

LEADERSHIP EMERGENCE THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM: A CASE STUDY OF LATE ADOLESCENT EXEMPLARS

Abstract

Leadership education is a prominent component of youth programming. In their efforts to promote leadership development, most youth programs promote character development and teach interpersonal skills but fall short in teaching leadership because they fail to encourage the use of authority. In this paper, we present the stories of five late adolescent exemplars as a case study of youth leadership emergence through volunteerism. These youth demonstrated leadership by transitioning from participating in community service activities to becoming organizers of their own beneficent efforts. Through a qualitative analysis of interviews with these adolescent leaders, we present themes that were important to their emergence as leaders. We then discuss how these findings should be used to inform youth development programs that are designed to encourage youth leadership through volunteerism.

Introduction

Leadership education has become an increasingly prominent component of a college education (Huber, 2002). This increased focus has filtered down to education and programming for youth as well. As early as elementary school, programs strive to help children develop leadership capacities through character development and interpersonal skills training (Ullestad, 2009). Just as leadership lacks a single definition, the notion of youth leadership is inconsistent across programs (Klau, 2006). Roach, Wyman, Brookes, Chavez, Heath, and Valdes (1999) suggest that while endeavors to create leadership programs for youth is good, this lack of a theoretical foundation allows youth practitioners to create programs that reflect their own beliefs about what is best for leadership development. One example of this would be Van Linden and Fertman (1998) suggesting

that adolescents are leaders by spending time with peers, babysitting, being involved with the school or community, and by volunteering. While this sentiment reflects more modern notions in which leadership is not an inherent quality but a capacity that anyone can develop (Dugan & Komives, 2007), suggesting that anything could be considered leadership; this does not promote leadership development among young people.

Despite the disparate views of what leadership is, Bass (2008) suggests that there are four common themes in modern definitions of leadership: (a) the leader as a person, (b) the behaviors of the leader, (c) the effects of the leader, and (d) the interactive process between the leader and the follower. These themes reflect the post-industrial paradigm of leadership that is more process focused and change directed (Rost, 1993). The Social Change Model (SCM) of Leadership

Development (HERI, 1996) falls under this post-industrial paradigm. The SCM was designed as a collegiate leadership educational tool and is the most used leadership model in colleges and universities in the United States (Owen, 2012). The central idea of this model is that leadership is a process whereby an individual (the leader) marshals the support of others to create positive social change. The leader is able to do this by developing capacities across three domains, individual, group, and societal/community. Within each of these domains are values that the leader must foster. These values are referred to as the Seven Cs. Within the individual domain leaders must develop a consciousness of self and of personal values, they must develop congruence in living those values, and a commitment to action. Within the group domain a leader must foster collaboration and common purpose with others as well as engage in controversy with civility. Finally, in the societal/community domain, a leader needs to engender a sense of citizenship. These seven values lead to the ultimate goal of the social change model, an eighth C of change, specifically, positive social change (Komives, Wagner & Associates, 2016).

Adolescents have many opportunities to participate in positive social change through volunteerism and activism. In the United States, about one in four adolescents engage in volunteer activities (Corporation for National & Community Service, 2015). Adolescent volunteerism is associated with numerous positive outcomes. Adolescents who volunteer show gains in positive identity development (Pancer, Pratt, Hunsberger, & Alisat, 2007), better academic outcomes (Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, & Snyder, 1998) positive attitudes about one's ability to impact their community (Janzen, Pancer, Nelson, Loomis, & Hasford, 2010) and are more likely to engage civically as adults (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1997). Undoubtedly, volunteerism is a noble endeavor that positively affects both the youth volunteers and those they serve (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). However,

we think that leadership involves more than simply participating in community service.

Authority is the ingredient that propels leadership into something more than passive volunteerism. MacNeil (2006) defines authority as influence and decision-making power. In addition to the ideas presented earlier that leadership is a relationship process and involves creating change, MacNeil (2006) argues that the use of authority (influence and decision-making power) is critical to leadership. Because of negative stereotypes surrounding the dependability of adolescents, those who would teach youth leadership often withhold real authority even if youth are able to hold leadership positions in youth organizations. As one program developer lamented, "teenagers are often regarded by adults as not old or experienced enough to hold meaningful official leadership roles" (Ferrence Ray, 2016, p. 101). Without the exercise of authority, "young people are simply learning about leadership rather than learning leadership" (MacNeil, 2006, p. 38). Because of the societal pushback on adolescent use of authority, it would be easy to suggest, like Van Linden and Fertman (1998), that under the SCM, an adolescent can be a leader by simply volunteering. Nonetheless, simply volunteering falls short of the complete definition of leadership because there is no practice of authority. We suggest that the emergence of leadership through volunteerism occurs when an individual goes from participating in volunteer work to creating volunteer opportunities for themselves and others. Beyond merely participating in social change, leaders are those who create it.

