models offers youth opportunities to practice their caring behaviour. Ultimately, the participants’ experiences with leaders who exhibit caring behaviour are framed within this study’s conceptual framework of care.

**Participant Portraits**

This chapter discussed the themes that emerged from the study findings. The themes reflect commonalities in the data; however the participants did not describe their experiences in the leadership development programs in the same way. To address the differences between the participants’ perspectives, portraits
for each participant are provided in this section. The portraits summarize each participant's understanding of his or her own leadership abilities, leadership role with others, and perception of good leadership. In this way, the portraits provide an individual answer to the research question by each study participant. A comparison of the portraits is used as a response to the research question in the next and final chapter.

Adam

Adam believed leadership involves taking charge of a situation and making decisions. He believed good leaders provide opportunities for others to be leaders by sharing the decision-making process. In his future leadership roles, he wished to encourage his peers to be leaders. Adam also believed good leaders prioritize the needs of others ahead of their own. Further, good leaders can relate to many different people and are well liked by the people they serve.

In terms of his leadership role, Adam saw himself as the judge and problem solver. He believed that in a leadership role he easily became acquainted with students of different ages. Adam believed that by talking with other students he developed his communication skills. Finally, Adam felt confident in his abilities as a leader and used that confidence to apply for new leadership positions.

Ruben

Ruben believed leadership involves instructing others. Good leaders are able to readily speak in front of a large group of people and are patient when
providing individual instructions to another person. Ruben believed good leaders share their leadership role with others. Also, good leaders are friendly and make an effort to get to know all the people they are leading. As a leader, Ruben was eager to help others try new activities and feel confident in the activities. Ruben reported that he felt more confident in his ability to speak in front of a group of his peers in the weeks immediately following the Willow Winds program.

**Vijay**

Vijay believed leadership is the organization of people to ensure that tasks are completed. A good leader balances being friendly with being firm when delegating tasks to others. Vijay recognized that he needed to work on sharing work with others because he usually completes more than his share of the work. Further, Vijay believed that good leaders prioritize the experience of those they are leading by being exceptionally nice, kind and respectful to others.

As a leader, Vijay believed he was a role model to other students. He described how he interacted with younger students as a way to show them that they are important to him. Vijay also believed other students often sought his council because he was empathetic about their personal struggles. Vijay felt confident that he would achieve his goals in his leadership roles during the school year.

**Rena**

For Rena, leadership involves making others feel included and accepted by their peers. Good leaders find ways to make connections with diverse groups
of people in social settings and provide opportunities for individuals to demonstrate their talents. Rena believed that as a leader she helped to make other girls feel included in the group. Also, Rena described how she continued her relationships with younger students after completion of the Girls for Change program. As a leader, Rena felt very confident in her abilities as a leader and believed that she is a role model for younger students. One example of how Rena believed she acted as a role model was to risk embarrassment by volunteering to take part in silly activities. Rena believed this action showed the younger students that being outgoing can be a positive social quality.

Sara

Sara believed leadership is making rules and decisions and encouraging others to adhere to the rules and decisions. The leader’s role is also to help make others feel comfortable with one another. A way Sara believed good leaders could be welcoming is by connecting with all the unique individuals in their care. Sara believed that to make these connections, good leaders might have to adjust how they talk to each person to accommodate individuals’ differences in personalities. As a leader, Sara felt confident in her abilities and was grateful to receive positive feedback from her peers at the Girls for Change sleepover. She was confident that she would be successful in any future leadership role in the school.

Jenny
Jenny believed leadership involves managing people in a group to collectively complete a task. Good leaders are respectful to their group members and set aside their personal interests in order to make the best decisions for the group as a whole. Jenny described good leadership as knowing when to take the lead in a situation and when to follow the lead of someone else in a group. In her leadership role at the sleepover, Jenny believed she offered encouragement to her group members to complete tasks on their own. Also, Jenny felt it was important to respect the opinions of younger students in a group. Jenny did not feel confident to take on additional leadership roles in the school and was hesitant to lead older students. However, Jenny was impressed by her ability to be social with all the different girls in her group at the Girls for Change sleepover. Finally, Jenny felt that she was beginning to understand how to recognize the needs of a group and how to encourage a group to complete a task.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the themes that emerged from the study findings. The participants experienced a change in their attitudes towards themselves. This was identified through the participants’ descriptions of their understanding of their personal abilities. Also, the participants described feeling a sense of self-confidence and a belief in their personal abilities. The participants’ plans for future actions concluded the discussion of the participants’ change in attitudes towards themselves. The second theme discussed was the value the participants placed on their peer relationships. The relationships existed as
friendships and mentorships. The participants believed their experience in the leadership development programs helped them to form new and close relationships. The participants also described the programs’ separation from the regular school schedule as an opportunity for newer and closer relationships to flourish. Finally, the participants believed that good leaders exhibit caring behaviour towards those they are leading. The participants identified caring behaviour as the offering physical assistance and advice based on expertise. Also, caring behaviour was identified as leaders’ prioritization of the needs of younger students and helping others to achieve their potential as future leaders. Finally, the participants liked and admired the leaders they believed exhibited caring behaviour. Arguments were presented to show how leaders who are liked are effective in their leadership role and admired leaders can serve as role models.

