

**Developing Leaders:
Understanding and Promoting Perceived Leadership Ability**

by

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DEDICATION

For my son, Baylan.

You can make the world a better place. I hope that you always believe in yourself and that you strive to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

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ABSTRACT

The three studies in this dissertation contribute to our understanding of leadership development by examining perceived leadership ability among underserved adolescents and emerging adults.

Study 1 and 2 utilized data from the Flint Adolescent Study, which followed participants from high school into adulthood. Participants in the sample were predominantly African American and all demonstrated low academic performance. Study 1 considered the influence of context on perceived leadership ability by examining changes in perceived leadership ability during the developmental period known as emerging adulthood. Findings demonstrated that perceived leadership ability declined between the ages of 18 and 22, with the largest declines occurring among emerging adults who did not attend four year colleges. These findings suggest that perceived leadership ability is malleable and responds to contextual factors, such as limited access to leadership roles during emerging adulthood.

Study 2 explored the relationship between adolescent leadership and adult thriving. Findings demonstrated that adolescents' perceived leadership ability predicted leadership roles in later adolescence, which predicted adult mental health and community participation. Adolescent perceived leadership ability also directly predicted adult community participation. These findings suggest that perceived leadership ability, in addition to leadership roles, provides a useful indicator of adolescent thriving among underserved youth.

Study 3 utilized data collected as part of the program evaluation of Badges for Baseball, a juvenile crime prevention program for middle school-aged youth, and sought to identify predictors and mechanisms by which perceived leadership ability develops among adolescents.

The study focused on the role of interpersonal skills in promoting perceived leadership ability. Findings revealed that adolescents' empathy and social competence were unrelated and they contributed to perceived leadership ability in different ways. The effects of empathy on perceived leadership ability were mediated by community participation and peer support, whereas social competence was directly related to perceived leadership ability. These findings suggest that different profiles may exist among youth with high perceived leadership ability and raises questions about how their leadership behaviors may differ.

Together, these studies contribute to our understanding of leadership development among underserved adolescents and emerging adults and offer implications for practice to support their leadership development.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Too often, children in the United States are taught a version of history that presents a series of heroic figures and ignores the contributions of ordinary people (Zinn, 2005). This narrative suggests that only exceptional individuals can become leaders who influence the course of history and paints a picture of leadership that, in the U.S., is often white and male. This limited conceptualization of leadership can have a detrimental effect on students' leadership development. It may be especially harmful to individuals from traditionally marginalized groups who rarely see images of their groups reflected in these narratives. If young people do not believe that they have the ability to be leaders, they are unlikely to seek out leadership roles or engage in other leadership behaviors. Without those experiences, they are unlikely to thrive personally or professionally in a society that places such high value on leadership. Therefore, it is critical to understand how young people develop perceived leadership ability, as well as the role those beliefs play in promoting positive outcomes.

Defining Leadership

Various definitions of leadership have emerged over time. In the 1800s and early 1900s, scholarship focused exclusively on *leaders*, as opposed to *leadership* (Rost, 1993). When the term leadership emerged as a focus of inquiry in the 1960s, the notion of leaders as exceptional individuals was still prevalent and leadership was defined as the actions of those individuals. Scholarship was mostly focused on organizations and management contexts; in those contexts, leadership meant that one held a position of authority and leveraged power to achieve outcomes. In the latter half of the twentieth century, new conceptions of leadership emerged that focused

less on the leader as a powerful individual and more on leadership as a collaborative process that relies on the development and involvement of followers (Komives & Dugan, 2010). These post-industrial theories conceptualize leadership as a learned process and suggest that all individuals have leadership potential (Burns, 2012; Greenleaf, 2002).

In this dissertation, I adopt Rost's (1993) post-industrial definition of leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 102). This definition highlights the idea that leadership is a mutually influential relationship, with leaders influencing followers and followers influencing leaders. Whereas earlier definitions of leadership define success based on output (e.g., level of production), this definition defines success based on the quality of the relationship and the nature of the goals.

Although connotations of the term are often positive, leadership is not always applied in positive ways. Because leadership can have far-reaching consequences and has the potential to either help or hurt group members and the larger society, it is important to acknowledge the role of ethics. In considering the ethics of leadership, Rost (1993) differentiates between the *process* and *content* of leaders' efforts to influence or change organizations. Ethics in leadership process refers to the morality of relationships leaders have with others in an organization while trying to influence them. Ethics in leadership content refers to the morality of the specific changes leaders are trying to influence. Ideally, leadership involves ethical process to achieve ethical changes, although this is not necessarily true. I am most interested in promoting leadership with both ethical process and content, which Rost calls "morally uplifting leadership" (p. 167). I include values as a component of leadership, but I also acknowledge the complexity of defining moral content and differentiating between moral and immoral values.