Programs that aim to promote youth leadership development using the Social Change Model need to foster the use of authority. A good example of this kind of program is the one described by Schwartz and Suyemoto (2013) where youth leaders learn community organizing skills and determine what social issues they would and invests significant time and energy (Vallerand et al., 2003). Passions

better understand the process whereby a young person moves from participating in volunteerism to creating opportunities for volunteerism.

The purpose of this study was to examine the process whereby a young person emerges as a leader by moving from participating in social change to creating social change. To accomplish this, we interviewed late adolescents who had demonstrated leadership and authority by creating volunteerism opportunities. Guiding our inquiry were the following research questions:

1. What characteristics do emerging adolescent leaders possess?
2. What resources do adolescents utilize in their journey toward leadership emergence?
3. How do emerging adolescent leaders describe the obstacles they experienced while engaging in social change work?

Methods

Sample. Participants for this study were recruited with the help of Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY), a non-profit organization that provides leadership training to high school students across the United States and internationally. HOBY uses the SCM as a foundation for its curriculum throughout its various programs. Students who participate in a HOBY program are taught leadership skills and are encouraged to volunteer in their communities (Ferrence Ray, 2016). Participants selected for this study were HOBY alumni who were identified as exemplars of leadership according to the framework we have laid out. Each participant demonstrated leadership by creating service opportunities and social change. All but one of the participants in our study also attended a HOBY program called the Advanced Leadership Academy (ALA). ALA's curriculum is designed to help participants create an action plan to complete a particular community service or social entrepreneurship project over the course of 12 months (Ferrence Ray, 2016).

From a list of thirteen exemplary program alumni provided by HOBY administrators, we identified seven potential participants based on descriptions of their excellent community service work. We contacted each of them explaining the purpose of the study and asked if they would be willing to share their leadership story through an interview. Of the seven participants initially identified, six responded to the invitation to participate and five completed all the study procedures. Because this group was homogenous in terms of the phenomena being studied (Sandelowski, 1995), we think that we had reached data saturation with the five participants and so we did not contact any of the remaining potential participants. Two of the five participants were female and three of the five participants were ethnic minorities. The participants were demographically diverse, but we will not provide specific demographic details in this section to protect the privacy of participants. A brief description of each participant precludes his or her story below.

Procedure. We contacted the participants via e-mail and invited them to respond if they were interested in participating in the study. Informed consent was completed prior to scheduling an interview. The participants told their stories of leadership and volunteerism during a semi-structured video-conferencing interview. Each interview lasted between thirty and forty-five minutes. The interview was designed to allow the participants an opportunity to tell their stories of volunteerism and social change work in a way that was important to them. Prior to the interview, we sent participants a list of questions to consider (e.g. "Why did you dedicate yourself to this cause and not another?", "What victories have you experienced", "What challenges have you experienced?" "What support have you received?"). At the beginning of the interview, the participants told their story uninterrupted while the interviewer took notes. The lead author, who has volunteered with the HOBY organization and its programs, conducted these interviews and asked follow-up and clarifying questions to elicit detail to the participants' stories.

Analytic Process. Following the interview, we transcribed the interactions verbatim in preparation for coding. Throughout transcription and again once all transcription was complete, the lead author consulted the original data to gain a sense of totality by reading through the interviews multiple times prior to the coding phase.

Initial coding took place in three stages. The first author began by coding interviews using In Vivo Coding, where the contents of the interviews is broken down into thematic chunks of data. With In Vivo Coding, the codes reflect the actual language of the participant (Strauss, 1987). This was done to preserve the integrity of the participants' voice, which is especially important when coding interviews with youth (Saldaña, 2016). Next, we employed pattern coding to classify the codes that emerged during the initial analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Finally, anchored in the research and theory on positive youth development and leadership, we conducted a directed content analysis of the pattern codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The purpose of this phase of analysis was to uncover specific themes related to our original research questions. Following the coding process, all identifiable information was removed and names were replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect the confidentiality of our participants.