The next chapter concludes this thesis. In the first section, the research question is addressed by comparing the students’ experiences as a way to evaluate the leadership development programs. Next, the implications of the evaluation for the leadership development programs at Parklands High School are presented. Specific suggestions for improvements to the scheduled activities for the programs are included. Finally, the chapter outlines recommendations for future research in the area of student leadership development programs.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

The students’ experiences are used to evaluate the leadership development programs and make recommendations for program improvement in this final chapter. The first section answers the research question by the way of a comparison of the participants’ understanding of leadership and themselves as leaders. An explanation for how the study findings translate to recommendations from this research is provided. The next section outlines the implications of the study findings for the leadership development programs at Parklands High School. Specific suggestions for modifications to the programs’ activities are discussed. This chapter concludes with broader recommendations from this study. This section begins with the contributions of the study findings to the discussion of student leadership in the academic literature. Next are recommendations from this study that includes suggestions for future research studies and plans for sharing this study with other educators of adolescent leadership development.

Evaluation of the Leadership Development Programs

This study used the experience of six students to evaluate two leadership development programs at Parklands High School. The findings of the study are summarized as portraits of each student at the end of Chapter Five. The portraits detail the students’ understanding of leadership and themselves as
Comparison of the portraits are used to answer the following guiding research question for this study:

How do student leaders participating in one of two extracurricular leadership development programs at one urban high school understand their experience in terms of their own leadership abilities, their leadership role with others and their perception of good leadership?

The participants believed that their experience as leaders in the leadership development programs helped them to feel confident in a leadership role. Specifically, three participants, Adam, Ruben and Sara, described feeling confident in their leadership abilities after completion of the leadership development programs. From the students’ perspectives, leadership abilities included solving problems, providing instructions and welcoming other students. The positive feedback the participants believed they received from younger students in the groups they were leading was included in their descriptions of confidence in their leadership abilities.

The participants believed their leadership role with others involved making their peers feel welcome. All of the participants described engaging conversations they had with people they met at the Willow Winds retreat or Girls for Change sleepover. For Vijay, Ruben, Sara and Ruth, the conversations they had with different types of students were a requirement of their role as leaders. All the participants described friendships as an important part of their experiences as leaders in the programs. These experiences with peers included
making new friendships and establishing closer existing friendships. Further, all the participants believed they served as role models to younger students.

There was diversity in the study participants’ perspectives of leadership. In general, Adam, Vijay, Sara and Jenny believed leadership involves organizing a group of people to complete tasks. Within the organization, the participants described such actions as: taking charge of a situation, making decisions, delegating tasks and solving problems. Sara, along with Rena, believed leadership involves making others feel welcome in a group. Further, Jenny and Ruben believed leadership involves instructing and encouraging others to participate in activities. Despite the differences in the detailed descriptions of leadership, all the participants believed good leaders respect those they are leading by listening to their ideas and acting kindly towards them. Good leaders were also perceived as leaders who demonstrate care towards those they are leading. The participants described care in leadership as leaders’ prioritization of the needs of others.

With the insight gained from this study, actions can be taken to value the participants’ perspectives on leadership. The leadership development programs are an obvious way to integrate the ideas of leadership shared by the participants in this study, because the programs formed the context for the participants’ discussions of leadership. Recommended improvements to the leadership development programs reflect the participants’ understanding of leadership.
As mentioned in Chapter Four, the image of a good leader presented to the leaders during the programs’ training sessions was that of a fun and talented older sibling. Leaders that form this image act as enthusiastic participants, experts of activities, monitors of safety and loving family members. The approach to leadership presented during the training sessions was based on my intuitive depiction of good youth leadership that has developed through my personal experiences in youth leadership programs. As the teacher supervisor and primary designer of the leadership development programs at Parklands High School, my concept of leadership has been the foundation for the programs. Therefore, the leadership development programs at Parklands High School, as with so much of the school curriculum, has valued the perspectives of the teachers rather than the current students. Students’ perspectives are important to utilize in program development because programs that address the needs and interests of students are more engaging for students (De Jesus, 2003; Fielding, 2001; Smyth, 2007). In order to reflect the students’ understanding of leadership found in this study, changes can be made to make the programs more relevant and engaging for future students.