Many leadership researchers, even those who adopt post-industrial perspectives, use possession of leadership roles as the measure of leadership (e.g., Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011). Yet, many of these same theories rest on the premise that individuals who do not hold leadership positions may demonstrate leadership within a group (e.g., Burns, 2012). Furthermore, inequities exist in the opportunities available for individuals to hold leadership positions (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Therefore, it is critical to consider other ways of conceptualizing and measuring multiple components of leadership.

Applying Empowerment Theory to the Leadership Context

I apply Zimmerman's (1995) empowerment theory to better understand the multiple dimensions of leadership. Zimmerman defined empowerment as the "process by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over issues of concern to them" (p. 581). Empowerment at the individual level of analysis, referred to as psychological empowerment, is characterized by "perceptions of personal control, proactive approach to life, and a critical understanding of the sociopolitical environment" (p. 581). Based on theory and empirical studies of related constructs, Zimmerman proposed a model that distinguishes among three components of psychological empowerment—intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral. The three components "merge to form a picture of a person who believes that he or she has the capability to influence a given context (intrapersonal component) understands how the system works in that context (interactional component), and engages in behaviors to exert control in the context (behavioral component)" (p. 590). Empowerment is context and population specific. Accordingly, I apply empowerment to the context of leadership.

Leadership, like empowerment, represents one's ability to work toward goals. Yet, leadership presents a unique context in which that work requires relationships and mutual

purposes. Figure 1.1 shows the three components of empowerment applied to the leadership context.

Intrapersonal leadership refers to individuals' beliefs about themselves and their leadership abilities. Perceived leadership ability, the focus of this dissertation, is an example of intrapersonal leadership. Effective leadership requires confidence in one's abilities to exert positive influence (e.g., Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008). If individuals do not believe in their ability to lead, they are unlikely to engage in leadership behaviors or seek out leadership roles. Individuals who are confident in their abilities to lead are more motivated to adopt leadership roles and demonstrate other leadership behaviors in groups (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Komives et al., 2006). They approach difficult situations as challenges and are likely to persevere in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 1994). Accordingly, perceived leadership ability contributes to the effectiveness of leadership behaviors by helping individuals persist in difficult situations and experience less stress (Hoyt, Murphy, Halverson, & Watson, 2003). Motivation to lead others and contribute to social and moral causes is another component of intrapersonal leadership (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Popper & Mayseless, 2007). Individuals with the motivation to lead are more likely to engage in leadership behaviors and more likely to seek out opportunities that promote the development of leadership skills (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Individuals' leadership schemas, their beliefs about what it means to be a leader, are another component of intrapersonal leadership that influence how individuals view themselves as leaders and the types of leadership behaviors in which they are likely to engage (Murphy & Johnson, 2011).

Interactional leadership refers to the way that individuals understand and relate to the world, as well as the possession of the skills necessary to lead others. Indicators of interactional

leadership include interpersonal skills, such as empathy and social competence (Goleman, 1995). Individuals who are able to understand others' perspectives and communicate effectively are more likely to be chosen as leaders and are more likely to engage in effective leadership behaviors. Other indicators of interactional leadership include forethought, self-regulation, and self-reflection (Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Burt, Patel, Butler, & Gonzalez, 2013). To engage in effective leadership behaviors, individuals must be able to set goals and anticipate the consequences of their actions with regard to those goals (forethought), manage their personal impulses in order to work toward goals (self-regulation), and be able to examine their own behavior and assess its effectiveness in progressing toward their goals (self-reflection).

Behavioral leadership is the manifestation of the leadership relationship. Holding leadership positions is the most obvious example of behavioral leadership and one that is often the focus of leadership research (e.g., Kuhn & Weinberger, 2005). Yet, behavioral leadership can also be exhibited by an individual who does not hold an official role and still engages in actions intended to organize groups of people toward a mutual goal. Leadership behaviors include challenging the status quo, inspiring shared vision, organizing complex projects, motivating team members, directing others' actions, enabling others to act, and supporting group members' development (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Murphy, 2011).

The three components of leadership can be exhibited independently, but true leadership requires the presence of all three. For example, an individual who holds a leadership position (behavioral), but lacks self-awareness (intrapersonal) or empathy (interpersonal) is unlikely to engage in a mutually beneficial leadership relationship. Conversely, the leadership relationship is not realized by an individual who possesses interpersonal skills and believes in her ability to lead groups, but does not engage in leadership behaviors. In this dissertation, I focus on

perceived leadership ability, a component of intrapersonal leadership, because of its critical role in translating interpersonal skills into leadership behaviors.

Given the range of labels applied to various components of leadership, it is critical to define terms. *Leadership beliefs* are a fundamental aspect of the intrapersonal component of leadership. *Leadership skills* are a fundamental aspect of the interpersonal component of leadership. It is necessary to differentiate leadership ability from leadership because individuals who possess both the skills and the confidence required may lack opportunities to demonstrate leadership behaviors. I use the term *leadership* to refer to the realization of the mutually beneficial relationship—the combination of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and behavioral components. *Leadership development*, therefore, refers to the emergence of these competencies over time.