To further establish trustworthiness of the analysis, we used two strategies. First, the second author acted as a check by reading through the coded material to verify accuracy and completeness. Next, we used member checking by allowing the original participants to read the results section of the manuscript to judge the accuracy and credibility of the account from their perspective (Creswell, 2013). Minor adjustments were made based on their feedback.

Results

The following are short summaries of each participant's story of leadership emergence through community service. At the time of the interviews,

participants were in their first or second year of undergraduate university studies and were reflecting back to when they were 15 to 18 years old.

Chad. When Chad was eleven years old, his dad passed away due to Parkinson's disease. With a desire to bring awareness to and raise money for Parkinson's disease, Chad began planning a 5k walk/run event. During that time, Chad's neighbor Suzy had a grandfather who also passed away from Parkinson's disease. Together they held a successful event that raised over \$4,000 that they donated towards Parkinson's disease research. Chad and Suzy together formed a non-profit organization to expand their work and make the 5k walk/run an annual event.

Elisabeth. Growing up, Elisabeth recognized that food equality was a major problem in the United States. She did not think that it was fair that she had access to fresh and healthy foods while others in her community did not. She started volunteering at food pantries and local community kitchens and eventually connected with an organization called Feeding Children Everywhere. Elisabeth organized a campaign at her high school, raised over \$3,000 dollars, and packed over 12,000 meals for Feeding Children Everywhere.

Danny. Through several formative personal experiences, Danny became passionate about gender equality, interpersonal violence, and sexual assault. Danny organized an educational campaign at his high school to raise awareness about issues surrounding domestic violence and abuse. His campaign included delivering an educational lecture, posting public service announcements at school, and organizing a walk event. During the course of the campaign, students also prepared 75 care packages and raised \$8,000 dollars

for the local domestic abuse shelter.

Omar. When Omar was in early adolescence when he began volunteering with organizations that worked to address poverty in third-world countries. When on a trip to a college campus near his uncle's home, Omar asked his uncle if he had a bag he could use while he was visiting the campus. His uncle showed him a "giant garbage bag" full of bags that he had received through attending various conferences. Seeing an opportunity to redistribute these unused resources to those in need, Omar started contacting conferences and asking permission to set up donation bins for attendees to donate their unwanted bags at the end of the conference. Omar set up a non-profit organization that would collect those bags and put them in the hands of other charities that would send them to developing nations so that children would have a bag to carry to school.

Taylor. Taylor is one of three daughters of a same-sex couple. Growing up in the Southern United States, she experienced prejudice from her community because of her family makeup. Taylor and her sisters began documenting their discrimination through social media to bring awareness to the experiences of children of same-sex couples in the United States. LGBT rights groups invited Taylor to sign an amicus brief submitted to the Supreme Court and to participate in rallies held in Washington D. C. while the Supreme Court deliberated on the case of marriage equality.

Nine themes emerged from these data through our coding process (see Table 1). In response to our first research question, "what characteristics do emerging adolescent leaders possess?", the themes of involvement, passion, confidence, skills, ownership, and mentorship describe the data. For our second research question, "what resources

do adolescents utilize in their journey toward leadership emergence?", the following two themes emerged, mentors and positive networks. Finally, for our question "how do emerging adolescent leaders describe the obstacles they experienced while engaging in social change work?", the theme of overcoming obstacles emerged. We illustrate the importance and role of each theme below.

It is not surprising that these youth leaders were involved in extracurricular activities prior to their emergence as leaders. Research has consistently shown that youth who engaged in extracurricular, non-academic activities demonstrate positive development during adolescence and into adulthood (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). These positive effects are more pronounced for youth who are involved for longer periods of time across a variety of contexts (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Similar findings come from the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2007). Extracurricular activities facilitate the development of initiative (Larson, 2000) which would be important to their emergence as leaders through volunteerism. Participation in extracurricular activities is also related to participation in volunteer activities (Youniss, McLellan, Su, & Yates, 1999). Further, participation in volunteer work in adolescence is related to stronger intentions to continue to volunteer (Taylor & Pancer, 2007), as was the case for this sample. Danny describes how volunteering earlier in life led to further involvement in volunteering. Danny's parents purchased a rundown farm when he was six and turned it into an equestrian therapy ranch for persons with disabilities. When recalling the work he did with his parents, Danny felt as though the experience "shaped [him]" and "made [him] really passionate about community service."