The student participants in this evaluative study shared their understanding of themselves as leaders. Although this study only examined the experience of six student participants to form the program evaluation, others students in the leadership development programs may have had similar
experiences in the programs as the study participants. Therefore the insights from the study participants guided the recommended changes to the programs.

The findings of this study were translated to recommendations for improvement to the leadership development programs using my own creativity in program planning. My training and experience as a high school classroom teacher and coordinator of outdoor education initiatives helped me to intuitively understand the requirements for planning successful activities for adolescents. The specific improvements recommended for the leadership development programs at Parklands High School to value the student perspectives presented in this study therefore reflect my professional knowledge. Also, broader applications than Parklands High School to honour the students’ perspectives presented in this study are based on my personal experiences. In the next section, specific suggestions for improvements to the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs are detailed.

Implications for the Leadership Development Programs

The evaluation of the leadership development programs is used as the foundation for suggested changes to the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs at Parklands High School. These changes involve modifications to the schedule of activities to reflect the experience of the students in the programs as presented in this study. In this section, recommendations for changes are detailed so that the Parklands High School programs’ staff advisors and student executive committees can easily implement the changes to the programs.
The first change recommended addresses the value the study participants placed on the social connections they made with their peers during the leadership development programs. The participants were grateful for opportunities to interact with students outside their regular circle of friends during the programs. To promote this connection between students, group discussion time can be built into the program schedules as part of the evening activities. The leaders can facilitate sharing circles around the campfire, so as to allow a safe space for the students to have conversations with one another. Also, there can be activities added to allow students to individually connect with others. For example, students can be asked to complete a trust walk through an obstacle course with a partner. In the trust walk, one student leads their blindfolded partner through the maze using only vocal instructions. Time can also be allotted after the trust walk to allow the partners to share their experience with each other.

The study participants identified their peers as good leaders by the caring behaviour they believed the leaders exhibited towards others. Opportunities for students to experience the caring behaviour of leaders are recommended for the leadership development programs at Parklands High School. One way to promote leadership with caring behaviour is through the rotation of exemplary leaders to different groups to facilitate a game during the leadership development programs. For example, a member of the executive committee could visit each group during the “ice-breaker” activity time. This time is when groups of students
become acquainted with one another at the beginning of the Willow Winds retreat and the Girls for Change sleepover. With the rotation of exemplary leaders from the executive committee, the peer group leaders and younger students can experience caring behaviour of leaders. Also, the peer group leaders will have an opportunity to immediately emulate this behaviour in the next set of program activities. The groups can also experience leaders who exhibit caring behaviour in their rotation through the activities in the programs. For example, an exemplary leader from the executive committee could be stationed at the tie-dying of clothing activity. Throughout the tie-dye process the group is exposed to a caring approach to leadership. At the end of the activity, as the clothing is drying, the group can discuss how the behaviour of the leader at the station made them feel and what they have learned about leadership through this experience. The challenge of using student demonstrations of caring leadership is finding mature and capable senior students from the executive committee who can appropriately lead a critical discussion of the scenarios with the student groups afterwards.

The final recommendation for improvement of the programs from this evaluation addresses the study participants’ understanding of themselves as leaders. Changes can be made to the programs’ schedules to help students recognize and understand their abilities as leaders. One way is to structure time for the students to reflect and identify their personal abilities. A specific example of a reflective activity is if students are asked to write down ten personal talents
on a piece of paper. Next, the students crumple the paper and toss it around the group. The students then proceed to read the list of talents and try to match the list to one of their group mates. Through this activity, the students clarify their beliefs of their own abilities. Also, this matching of abilities could be a way for the students to receive positive feedback from their peers. Positive feedback from peers was believed by the participants in this study to support their feelings of self-confidence.

Another way the students could reflect on their personal skills as leaders is through a group discussion using the “roses and thorns” format. In this format, a “rose” represents a positive comment and a “thorn” a negative comment. The peer group leaders could gather at the end of a day and share the “roses and thorns” of their leadership of their peer group that day. Through this discussion, the student leaders could identify their beliefs in their skills and abilities as leaders.

The younger students at the Willow Winds retreat and the Girls for Change sleepover could be assisted in understanding their personal abilities by being informed of their group’s positive perception of them. One example of how the younger students at the Willow Winds retreat could receive these positive comments begins with the rotation through the outdoor adventure activities. For each activity, the group leaders could note which of the younger students discover unexpected success in the activities. Then, during breakfast on the last morning of the program, each student could be assigned a specific duty for the
upcoming group relay race in accordance with his or her newly discovered skill. This procedure allows every student to be a contributing member of the relay race team. The suggestions in this section are examples of how the evaluation in this study can guide improvement for the leadership development programs at Parklands High School.