How Does Perceived Leadership Ability Change over the Life Course?

A major difference in leadership theories exists regarding the question of whether leaders are born or made. Post-industrial leadership theories, including Rost's (1993) conceptualization, suggest that individuals' leadership ability can change over time. Researchers guided by these perspectives examine the processes by which leadership ability develops and seek to identify interventions that promote leadership development (e.g., Komives, Longersbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006; Murphy, 2011). Conversely, trait-based theories describe leaders as exceptional individuals who are able to demonstrate effective leadership in any context (Galton, 1869; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Researchers guided by trait-based perspectives seek to identify the traits and behaviors of these exceptional individuals (Zaccaro, 2007).

Despite controversy regarding the mutability of leadership, few researchers have studied the question of whether individuals' perceived leadership ability remains constant or changes

over the life course. Trait-based theories would suggest that some individuals are born leaders who will demonstrate high levels of perceived leadership ability throughout their lives. In contrast, developmental leadership theories suggest that individuals' perceived leadership ability will vary over time in relation to their opportunities, experiences, and contexts. Individuals' perceived leadership ability should increase when contexts support the development of leadership skills and provide opportunities to engage in leadership behaviors, but decrease when contexts inhibit the development of individuals' leadership skills or limit opportunities for leadership behavior.

Leadership identity development (LID) theory offers a framework to describe the process by which leadership ability may be learned (Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2009). LID suggests that individuals progress through a series of six developmental stages, beginning with a basic awareness that leaders exist in the world. Next, they begin to seek out opportunities to engage with their peers and, in doing so, gain experience working with others and learning about their own interests and strengths. A key transition occurs when individuals move from the third stage, in which they view leadership as positional and groups as hierarchical, to the fourth stage, where they begin to see leadership as a shared group process that is not defined by a position. In the fifth stage, individuals move from engaging in leadership behaviors motivated by their personal interests toward leadership inspired by a commitment to promoting the welfare of others. Individuals who reach the sixth stage of LID have the ability to demonstrate leadership in diverse contexts, regardless of whether they hold a positional role. As leadership identities develop, individuals feel increasingly confident in their abilities and are more motivated to lead. Individuals' perceptions of their leadership abilities, therefore, serve as both an indicator of leadership identity and as a critical motivator for their continued development.

According to LID, contextual factors may either support or hinder leadership development. Individuals' progress through LID stages is influenced by a range of individual and contextual factors, including self-confidence, self-awareness, meaningful group experiences, and continuity of membership in key groups (Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2009). The stages defined by LID theory are not strictly linear; individuals may regress to earlier stages and may at times demonstrate characteristics of multiple stages. Emerging adulthood offers an example of a developmental period that may hinder leadership development. Emerging adulthood is a time of exploration and change, during which individuals are likely to hold fewer leadership roles and may feel less confident in their leadership abilities (Arnett, 2000). For emerging adults who do not attend postsecondary education after high school, the decline in perceived leadership ability may be especially pronounced (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). Yet, because most leadership research has focused on high-achieving individuals, few researchers have considered these processes among emerging adults who do not attend four-year colleges.

How do Leadership Beliefs and Behaviors Affect Individuals' Development?

Positive youth development perspectives, which focus on optimal development of young people (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2007; Larson, 2000; Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003), identify leadership ability as a developmental attribute that is necessary for personal and professional thriving (Scales et al., 2011). Thriving refers to the absence of problem behaviors or pathology, but also the presence of signs of healthy development (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). Possession of leadership roles typically indicates the presence of other developmental attributes, such as self-confidence (intrapersonal component of leadership) and respect for others (interpersonal component). Researchers have also demonstrated linkages between leadership ability and positive behaviors in adolescence, such as decreased aggression

(Leff et al., 2014) and lower rates of alcohol use (Hensing & Spak, 2009). According to PYD perspectives, adolescent thriving is an indication that individuals are on the path to becoming generative adults. Yet, few researchers have empirically demonstrated connections between adolescent leadership ability or behaviors and adult outcomes.

Although few researchers have considered the long-term effects of adolescent leadership, still fewer have addressed the questions of whether and how *perceived* leadership ability matters for long-term development. Individuals who are confident in their abilities are more motivated to adopt leadership roles (Komives et al., 2006), which provide a context for individuals to refine existing leadership skills and develop new ones (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). Accordingly, adolescent perceived leadership ability may promote positive adult outcomes by motivating adolescents to adopt leadership roles. Perceived leadership ability may also motivate individuals to engage with groups and practice leadership behaviors, even when they do not hold formal leadership roles. As a result, adolescent perceived leadership ability may promote positive adult outcomes in ways that cannot be explained solely by adoption of leadership roles.

What Competencies Promote Perceived Leadership Ability among Adolescents?