Passion. Passion is essential to the emergence of leadership through volunteerism. Without passion, adolescents are unlikely to take advantage of opportunities to develop as leaders (Bronk & McLean, 2016). Passion is an inclination towards an activity that a person enjoys, finds important,

Table 1
Qualitative Themes

What characteristics do emerging adolescent leaders possess?	
Involvement	“in like trying to like volunteer for this, be president of that, like do this, do that, like, too many clubs and um all that stuff”
Passion	“I’m really passionate about, like, hunger and food insecurity issues and things like that”
Confidence	“I could maybe even make my own non-profit one day”
Skills	“I came up with that on my own but using the tools HOBY gave me”
Ownership	“empowering young people to take charge of what they want to do instead of structuring it for them”
Mentoring Others	“I think going back to teach sort of helped me solidify what I think the most important”
What resources do adolescents report utilizing in their journey toward leadership emergence?	
Mentors	“if I ever had any questions or anything they were just there”
Positive Networks	“So I was very privileged to already be a part of, um, a leadership group in my high school called Leadership Institute, um, and they already were, like, a great catalyst point in the school”
How do emerging adolescent leaders report experiencing obstacles while engaging in social change work?	
Overcoming Obstacles	“this entire experience was the exercise in just being able to just jump over hurdles and figure out a way to do something”

develop through a process of selection, valuation, and internalization. Selection occurs as an individual engages in an activity she/he finds enjoyable. This leads to further engagement with that activity. The more energy and time someone invests in an activity the more valued it becomes (Vallerand et al., 2003). Eventually, passions are internalized and become a part of an individual’s identity (Vallerand, 2012). When the selection, valuation and internalization processes are motivated intrinsically, passions lead to greater engagement and meaning in life as opposed to passions that develop due to intrapersonal and/or interpersonal pressures (Mageau et al., 2009). For all the participants, their projects were rooted in a cause they were passionate about. They selected their passions after personal experiences that brought certain issues to their attention. After becoming aware of these issues, they put increasing value on those causes until they have become a part of their identity.

Elisabeth developed passion for food inequality

over a process of time. She was unaware of food inequality until she heard some other kids at school talking about government assistance programs. After becoming aware of the issue, Elisabeth began researching the topic for school projects. “I realized, like, people just don’t have the same opportunities as others. I can eat all the organic vegetables I want but someone a few streets down will be, like, eating canned food and boxed food and processed food... it just bothered me that everyone didn’t have the same equal opportunity to eat, like, properly or nutritiously.” This increasing valuation of food inequality led her to volunteer with various organizations like soup kitchens and food pantries. Eventually she created her own project to address this issue. Now, she has internalized this passion and it is an important part of her self-concept. She is at a university studying social work with a minor in food systems and she would eventually like to run a non-profit that addresses issues of food inequality. Elisabeth’s story is not unique in this respect. The passions of those we interviewed have influenced

have influenced their choice of college major they are pursuing in higher education and have developed into what Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) call a purpose in life, a set of long reaching goals that contribute to a person's own search for meaning and the world around them.

Confidence. The youth in this sample all demonstrated confidence in their ability to create positive social change. All of our participants shared an experience where they realized that they could do something greater than their current volunteer work. Confidence came in two ways for those we interviewed: through their initial attempts to create positive change, and by seeing models of youth leadership. Omar developed confidence through his initial attempt to create positive change. After his experience with his uncle, he decided to set up a bag donation bin at a conference and then donate however many bags he received to a charity. "The first conference I went to there were 500 attendees and a little over 300 of them donated their bags and that was kind of eye opening. Everyone there that was seeing me was like 'you know this could really be something, I go to a lot of conferences, this is a service that is needed, um, why don't you do something there.' So from there I thought 'OK, I guess I could do a non-profit organization.'" While Omar never intended this to be a long-term project, this initial success helped him to develop the confidence needed to move forward. Elisabeth developed confidence after seeing models of social change. Early in high school, Elisabeth learned of another girl in her high school who had started her own non-profit organization that connected her school's cooking program with the local soup kitchen. "So hearing about a girl who was just in my shoes and my footsteps really helped me to be, like, 'Hey, I definitely could do something, I want to do something.'" Elisabeth's confidence grew because this high-school aged model was salient to her.