**Recommendations for Future Inquiry in Student Leadership Development**

The evaluation of the leadership development programs in this study informs an audience beyond the Parklands High School community. The findings from this study contribute to the broader discussion of student leadership development. Topics requiring further investigation are uncovered in the discussion of the surprises I felt in uncovering the student experience in leadership development programs presented in this study. This final section of the chapter outlines recommendations for future research of adolescent student leadership development programs. Further, the plans for sharing the study’s findings with educational institutions are detailed.

Before a discussion of the recommendations for future research in student leadership development, the findings of this study are reviewed in the context of the student leadership academic literature. The findings in this evaluative study contribute to the discussion of student leadership that was first presented in Chapter Two. First, the experience of the student leaders in this study confirms theories of the nature of youth leadership explored in the literature review. The study participants all described their leadership in relation to others. Therefore,
their experience as leaders was dependent on their interactions with others. This can be interpreted as a demonstration of Fertman and van Linden’s (1998) interaction stage of youth leadership, in which leaders participate in activities with others. Further, the participants described goals they had set for themselves for future leadership roles. The participants’ creation of personal goals could arguably be an example of Fertman and van Linden’s (1998) mastery stage of youth development that is described as students’ pursuits of personal pathways to leadership. The participants’ descriptions of their experiences also confirm Whitehead’s (2009) model of authentic leadership for youth. Specifically, the participants experience Whitehead’s (2009) youth leadership qualities of community and trust building. By taking part in the leadership development programs, the study participants are part of the community and are trust building as they help others feel safe and secure at the Willow Winds retreat and Girls for Change sleepover. The findings from this study therefore offer practical examples of Fertman and van Linden’s (1998) and Whitehead’s (2009) theories of youth leadership.

The findings from this study contribute to the documentation of the student leader’s experience. The study participants’ descriptions of their leadership abilities provide additional evidence that student leaders feel their experience helps them to develop better communication skills with their peers (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Logue, Hutchens, & Hector, 2005; Ouellette, 1998; Schwitzer & Thomas, 1998). Also, the study participants’ descriptions of new
and close friendships in their roles as leaders in the programs is consistent with the experience of student leaders in the academic literature who expand their social networks (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003; Karcher, 2009; Ouellette, 1998; Parsons, 2012; Romano, 1996). In contrast to the experience of student leaders in the literature, the participants in this study did not feel they contributed to reform efforts in their school or extracurricular programs available to future students (De Jesus, 2003; Mayer & Feuer, 2008; Miles, 2010; Robinson, 2004). The absence of contributive feelings may have been because the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs were removed from the daily routine of the school day. Further, the programs offered limited time for the students to interact with the teachers and administrators at the school, whom the students may have felt were in the best position to make changes to the school and extracurricular programs (Mayer & Feuer, 2008). Therefore, the documentation of the students’ perspectives for this study serves as an important contribution by the students for leadership development program reform at Parklands High School.

A final way the findings of this study contribute to the discussion of student leadership is by providing practical feedback about the experiences of student leaders in leadership development programs. The feedback can be used to improve the design of other leadership development programs more generally. For example, the participants repeatedly mentioned the value of arranging for the Willow Winds retreat and Girls for Change sleepover to be after regular school hours. The participants from the Willow Winds programs especially emphasized
their appreciation that the retreat was held at a unique location, away from school. Also, the participants believed the opportunities to interact with new people were significant to their experience. As a way to entice students to register for leadership development programs and help them to enjoy their experience, the programs should be designed to separate students from their regular school routines and offer opportunities for students to work with peers outside their social circle.

Throughout this study, I was impressed by the study participants’ willingness to share their personal feeling with me. The study participants did not hesitate to express their opinions about themselves and their peers in their two interviews. I was surprised by the specificity and depth of their interview responses and would be interested in expanding this research study to include more student participants. Evaluation of the leadership development programs at Parklands High School using data from a large, diverse group of students might provide additional insights into the student experience that did not emerge in this study of six students.

The study findings reveal broad areas of academic interest. For example, I was surprised that no study participants mentioned their teachers in their descriptions of leaders and leadership. I thought the participants might have referred to their teachers as models of good leaders because of the inherit structure of the school, where the teachers serve as leaders of the classrooms and supervisors of the leadership development programs. To explore the
students’ perspectives of leadership by their teachers and peers, the following question could be investigated: How do students understand leadership by their teachers in extracurricular activities and leadership by their peers in extracurricular leadership development programs?

In addition to the student experience of leadership by their teachers, the study findings explore adolescents’ sense of self. Also, the findings reveal adolescents’ experiences working with and acting as leaders of their peers. The study findings present topics of leadership development program design and the skills of adolescent leaders. The following research questions can be used to design studies to further explore the topics presented in this study:

• What experiences in school-based programs do students believe influences their self-confidence and development of leadership skills? How do schools effectively provide opportunities for leadership development?