If perceived leadership ability can change over time and promotes positive outcomes in adulthood, then it is important to understand its antecedents. Applying empowerment theory (Zimmerman, 1995) to the context of leadership suggests that interpersonal skills are a component of leadership and should be related to both engagement in leadership behaviors and perceived leadership ability. Researchers have found that interpersonal skills promote a range of positive developmental outcomes for adolescents, including leadership roles (e.g., Charbonneau & Nicol, 2002). Adolescents with interpersonal skills are likely to have positive relationships with their peers and they are likely to engage in prosocial activities in their schools and

communities. Komives and colleagues (2009) suggest that this process of engaging with peers is a critical stage in leadership identity development. Positive peer relationships and engagement in prosocial activities promote the continued development of interpersonal skills and provide contexts that are likely to support leadership development. Through these experiences, individuals are also exposed to diverse leadership styles and have opportunities to learn about their own capacities for leadership. Accordingly, interpersonal skills may promote leadership development by promoting involvement with peers and engagement in prosocial activities.

Overview of the Dissertation

The three studies included in this dissertation contribute to our understanding of leadership by examining the development of perceived leadership ability among adolescents and emerging adults. I explore how perceived leadership ability changes during a challenging developmental period, the long-term effects of adolescent perceived leadership ability, and factors that promote perceived leadership ability.

Data for the first two studies were collected as part of a longitudinal study of 851 adolescents in four public high schools in Flint, Michigan. The original study was focused on school dropout and substance abuse. Accordingly, students who were deemed at risk for high school dropout at the beginning of ninth grade were recruited for the study. Students were eligible to participate if they were enrolled in one of Flint's four main public high schools, had an eighth grade Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or below, and were not diagnosed by the schools as having developmental impairments (Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Zapert, & Maton, 2000). The majority of participants in the sample are African American, reflecting the demographics of the community. Structured interviews were conducted annually from Wave 1-4, Wave 5-8, and Wave 9-11, with a two year lapse between Wave 4 and 5 and a seven-year

lapse between Waves 8 and 9. The last wave of surveys used in this dissertation, Wave 11, occurred 17 years after the first wave of surveys when most of the participants were 32 years old.

Study 1. College status and trajectories of perceived leadership ability among emerging adults. In the first empirical paper, I consider the influence of context on perceived leadership ability. I examine changes in perceived leadership ability over the life course by studying perceived leadership ability between the ages of 18 and 22. Emerging adulthood is a particularly challenging developmental period for leadership development because individuals are likely to experience major life transitions and limited opportunities to engage in leadership behaviors (Arnett, 2000). These challenges may be especially pronounced for emerging adults who do not attend four-year colleges and for whom employment and leadership opportunities may be especially limited. Based on developmental perspectives that suggest leadership ability changes over time and is influenced by contextual factors (e.g., Komives et al., 2006), I hypothesize that perceived leadership ability will decline during emerging adulthood. The developmental period may be especially challenging for individuals who do not attend four-year colleges because they are more likely to be unemployed or have low-paying jobs that do not afford opportunities for leadership behaviors (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). Accordingly, I hypothesize that the decline in perceived leadership ability will be greater for individuals who do not attend four-year universities than for those who do. I test these hypotheses with a linear Latent Growth Model (LGM) that uses four waves of data to estimate two latent factors: participants' perceived leadership ability at age 18 (intercept) and changes in perceived leadership ability during emerging adulthood (slope).

Study 2. Adolescents' perceived leadership ability and leadership roles as predictors of adult thriving. In the second paper, I consider the relationships between perceived leadership

ability in adolescence and positive outcomes in adulthood. Based on research regarding leadership roles and thriving (Scales et al., 2000), I hypothesize that perceived leadership ability will motivate adolescents to adopt leadership roles and that possession of leadership roles in adolescence will lead to higher adult job autonomy, mental health, and community participation, as well as lower drug use. Additionally, based on extant research regarding the role of perceived leadership ability as an indicator of thriving (Scales et al., 2010), I hypothesize that perceived leadership ability will directly predict adult outcomes. I test these hypotheses using a structural equation model that includes direct and indirect effects of perceived leadership ability on four adult outcomes (job autonomy, mental health, alcohol use, and community participation), with leadership roles as a mediating variable.

Study 3. Interpersonal skills as predictors of adolescents' perceived leadership ability. In the third paper, I use data collected as part of the program evaluation of Badges for Baseball, a juvenile crime prevention program led by the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation in which law enforcement officials engage youth in sports games and character development lessons. The program serves children and adolescents from underserved communities across the country. The original evaluation study included children between the ages of 9 and 14 and used a two-group quasi-experimental design in which one group of participants enrolled in Badges for Baseball and the other group enrolled in a different youth program. Participants completed paper surveys at three time points: pre-program, post-program, and three months after the end of the program. My third study uses cross-sectional data from the post-program survey, which had the largest number of usable responses.