The experiences that these youths shared make sense from a developmental perspective. Both prior successes and salient models are important to the development of self-efficacy, which refers

to a person's judgments of their capabilities to accomplish a goal (Bandura, 1989). This judgement is one of the primary determinants of whether an individual will engage and or persist in any given behavior (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is manifested both generally as well as in specific domains. Leadership research has shown that individuals with higher levels of leadership self-efficacy set more lofty goals in the practice of their leadership (Kane, Zaccaro, Tremble, & Masuda, 2002). Because of their prior and vicarious experiences through salient models, our participants developed the confidence needed to practice leadership.

Skills. In addition to confidence in their ability to make a difference, these youths also expressed the importance of developing skills, such as using goal setting, managing project logistics and organizing volunteers. One skill that stood out above all others was that of information literacy. Information literacy is the ability to recognize gaps in knowledge and how to find and evaluate new information (Bruce, 1999). All our participants expressed the value of the Internet for finding information, fundraising, and spreading awareness. Chad mentioned that "the Internet was a huge huge huge tool." Chad and Suzy created a website and managed pages on social media for their event to spread awareness. They also used an online fundraising site for the majority of fundraising. When Taylor wanted to share her story of discrimination, she used a blog. She realized that to reach a larger audience they would need to change their content. "[We created] a video about our family sort of putting the blog into film um, because we thought that would help us get a wider audience in this day and age. Everybody likes to watch videos more than they like to read articles." This video was what garnered attention from advocacy groups and got her involved in the marriage equality debate on a larger scale. Finally, when Omar was encouraged to do more by conference attendees who donated their bags, he turned to the internet to see how to create a non-profit organization. "I just looked up how to start one online." Later when he needed to incorporate

with the IRS and could not afford a lawyer to help him, Omar figured it out on his own. "I spent about one or two months just with the instructions and the paperwork filling it out all myself to save the money that we didn't have to get a lawyer."

Ownership. When talking about their projects, our participants used what Larson (2000) called agentic language. This agentic language is important because it demonstrates self-efficacy, intentionality, forethought, self-regulation, and self-reflection (Bandura, 2006), all of which are important to leadership development. Those we interviewed spoke of their experiences in terms of what they accomplished, using possessive pronouns such as "my project." This agentic language suggests ownership over their work. Omar mentioned how important that sense of ownership is to him. "And so that's something we've always prided ourselves on, you know, we're an organization for kids by kids. We're an organization that's giving these bags, these promotional items, this encouragement, um, to a school child in the developing world and that was all coordinated and orchestrated by another group of students. And I really like that idea and I like that concept a lot."

Danny spoke extensively about ownership during his interview. He related that during his project he constantly went to his mentors for advice on what to do. In advice seeking, he felt as if he was questioning himself and his abilities rather than trusting that he could do it. This attitude turned around by the end of the project: "And by the end of the project I realized that this was something that I started and I needed to take ownership for it and this is not the adults' project. This is my project and I need to stop asking for permission and just do and take ownership of that." Danny related that when he talks to youth about service he always relates the importance of taking ownership for your work. This emphasis on ownership demonstrates these youths' transition from participating in volunteer work to emerging as leaders and creators of social change.

Mentoring Others. All of the participants referred to instances in which they have now mentored other youth develop as leaders. Danny's statement about talking to youth about service was not unique to his story. At the suggestion of her own mentor, Elisabeth agreed to help another young man who also wanted to organize a project on behalf of Feeding Children Everywhere. Additionally, Chad, Elisabeth, and Taylor all volunteered with their local HOBY chapters as junior facilitators, which play an important role during HOBY state seminars in teaching those who attend leadership skills. The most striking example of acting as a mentor came from Omar. While in high school, Omar hired two fellow students to serve as the Chief Marketing Officer and the Chief Operating Officer for his non-profit. "That was another big task, you know, how do you lead people, how do you manage other people and motivate them to be just as passionate about your mission as you are, um, and that was also a really cool experience." Emerging as leaders, these young people demonstrated a desire to pass what they learned onto others.