• How does the curriculum objectives of a leadership development program inform the activities planned in the schedule of the program? In what ways do student leaders believe their experience in the programs is related to the scheduled activities?

• What aspects of leadership programs do student leaders believe influenced their development and maintenance of positive interactions with their peers and adults?
• What aspects of a leadership development program’s curriculum encourage students to utilize caring behaviour in the leadership of their peers?
• How do writers of leadership development curriculum define leadership? How do students believe their experience in a leadership development program influences their long-term development as leaders?

These recommendations for future research projects are examples of how the student perspectives revealed in this study promote action for educators. Therefore, these recommendations can be shared with educators and policy-makers who have a vested interest in students’ leadership development and can initiate future investigations. On a larger scale, the school board for Parklands High School receives a summary of the study findings. This commitment was one of the requirements for permission to conduct the study at Parkland High School.

The application of the student perspectives discussed in this study most critically relies on the teachers. Thiessen (1997) explains that individual classrooms are locations for policy decisions. The teachers and school administrators who manage these policy-making locations are important stakeholders for student leadership development because they have the capacity to utilize the recommendations from this study. The insights of the student experience in leadership development programs can be shared at school staff meetings and professional development conferences. Through the presentation,
other educators can be informed of the findings and recommendations of this study. An example of a recommendation from this study that is applicable leadership education in schools is structuring time and space for the students to reflect on their leadership and personal capabilities. This reflective process can be useful for students’ leadership development because, reflection has been found to help students confirm their understanding (Calderhead, 1992; Newman, 1991).

Leadership education in schools can support the findings in this study by honouring the caring behaviour of leaders as identified by the study participants. For example, the participants believed that good leaders respected the opinions of others in the group setting. As a way for the school staff to model respectful leadership of groups, small professional learning communities can be established for the staff to work together on school-wide initiatives (Timperley, 2008). Also, the encouragement of student involvement in school improvement plans is an example of leadership that respects others’ opinions (Fielding, 2001).

Another way leadership education can affirm the study participants’ caring perspective of leadership is with a long-term project that promotes caring leadership in areas of school beyond specified leadership development programs. Leadership development does not have to be limited to a few special programs, such as the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs at Parklands High School. Due to limited enrollment spaces, not every student has access to the leadership development programs. Therefore, a committee of teachers and
students at schools could plan a more holistic, school-wide and cross-curricular approach to leadership development.

This research project grew from my personal interest in student leadership and the intense experience for students in extracurricular leadership development programs. I believe leadership learning and development should not be limited to students that have the foresight and opportunity to attend the programs. Therefore, I feel a duty as an educator to find ways to bring opportunities for leadership development to the classroom. Through this work, I move to inspire other educators to foster the leader that lives within each one of their students.
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## APPENDIX A: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS’ SCHEDULES