Study 3 seeks to identify predictors and explain the mechanisms by which perceived leadership ability develops among adolescents. Researchers have found that interpersonal skills,

such as social competence and empathy, promote a range of positive developmental outcomes for adolescents, including greater likelihood of leadership roles (e.g., Charbonneau & Nicol, 2002). Accordingly, I hypothesize that social competence and empathy will be associated with perceived leadership ability among adolescents. Based on research and theory regarding the role of social support and engagement in promoting leadership development (e.g., Komives et al., 2009), I hypothesize that community participation and peer support will mediate the relationship between interpersonal skills and perceived leadership ability. Specifically, I predict that adolescents with high social competence and empathy will report greater engagement in community activities and more supportive peer relationships, and that community participation and peer support will be associated with perceived leadership ability. To test these two hypotheses, I compare two structural equation models: a partial model in which only competence and empathy are predictors of perceived leadership ability and a model that includes community participation and peer support as mediating variables.

These three papers will contribute to our understanding of leadership development in multiple ways. Whereas many leadership development researchers (e.g., Scales et al., 2011) equate leadership to possession of leadership positions, I conceptualize the term more broadly to include individuals' beliefs about their abilities to lead. Given the multiple components of leadership (e.g., interpersonal, intrapersonal, behavioral) and the existence of inequities in individuals' opportunities to adopt leadership roles (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006), studying perceived leadership ability will help us gain a more robust understanding of leadership development than a limited focus on leadership roles. Study 1 explores whether perceived leadership ability can change over time, an assumption inherent in leadership development theories, and contributes to our understanding of how challenging developmental contexts influence leadership development.

Study 2 explores the relationship between adolescent leadership beliefs and behaviors, as well as the long-term effects of each. After establishing the malleability and significance of perceived leadership ability in the first two papers, I seek to identify factors that promote perceived leadership ability among adolescents in Study 3.

The papers in this dissertation also help inform the development of strategies to promote leadership development among adolescents and emerging adults. Declines in perceived leadership ability during emerging adulthood (Study 1) would suggest a need for interventions that encourage leadership development among emerging adults. More dramatic declines among emerging adults who do not attend four-year colleges would suggest a particularly great need for interventions for that population. Interventions that explicitly address emerging adults' views of leadership and help individuals learn to view leadership ability as malleable may promote greater perceived leadership ability. Interventions could also provide opportunities for individuals to engage in leadership behaviors in order to compensate for the limited opportunities available during that developmental period. If perceived leadership ability in adolescence is related to positive adult outcomes (Study 2), then interventions that promote adolescents' leadership development may also be valuable. If adolescents' interpersonal skills predict their perceived leadership ability (Study 3), then I will suggest that developing social competence and empathy is a potentially beneficial focus for adolescent leadership development interventions. If community participation and peer support are associated with perceived leadership ability, then interventions that incorporate opportunities for adolescents to engage in prosocial activities with peers may be warranted.

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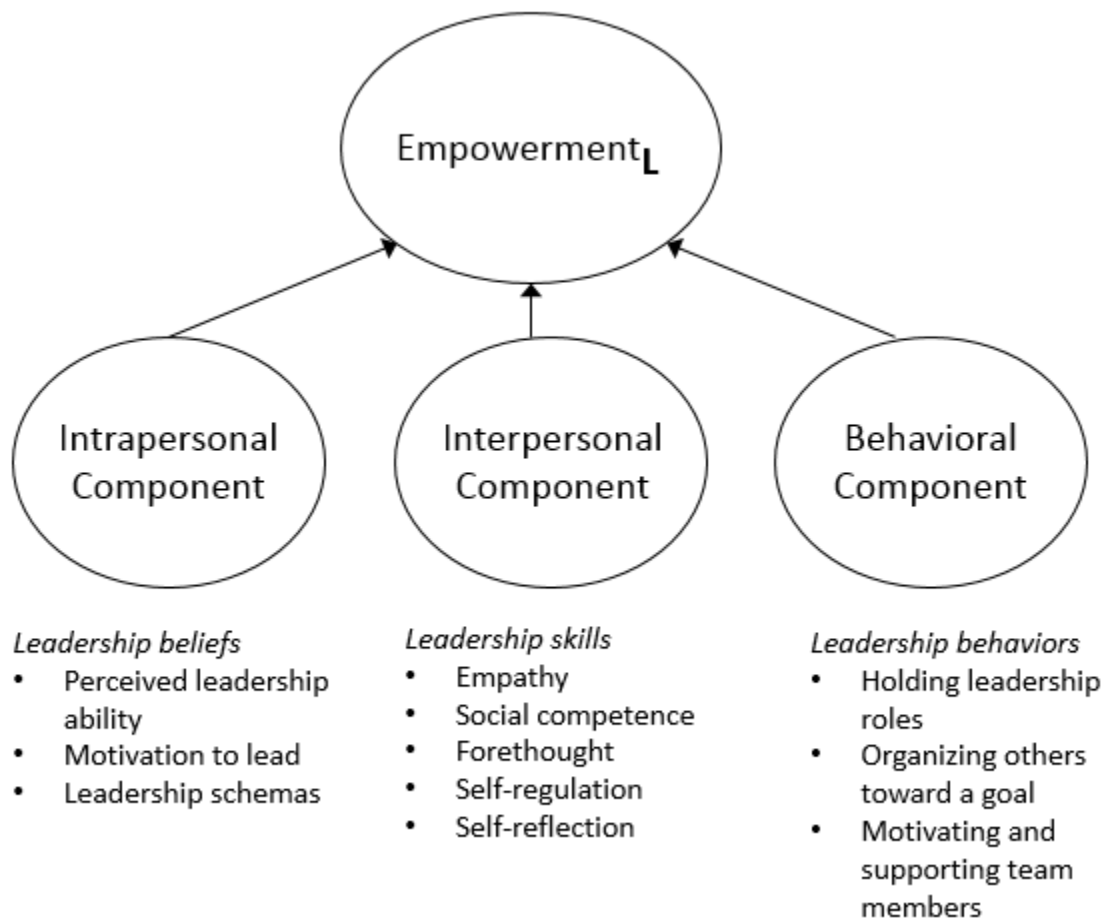
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Figure 1.1. Empowerment theory applied to the leadership context