Mentors. Support from adult mentors is important for the development of leadership skills (Hancock, Dyk, & Jones, 2012). A mentor is someone who can provide social capital and advice to a protégé (Barnett, 1984). Those we interviewed described mentors who provided social connections and encouragement. Chad described his mentor, Sarah as someone who had "all the connections in all the right places." Sarah worked in a county office and was able to connect Chad with individuals, organizations, and agencies necessary to carry out his event. Danny's mentor helped give him a greater perspective on the needs of his community. This new perspective helped him to adjust his project to better address local needs. Beyond social connections, mentors also played a role in providing encouragement and advice. Elisabeth was especially grateful for her mentor, Nicole. Elisabeth met Nicole through HOBY and asked her to be her mentor because they had a shared interest in nutrition. Referring to Nicole, Elisabeth expressed

who she supported her. "If I ever had any questions or anything she was just there and she cheered me on and was happy when I told her about my milestones. Um, yeah, just having her a text away or a call away was just really great."

Positive Networks. Beyond the direct support gained from their mentors, our participants spoke of the indirect support they received from a positive network of peers. Chad credited attendance at his local HOBY state seminar as a turning point for him. When asked what specifically made the difference in his leadership, he expressed the importance of the community of peers that HOBY provided. "You're surrounded by, not all like-minded, but like, equally motivated people. You all come from different backgrounds, different walks of life, and different beliefs but one belief you all share is trying to make positive change in the world." Making connections with other equally engaged youths was an important component to our sample persisting in trying to make a difference. Omar described it like this, "Getting all these other like-minded people in a room from all across the state really gives you a sense of community. More so on the national level. There are people that are actually dedicating their lives um to doing great, and once you feel like you belong to that community, you're more reinforced to stay in that community, continue doing what you're doing."

One possible explanation for the importance of these positive peer networks lies in Elkind's conception of personal fable (Elkind, 1967). Elkind suggested that adolescents have an exaggerated egocentric belief that they are special or unique. Personal fables are often linked to adolescent risk-taking behaviors (Greene, Krcmar, Walkters, Rubin & Hale, 2000), and they might also be responsible for some youth's reluctance to engage in positive behaviors. Youth may entertain the personal, fearing that they are alone in their desire to make a difference in the world. Later in his account of the positive network at HOBY, Chad expressed that he felt like a big fish in a little pond but he found connection because "at HOBY, everyone does all

that stuff." The positive network of peers could be responsible for dispelling a personal fable and encouraging youth to be more active and engaged.

Another possible explanation for the importance of a positive peer network to leadership emergence is the idea of identity capital. The notion of identity capital refers to the collection of tangible and intangible attributes that contribute to an individual's ability to navigate the transition from adolescence into adulthood. Tangible attributes such as financial stability, educational achievements, social competencies, and group memberships and intangible attributes such as an internal locus of control, self-esteem, and sense of purpose promote a deeper sense of and commitment to the self (Côté, 1997). The positive networks that our participants describe provide some of the tangible attributes and likely promote some of those intangible attributes that would help them to negotiate the more adult roles that come from exercising leadership authority.

Overcoming Obstacles. Finally, our participants related various obstacles they experienced related to their volunteer and social change activities. These obstacles included discouragement getting started, balancing the amount of work that these projects required, conflict with parents over the amount of time spent with their projects, and lacking the resources they needed to accomplish all that they wanted to do. Encountering obstacles while engaging in social change is predictable, but these youths were noteworthy in their attitudes about overcoming obstacles. For example, Omar felt that overcoming obstacles was valuable to his growth. "The best part of this entire experience was the exercise in just being able to just jump over hurdles and figure out a way to do something and if you can't like change what you're doing and then figure that out. And that whole process I think taught me a skill that was at its very essence problem solving, and something that I've been able to kind of take and use under every circumstance, which has been great." All five youths described how they overcame their obstacles by using skills or positive networks.

Elisabeth used newfound skills to overcome her challenges. Elisabeth described an initial project that, in retrospect, was too ambitious. She indicated that she used skills she had gained to adjust her project to be more manageable. Originally, she wanted to create a non-profit organization and community food kitchen that would connect farmers, dieticians, and cooks with populations in need. "There was just so many different things... I realized that my project ... it wasn't attainable so like one or two months passed and I hadn't been doing anything." Facing a project too large to accomplish, Elisabeth used a principle she learned through leadership education called S.M.A.R.T. goals. S.M.A.R.T. is an acronym to remind individuals that goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound. Rather than giving up on her passion to address food inequality, Elisabeth decided to adjust her plans, "So using SMART goals really helped me to realize, like 'ok, I'm gonna scale back a little bit, I'm still going to do a major project and it's still going to take up a majority of my time but the project I had planned was just not going to work."