**Willow Winds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:35 am</td>
<td>Meet</td>
<td>Everyone meet at school</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:35 - 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Drive</td>
<td>Leave school and arrive at camp</td>
<td>Bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 - 6:00</td>
<td>Luggage</td>
<td>Collect luggage</td>
<td>Arrival field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 - 7:30</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Sitting in cabin groups</td>
<td>Dining Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 - 8:00</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>Guidelines and rules</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45 - 8:30</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
<td>Settle into cabins</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 - 9:30</td>
<td>Icebreakers</td>
<td>Big group games</td>
<td>Main camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 - 10:30</td>
<td>Campfire &amp; snack</td>
<td>Everyone together</td>
<td>Main campfire site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 - 11:00</td>
<td>Cabin reflections</td>
<td>Counselors debrief day</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Lights out</td>
<td>Sleep</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 - 8:00 am</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Counselors responsible</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 8:45</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Cabin groups</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 - 9:10</td>
<td>Meet Activity Groups</td>
<td>Name games</td>
<td>Main camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15 - 10:30</td>
<td>Activity 1</td>
<td>Canoeing/ hiking/ ziplining/ archery/ rock climbing/ wilderness skills/ arts &amp; crafts</td>
<td>Activity sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 - 12:00 pm</td>
<td>Activity 2</td>
<td>Canoeing/ hiking/ ziplining/ archery/ rock climbing/ wilderness skills/ arts &amp; crafts</td>
<td>Activity sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 1:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Meal Games with activity groups</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15 - 2:30</td>
<td>Activity 3</td>
<td>Canoeing/ hiking/ ziplining/ archery/ rock climbing/ wilderness skills/ arts &amp; crafts</td>
<td>Activity sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45 - 4:00</td>
<td>Activity 4</td>
<td>Canoeing/ hiking/ ziplining/ archery/ rock climbing/ wilderness skills/ arts &amp; crafts</td>
<td>Activity sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:15 - 4:30</td>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Everyone together</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:45 - 5:45</td>
<td>Free Time</td>
<td>Volleyball/ tennis/ basketball</td>
<td>Activity sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 - 7:00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Meal Games with cabin groups</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 - 7:45</td>
<td>Cabin games</td>
<td>Activities/games</td>
<td>Cabin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45 - 10:30</td>
<td>3 Outdoor Rotations</td>
<td>Night Activity (Camouflage) Campfire Stargazing</td>
<td>Field, dock, campfire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 - 11:00</td>
<td>Cabin Reflections</td>
<td>Counselors lead debriefing</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Lights out</td>
<td>Cabin check, sleep</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 - 8:00</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Counselors responsible</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 9:00</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Cabin groups</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 10:15</td>
<td>Activity 5</td>
<td>Canoeing/ hiking/ ziplining/ archery/ rock climbing/ wilderness skills/ arts &amp; crafts</td>
<td>Activity sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 - 11:45</td>
<td>Activity 6</td>
<td>Canoeing/ hiking/ ziplining/ archery/ rock climbing/ wilderness skills/ arts &amp; crafts</td>
<td>Activity sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 12:45 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Meal Game in activity groups</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45 - 2:00</td>
<td>Activity 7</td>
<td>Canoeing/ hiking/ ziplining/ archery/ rock climbing/ wilderness skills/ arts &amp; crafts</td>
<td>Activity sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15 - 4:15</td>
<td>Team Building</td>
<td>Cheer construction, Cheer off and vehicle for relay race</td>
<td>Open stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:15 - 4:30</td>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Everyone together</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30 - 5:30</td>
<td>Free time</td>
<td>Volleyball/ tennis/ basketball (and other activities)</td>
<td>Activity sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 - 6:45</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Meal game with cabin groups</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:45 - 7:30</td>
<td>Rehearsal</td>
<td>Skit in a bag</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 - 9:30</td>
<td>Talent Show</td>
<td>Everyone together</td>
<td>Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 - 10:30</td>
<td>Campfires</td>
<td>Girls &amp; Boys separate</td>
<td>Campfire sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 - 10:45</td>
<td>Return to cabins</td>
<td>Cabin Reflections</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Lights out</td>
<td>Cabin Checks</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 - 8:00</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Counselors responsible</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 8:45</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Cabin groups</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 11:00</td>
<td>The Ultimate Relay Race</td>
<td>Everyone in activity teams</td>
<td>Throughout camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 12:00 pm</td>
<td>Packing</td>
<td>Pack to leave camp</td>
<td>Cabins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 1:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Eat lunch in cabin groups</td>
<td>Dining hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 - 1:30</td>
<td>Departure</td>
<td>Leave camp</td>
<td>Loading dock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30 - 2:30</td>
<td>Board Buses</td>
<td>Drive to school</td>
<td>Bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>Arrival</td>
<td>Arrive back at school</td>
<td>Bus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Girls for Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 pm</td>
<td>Arrival</td>
<td>Everyone check in</td>
<td>Front foyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 - 7:00</td>
<td>Welcome games</td>
<td>Everyone then in groups</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 - 7:45</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Rotate through groups</td>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45 - 8:30</td>
<td>Treasure Hunt</td>
<td>Groups follow clues</td>
<td>Whole school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30 - 9:30</td>
<td>Skit Performance</td>
<td>Groups create skit and perform using clues</td>
<td>Drama room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 - 10:00</td>
<td>Cake Decoration</td>
<td>Groups decorate then eat cake</td>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 - 11:00</td>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>Choice to go swimming or get ready for bed</td>
<td>Pool / Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>Cozy time chats</td>
<td>Leader facilitated group discussions</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 2:00</td>
<td>Movie</td>
<td>Watch movie in beds</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00 am</td>
<td>Sleep</td>
<td>Sleep (hopefully)</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 - 8:00</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
<td>Pack up bedding</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 - 8:45</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Sitting in Groups</td>
<td>Cafeteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 - 9:30</td>
<td>Mural</td>
<td>Groups painting mural to hang in school</td>
<td>Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 - 10:30</td>
<td>Warm Fuzzies</td>
<td>Kind messages to others</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30 - 11:00</td>
<td>Thank you and check out</td>
<td>Group picture and clean up</td>
<td>Gym / Front foyer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION TEMPLATES

## First Field Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Observed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program and Activity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task assigned to leader:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## First Post-Observation Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Observed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program and Activity:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of participant in leader role:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of expected leader behaviour:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations of surprising leader behaviour:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible follow-up questions to ask participant during interviews:</td>
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### Second Field Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Observed:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program and Activity:</th>
<th>Location:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task assigned to leader:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations:</th>
<th>Immediate researcher interpretation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Second Post-Observation Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Observed:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program and Activity:</th>
<th>Location:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of participant in leader role:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations of expected leader behaviour:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations of surprising leader behaviour:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible follow-up questions to ask participant during interviews:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interview protocol was the same for the participants in the Willow Winds and Girls for Change programs. The following interview questions were therefore appropriately phrased for each study participant.