CHAPTER 2

Study 1. College Status and Trajectories of Perceived Leadership

Ability Among Emerging Adults

Positive youth development perspectives that focus on promoting optimal development rather than preventing dysfunction, identify leadership ability as a developmental attribute that is necessary for personal and professional thriving (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011). Leadership behaviors often indicate the presence of other developmental attributes because the same individuals typically possess competencies such as self-confidence and respect for others (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). Additionally, leadership roles provide a context in which individuals can refine existing skills and develop new ones (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). Researchers have demonstrated linkages between leadership ability and positive behaviors, such as decreased aggression (Leff et al., 2014) and lower rates of alcohol use (Hensing & Spak, 2009).

Researchers suggest that context influences individuals' perceived leadership ability (Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006). When individuals experience environments that provide opportunities to engage in leadership behaviors and develop relevant skills, they are more likely to believe in their abilities to lead (Hannah, Avolio, & Luthans, 2008). Emerging adulthood, a developmental period characterized by exploration and change (Arnett, 2000a), is a time when new roles and increased responsibility (e.g., job, family) create competing demands that may make individuals less likely to hold leadership positions. Emerging adults are likely to hold fewer leadership roles than adolescents (Larson, 1990) and may feel less confident in their leadership abilities. Emerging adults who do not attend four-year

universities after high school are likely to have even fewer opportunities to demonstrate leadership (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006) and, therefore, decline in perceived leadership ability among non-college bound youth may be especially pronounced. In this study, I explore changes in perceived leadership ability during emerging adulthood, with special consideration of the differences between the experiences of individuals who attend four-year universities and those who do not.

Defining Leadership

Various definitions of leadership have emerged over time. In the 1800s and early 1900s, scholarship focused exclusively on *leaders*, as opposed to *leadership* (Rost, 1993). When the term leadership emerged as a focus of inquiry in the 1960s, the notion of leaders as exceptional individuals was still prevalent and leadership was defined as the actions of those individuals. Scholarship was mostly focused on organizations and management contexts. Accordingly, leadership meant that one held a position of authority and leveraged power to achieve outcomes. A substantial body of research has focused on predictors of leadership ability. Researchers have identified a range of psychological correlates of leadership ability, including achievement motivation (Galton, 1869; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Zaccaro, 2007), cognitive ability (Murphy, 2011; Popper & Mayselless, 2007), and self-esteem (Oliver, Gottfried, Guerin, & Gottfried, 2011).

Over the course of the twentieth century, alternate conceptions of leadership emerged that focused less on the leader as a powerful individual and more on leadership as a collaborative process that relies on the development and involvement of followers (Komives & Dugan, 2010). I adopt Rost's (1993) post-industrial definition of leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 102). This

definition highlights the idea that leadership is a mutually influential *relationship*, with leaders influencing followers and followers influencing leaders. Contemporary theories like Rost's conceptualize leadership as a process that can be learned and suggest that all individuals have leadership potential (Burns, 2012; Greenleaf, 2002). Researchers guided by these perspectives examine the processes by which leadership ability develops and seek to identify interventions that promote leadership development (e.g., Murphy, 2011).

Many leadership researchers, even those who adopt post-industrial perspectives, use possession of leadership roles as the measure of leadership (e.g., Scales et al., 2011). Yet, these same theories rest on the premise that individuals who do not hold leadership positions may demonstrate leadership within a group (e.g., Burns, 2012). Furthermore, inequities exist in the opportunities available for individuals to hold leadership positions (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Therefore, it is critical to consider other ways of measuring leadership abilities and behaviors.

Leadership Development

Controversy exists regarding the mutability of leadership ability. Traditional theories suggest that some individuals are born leaders who will demonstrate strong leadership ability throughout their lives (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Zaccaro, 2007). Contemporary leadership theories, however, suggest that individuals' leadership ability is highly context dependent and will vary over time in relation to their life experiences (e.g., Burns, 2012; Komives & Dugan, 2010). Individuals' leadership ability should increase when they have experiences that support their development and decrease when they have experiences that are not supportive.