Kinsey utilized positive networks to overcome her challenges. Kinsey expressed feeling discouraged about the political climate in the United States and how important her positive network was in encouraging her to continue her efforts of social change. "People who know me and believe in me were sort of there and reached out, you know and said that they really believed what I stand for and what I'm doing ... I had a friend out of the blue just sort of text me and say, ' I'm so proud of you for doing that... I think more than ever, I admire you.'"

What our participants demonstrate through overcoming obstacles is grit. Grit is defined as a perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Individuals who possess grit are willing to persist in an activity despite difficulties and failures (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). Inextricably linked to our participants' demonstration of grit was their passion for a cause (St-Louis, Carbonneau, & Vallerand, 2016). Passion

enabled them to persevere beyond difficulties because their passions had become a part of their identities. Omar's passion for addressing poverty in third world countries enabled him to demonstrate grit. He related an experience of when he tried to volunteer for an organization but was turned down because he was too young, "they made all these promises about how I could help with the shows and stuff but then they said, 'well, I'm sorry we can't have a 13-year-old volunteering for us' or whatever. Then I ended up starting another campaign." The campaign he started was eventually adopted by the organization he originally tried to volunteer for, "I figured that there was something I could do, even though they didn't give it to me, I just wasn't going to sit around and watch. I just wanted to do something." Omar's passion fueled his grit as it did for all of those we interviewed.

Conclusion

The emergence of leadership through volunteerism occurs when an individual goes from participating in volunteer work to creating volunteer opportunities for themselves and others. Through the stories of five adolescent emerging leaders, several themes emerged to describe this process. First, our participants were involved in a range of extracurricular activities including volunteerism. Initial involvement in volunteer work provided an opportunity to develop confidence, skills, and passion (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006), which were essential as they stretched beyond organized volunteerism and became the organizers of their own beneficent efforts. This transition marked their emergence as leaders. Beyond involvement, our participants demonstrated several characteristics that were also important to their emergence as leaders. First, their volunteer work was rooted in a passion. For each participant it was different but each of them cared deeply about addressing a societal need. Before they sought to address that need through their own work, they developed confidence to succeed through initial successes during previous volunteer activities and by

observing salient models of youth who were engaged in impactful social change. Passion for a cause, confidence, and both direct and indirect support from positive networks and mentors played important roles in how they overcame obstacles and demonstrated grit. In addition to having meaningful societal impact, the experiences of leadership emergence has prepared our sample for a life of continued engagement. During our interviews, this sample described their continued efforts of volunteerism and social change.

The stories that these youth shared demonstrate that not only are adolescents capable of emerging as leaders through volunteerism but that their efforts have far-reaching effects, both for themselves and for society. Young people have the potential to positively impact society, so it is critical that youth leadership development programs do more than simply promote character development and teach interpersonal skills. They must also encourage the development of authority through agency. Young people are capable of affecting their communities in positive ways and should be encouraged and enabled in their efforts. These stories are valuable for identifying ways in which youth development programs can facilitate leadership emergence through volunteerism and social change.

Limitations. The findings from this study underscore the role of that volunteerism can play in leadership development. Nonetheless, there are several important limitations to consider related to the current study. Our findings rely on the memories of our participants, rather than on our own observations of young people engaged in social change work. The self-reflective, life stories approach to gaining understanding to past events produces a richness of data that is hard to get through other methods. However, some caution is warranted when relying on the accuracy of memories from such an emotionally rich time as middle adolescence. Stories were gathered several years after the events happened, which may change the stories themselves. Additionally, all the participants from this study were patrons of the same youth development program

within the HOBY organization. It could be of interest to replicate the study with youth people who have similar stories from other organization to identify the relationship of the program to the outcomes. Finally, the sample of five participants is small but we do not feel that this detracts from what can be learned about adolescent leadership emergence (Flyvbjerg, 2006). We felt, as the interview process unfolded, that we reached saturation in the data with the five participants but there is no way to know if adding more participants would have provided additional data. . It would be valuable in future research to examine the stories of youth who take initial steps toward authority and leadership but who do not follow through with their ideas.