First Interview

*Pre-Amble:* Thank you again for meeting with me today. We are going to discuss your role as a leader at the leadership program. Also, how this experience might have changed your thoughts and feelings about your self and other students in the school. At any time during this interview and research process you may refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the study altogether with negative repercussions.

1. Pretend I am one of your friends who does not want to go to the Willow Winds retreat/Girls for Change sleepover. What would you say to me to convince me to go?

2. If the Willow Winds retreat/Girls for Change sleepover were a story, what would be the moral of the story be?

3. If your school day were a story, what would the moral of that story be?

4. Was there anyone at the Willow Winds retreat/Girls for Change sleepover you thought was an exceptional leader? Why?

5. Think about a friend of yours that also attended the Willow Winds retreat/Girls for Change sleepover. What do you admire about your friend? Has your opinion changed after working with them in the program?

6. What would your friends say they admire about you? What would the people you met at the Willow Winds retreat/Girls for Change sleepover say they admire about you? Why?

7. If you could offer advice for your peers that are struggling to be a leader in their school, what would it be?

8. Has anything about how you feel towards your self and others (classmates, friends) changed for you since your experience at Willow Winds/Girls for Change?
Second Interview

Pre-Amble: Thank you again for meeting with me today. We are going to again discuss your thoughts at the leadership programs here at school you participated in this year. Also we are going to talk about how you show self esteem or self worth and the relationships you have with others in your life. At any time during this interview and research process you may refuse to answer a question or withdraw from the study altogether with no negative consequences.

1. Think back to the Willow Winds retreat/Girls for Change sleepover. Imagine we filmed you during the event. Walk us through what that film would show.

2. Now imagine you time travelled back to September 1st before Willow Winds/Girls for Change even happened and you had a copy of the Willow Winds retreat/Girls for Change sleepover film on your ipod. When you watched the film would have been surprised at what you saw. Why?

3. Explain why you think it should or shouldn’t be mandatory for students at Parklands High School to go to Willow Winds/Girls for Change.

4. Since the last interview you have had some time to think the potential impact of your experience in your own life. Compare the way you feel about your self before you were a leader at Willow Winds/Girls for Change and now. Please explain your comparison.

5. If the students in your group at Willow Winds/Girls for Change had to write a leader evaluation about you, what do you think it would say? What about if your teachers had to write a similar review? Your friends? Your family? Why are these reviews the same/different?

6. Can you tell me of a time recently where you were the leader? What about outside of Parklands High School?

7. Imagine Parklands High School is a small town and each student and teacher has a job in the town. What would your job be? Imagine the same scenario for the Willow Winds retreat/Girls for Change sleepover? Why is your job same/different?

8. Explain a time when recently have you felt sorry for someone else. What would you do to help that person?

9. What are the most important things a good leader has to remember? What leadership skills do you want to work on the rest of this year?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Interview Reflection Template</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Interviewed:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description of overall session:</strong> (tone, mood, ease of discussion, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incidents of unexpected behaviour or responses:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergent code words in responses (friendship, self-confidence, leadership &amp; community):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possible follow-up questions to ask participant during next interview/ Questions still unanswered:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: SAMPLE INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORMS

Information Letter

September 4, 2012

RE: Willow Winds Program

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The extracurricular leadership program your son/daughter is planning to attend is the focus of a research study that I am conducting for my Master of Arts degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. The purpose of the study is to gain insight of the student experience of being a leader in the program. The findings from this study will be used to help improve the Willow Winds program and similar leadership development programs at Parklands High School.

The study participants have already volunteered and consented to being observed during the leadership program. Due to the group nature of the leadership program, the study participants may be observed interacting with your son/daughter during the event.

No photos, video or audio recording will be taken during the event or in the observations of the study participants. In no written documents will your son/daughter’s name or any other identifying features be mentioned.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Karen Seedhouse
Researcher, MA Candidate
Dept. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/UT
416-778-7949
ekaren.seedhouse@utoronto.ca

Dr. Elizabeth Campbell
Research Supervisor, Professor
Dept. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/UT
416-978-0232
ecampbell@oise.utoronto.ca
Guardian Consent Form

May 16, 2012

RE: Permission form to participate in volunteer research study about student leadership

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your son/daughter was a student leader in an extracurricular leadership program that will be the focus of a research study I am conducting for my Masters of Arts degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The purpose of the study is to analyze the students' perspectives of their experiences leading a group of their peers in a school-based leadership development program. The results of this study are intended to improve the design of extracurricular leadership programs for future students at Parkland High School.