Leadership identity development (LID) theory offers a framework to describe the process by which leadership ability can be learned (Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2009). LID

suggests that individuals progress through a series of six developmental stages, but these stages are not necessarily linear and individuals' progression is heavily influenced by context. Individuals begin with a basic awareness that leaders exist in the world. They then begin to seek out opportunities to engage with their peers and, in doing so, gain experience working with others and learn about their own interests and strengths. A key transition occurs when individuals move from understanding leadership as positional and groups as hierarchical to a view of leadership as a shared group process that is not defined by a position. They then move from engaging in leadership motivated by their personal interests toward leadership inspired by a commitment to promoting the welfare of others. Individuals who reach the final stage of LID have the ability to demonstrate leadership in diverse contexts, regardless of whether they hold a positional role. As leadership identities develop, individuals feel increasingly confident in their abilities and are more motivated to lead. Individuals' perceptions of their leadership abilities, therefore, serve as both an indicator of leadership identity and as a critical motivator for their continued development.

Individuals' LID is influenced by a range of individual and group factors, including self-confidence, self-awareness, meaningful group experiences, and continuity of membership in key groups (Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2009). The developmental nature of LID theory also suggests that individuals may regress to earlier stages and may at times demonstrate characteristics of multiple stages. Accordingly, contextual factors may either support or hinder leadership development.

Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood, the developmental period occurring roughly between ages 18-25 for individuals in Western industrialized societies, is a period of life when individuals are likely to

have experiences that diminish their confidence in their leadership abilities. Emerging adulthood is a distinctive developmental period between adolescence and adulthood that is often characterized by instability and exploration. According to Arnett (2000a), this relatively new developmental period is the result of societal changes that have occurred in industrial societies over the past four decades. Between 1970 and 2000, for example, the average age of marriage in the United States rose from 22 to 27 and the age of parenting increased similarly, from very early 20s in 1970 to late 20s in 2000 (US Bureau of the Census, 2000). Delays in the onset of familial responsibility brought additional freedom for individuals in their 20s and a new sense of what it means to be an adult. Over this same span of years, more individuals began to pursue higher education, allowing for an extended period of learning and self-discovery (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adults may experiment with new ideologies, occupations, and relationships as they strive to achieve an integrated sense of identity (Marcia, 1966). These explorations may present psychological challenges (Arnett, 2005; Stone, Becker, Huber, & Catalano, 2012; Sussman & Arnett, 2014), but four-year colleges provide an ideal space for experimentation and emerging adults tend to feel optimistic about their futures (Arnett, 2000b).

High school seniors are typically afforded a certain social status within their schools and may feel like leaders in relation to younger students; however, when they transition to their next role, perhaps to an introductory level job or a freshman year in college, they become much smaller fish in a much bigger pond. As they navigate their new roles and contexts, emerging adults may feel less confident in their abilities, especially their abilities to lead others. For example, a soccer player who was confident in her leadership abilities as a senior on her high school team will likely feel less confident when she begins playing on a college team where she is surrounded by teammates who are more experienced. Individuals' beliefs in their abilities

tend to be task and context specific (Bandura, 1977), so emerging adults' beliefs in their leadership abilities are likely to decline when they enter new contexts.

Because they are beginning the process of becoming self-reliant, autonomous individuals, emerging adults spend more of their work, study, and leisure time alone than they did as adolescents (Larson, 1990; Bowker, Nelson, Markovic, & Luster, 2014). Adopting new work and family responsibilities also limits the time they have available to participate in social activities (Arnett, 2005). Less time in group settings means that emerging adults may have fewer opportunities to engage in leadership behaviors than they did as adolescents. When they do work with groups, relative lack of experience may mean that they are less likely than older adults to be selected for leadership positions. With limited opportunities to engage in leadership behaviors or practice leadership skills, emerging adults may lose confidence in their leadership abilities.

Emerging adulthood is a time that presents psychological challenges for individuals from all backgrounds (Arnett, 2005; Stone, Becker, Huber, & Catalano, 2012; Sussman & Arnett, 2014), but it may be especially challenging for individuals from marginalized groups who do not have access to the types of privilege assumed by earlier conceptualizations of emerging adulthood. The idea of emerging adulthood as a time for exploration most neatly applies to members of the majority culture in industrialized societies who are middle class or above, and attend postsecondary education after high school (Arnett, 2000a; 2004). Critics of the theory have argued that many individuals do not have the luxury of engaging in this time of personal and professional discovery (Bynner, 2005; Syed & Mitchell, 2013). Financial constraints and family commitments require many individuals to enter the workforce immediately after high school. These individuals' experiences are similar to their college-attending peers in that the years between 18 and 22 include a time of transition, but unique because adult responsibilities

may detract from the sense of limitless possibilities and the time available for experimentation, discussion, and identity exploration. This difference in context has implications for individuals' perceived leadership ability.