Implications for Youth Development Programs.

Our findings provide support for Schwartz & Suyemoto's research (2013) on social change programs. Schwartz and Suyemoto's work focused on a youth development program called Youth Force (YF), which teaches its participants community organizing skills and encourages them to be active participants in their community. Their qualitative work was similar to our own and they developed a model of the process of development through participating in Youth Force. Their model suggests that YF provides for its participants both models of teens as agents of change and a structure for action. The program also facilitates the development of skills, knowledge and a peer community. Continued engagement in YF leads to civic action, which in turn promotes and internal change in self-concept. This creates a positive feedback loop into continued civic engagement. While Schwartz and Suyemoto focused their inquiry on the process of change through participation in YF, our findings highlight the characteristics and resources of emerging leaders. In an effort to build on the findings of Schwartz and Suyemoto we propose an expanded model in Figure 1.

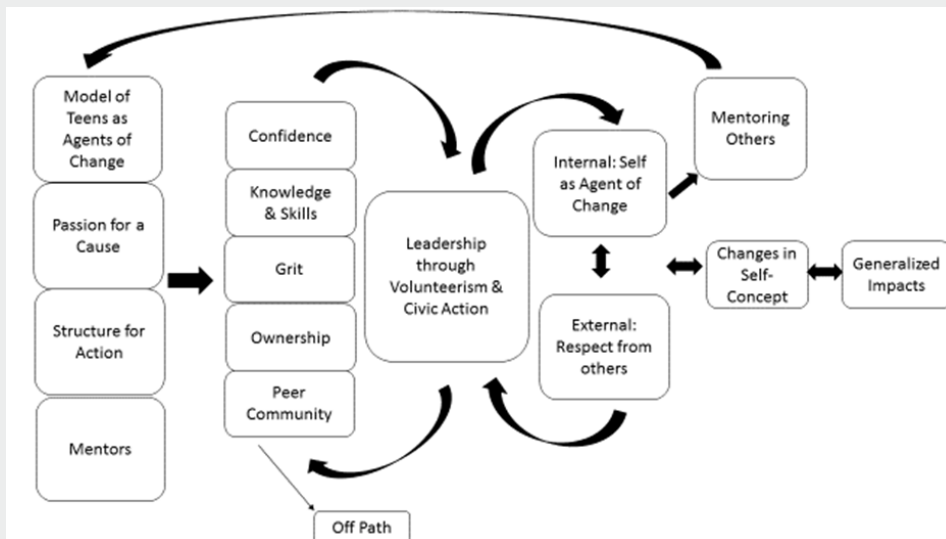


Figure 1. Adapted model from Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013

This adapted model incorporates the themes from the present study with those of Schwartz and Suyemoto. These factors can guide youth development programs to better facilitate the emergence of leadership through volunteerism and social change. Our findings, in concert with those of Schwartz and Suyemoto (2013), suggest that youth development programs should provide salient models, structure for action, and a focus on the passions of its participants. Additionally, these programs should facilitate a mechanism for mentorship. One of the participants in our study suggested that this mechanism for mentorship was one of the strengths of the ALA program. In addition to knowledge, skills, and a peer community, we suggest that programming should also promote confidence, grit, and ownership. Roach et al. (1999) suggested that leadership education should focus on helping young people see themselves as leaders now, not just in the future, by encouraging them to work together to accomplish bold group projects that are based on the interests of the youth. While they do not suggest that those projects exclusively focus on social change, it is one way to encourage these collaborative projects. Finally, when young people emerge as leaders through volunteerism and

social change, they should be given opportunities to mentor other youth. This will provide the salient models that both our research and that of Schwartz and Suyemoto (2013) have shown as an important aspect of programming. YF implements this through its programming by allowing youth who complete the general program to apply to work for YF and be in charge of implementing programming for future participants. Successful aspects of these programs, such as those outlined above, should be incorporated into existing programs that facilitate youth-led social change work such as youth city councils (Carlson, 2006). Beyond facilitating leadership emergence, programs that incorporate these suggestions can have profound impact on communities. We believe that young people have untapped potential to act as agents for positive social change toward improving conditions in their communities and society.

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