The External Research Review Committee of the TDSB has granted approval for this study. In addition, Parkland High School’s Principal, has given permission for the study to be carried out at school and during the leadership program.

The study requires volunteers to be observed participating in the program, and interviewed individually in late October or early November and again in December. The interviews will be 25 minutes in length and take place in the conference room at Parkland High School during the lunch period. The interviews will include questions about what your son/daughter feels he/she has learned about being a leader after participation in the Willow Winds program at Parkland High School.

Your son/daughter’s participation in this study will be strictly confidential. Interview responses will be available only to my research supervisor and me. Pseudonyms (fake names) will be used in all references to student participants in the observation written notes, transcripts (interview written records), thesis document and any future publications of the information. Every reasonable precaution will be made to protect the identity of your son/daughter in this study, except in a case where there is reason for the researcher to believe the child may be in danger of harming themselves or others.
Participation in the study will have no effect on your son/daughter’s grades, student awards or selection for future leadership positions. Your child also has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. If there are any further questions about the rights of research participants please contact the University of Toronto Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca, phone 416-946-3273). Further, I can make a summary of the research findings available to you upon request.

I appreciate your interest for your child participating in this research study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Karen Seedhouse
Researcher, MA Candidate
Dept. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/UT
416-778-7949
karen.seedhouse@utoronto.ca

Dr. Elizabeth Campbell
Research Supervisor, Professor
Dept. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/UT
416-978-0232
ecampbell@oise.utoronto.ca

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT

I have read the above information and agree to allow my son/daughter
__________________________ to participate the research study at Parkland.

I have read the above information and do not wish my son/daughter
__________________________ to participate the research study at Parkland.

Parent/Guardian Name (printed): ________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

Please return this permission form to Mrs. Karen Seedhouse at Parkland High School by (June 18, 2012). A copy of this letter will be made for you to keep.
May 16, 2012

RE: Volunteer to participate in student leadership research study consent form

Dear Student Leader at Parkland High School,

The Willow Winds program is the focus of a research project I am conducting for my Masters of Arts degree at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the experience you, the student leader, had in the program. Insight gained from this research will be used to help improve the Willow Winds program for future students.

This research requires interested volunteer participants that are student leaders in the Willow Winds program this year.

As a volunteer you would be:
• Observed leading your group during the Willow Winds program.
• Interviewed twice about your time in the program and your leadership experiences following the program.

Interviews will 25 minutes and take place over the lunch hour at school. The first interview will be in late October or early November and the second in December. Both interviews will be conducted in the school conference room and be confidential and private. The interviews will be audio recorded, but only made available to my research supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Campbell at the University of Toronto, and me. Your name, the school name or any other identifying information will never be used in any records of the research study. Pseudonyms (fake names) will always be used to help protect your identity in the research records and any future publications of the research. All information will be confidential unless there is reason to believe you or someone else may be at risk of being harmed.

By volunteering for this study, you will be helping to improve the future Willow Winds retreats. Participation in this research study will not have any effect on your grades, student awards or selection for future leadership positions. You have the right to stop participating in the research study at any time without any negative consequences. If you have any further questions about your rights as a research participant please contact the University of Toronto Office of Research.
Participant Consent Continued

Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca, phone 416-946-3273). Further, I can make a summary of the research findings available to you upon request.

I appreciate your interest in volunteering for this research study. Please do not hesitate to ask me any further questions.

Sincerely,

Karen Seedhouse
Researcher, MA Candidate
Dept. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/UT
416-778-7949
karen.seedhouse@utoronto.ca

Dr. Elizabeth Campbell
Research Supervisor, Professor
Dept. Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/UT
416-978-0232
ecampbell@oise.utoronto.ca

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Willow Winds Program

I ____________________________ (print name) have read and understood the above information and volunteer to participate in the research study at Parkland High School.

Your Signature:__________________________

Date:__________________________
APPENDIX E: UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD STUDY APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, RESEARCH

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 27329

February 8, 2012

Dr. Elizabeth Campbell
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Mrs. Karen A.E. Seedhouse
DEPT OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING & LEARNING
OISE/UT

Dear Dr. Campbell and Mrs. Karen A.E. Seedhouse,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "Student perceptions of school-based leadership programs"

ETHICS APPROVAL

| Original Approval Date: February 8, 2012 |
| Expiry Date: February 7, 2013 |
| Continuing Review Level: 1 |

We are writing to advise you that the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB's delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Margaret Schneider, Ph.D.,
C.Psych
REB Chair

Dean Sharpe, Ph.D.
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
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