Perceived Leadership Ability and College Status

Most studies of leadership ability focus on White individuals who are high achievers, often students in four-year colleges or participants in leadership programs (e.g., Komives et al., 2005; Mortensen et al., 2014). LID theory, for example, was developed based on a series of studies conducted with university students (Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2009). Consequently, significant gaps exist in the literature regarding the leadership abilities of emerging adults who do not attend four-year colleges.

For individuals who do not attend any postsecondary education after high school, the lack of opportunities for leadership and psychological challenges experienced during emerging adulthood are likely to lead to declines in perceived leadership ability. Secondary schools provide opportunities for leadership in extracurricular activities and in the classroom, but after high school, individuals do not have access to the same opportunities to demonstrate leadership. Entering the workforce without a post-secondary degree is a challenging process that is likely to yield positions that are low-paying and offer limited opportunities for leadership or autonomy (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). Unemployment is also more likely for individuals without postsecondary degrees than those with Associate or Bachelor's degrees (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Unemployed emerging adults have the lowest self-efficacy beliefs about their abilities to accomplish professional goals, as compared to individuals who are students or employed (Seiffge-Krenke, Persike, & Luyckx, 2013). As a result of their changing personal and

professional roles and the associated psychological challenges, emerging adults who do not attend college are likely to experience decreased confidence in their leadership abilities.

Of those who do pursue postsecondary education in the United States, roughly half attend community colleges (Rosenbaum, Ahearn, Becker, & Rosenbaum, 2015). Student experiences in community colleges vary widely, but they are likely to present many of the same challenges faced by emerging adults who do not attend any postsecondary education. Rosenbaum and colleagues (2015) found that eight years after high school graduation, 46% of individuals who attended community college had not attained a degree (as compared to 27% of individuals who attended four-year colleges). Furthermore, community college students who did not attain degrees were as likely to be unemployed as their peers who did not attend any college. The majority of community colleges are non-residential and 59% of students attend part-time, compared to 27% of students in four-year institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Because of their other roles and constraints on their time (which may include commuting to campus, working full-time jobs, and taking care of family obligations), community college students likely do not place as high a value on the social aspect of college as students who attend four-year colleges (Tinto, 1993). Even if extracurricular activities are available on campus, community college students may lack the time or desire to participate.

Emerging adults who attend four-year universities, however, are likely to have more opportunities for leadership than their peers who attend community colleges or no college. Furthermore, attending a four-year college may prevent emerging adults from experiencing some of the challenges to perceived leadership ability faced by their peers, such as unemployment or un- and semi-skilled, entry-level jobs.

Current Study

In this study I describe and examine changes in individuals' perceived leadership ability during emerging adulthood. Based on developmental perspectives that suggest leadership ability changes over time and is influenced by contextual factors (e.g., Komives et al., 2006), I hypothesize that perceived leadership ability will decline during emerging adulthood. Given the additional challenges that may be faced by individuals who do not attend four-year universities after high school (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006), I hypothesize that the decline in perceived leadership ability will be greater for individuals who do not attend four-year universities than for those who do.

METHODS

Participants

Data were collected as part of a longitudinal study of 851 adolescents in four public high schools in Flint, Michigan. The initial study was focused on school dropout and substance abuse. Accordingly, students who were deemed at risk for high school dropout at the beginning of ninth grade were recruited for the study. Students were eligible to participate if they were enrolled in one of Flint's four main public high schools, had an eighth grade Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or below, and were not diagnosed by the schools as having developmental impairments (Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Zapert, & Maton, 2000). Structured interviews were collected annually from Wave 1-4 and Wave 5-7, with a two year lapse between Wave 4 and 5.

At Wave 1, participants were freshmen in high school with an average age of 15 (SD=.64). The sample was half female (n=425) and 80% reported their race as African-American (n=681), 17% as White (n=143), and 3% as African-American and White (n=26). The response rate from Wave 1 to Wave 7 was 68%. At Wave 7, participants (n=576) had a mean age of 22 (SD=.66). The sample at Wave 7 was 56% female (n=322) and 81% reported their

race as African-American (n=464), 17% as White (n=97), and 3% as African-American and White (n=15). This study utilizes data from Waves 4 – 7, when participants were between the ages of 18 and 22.

Measures

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alphas for all study variables are shown in Table 2.1.

Perceived leadership ability was measured at Waves 4-7 using three items from the Leadership Competence subscale of Zimmerman and Zahniser's (1991) Sociopolitical Control Scale. The items were, "Other people usually follow my ideas," "I am often a leader in groups," and "I can usually organize people to get things done." Participants responded using a five-point scale where 1 = not true and 5 = very true.

Parents' occupational prestige was measured at Wave 1 and calculated as the highest score reported by either parent (Nakao & Treas, 1990). Occupational prestige ranged from 29.28 (household work) to 64.38 (professional) for participants in this study. The mean occupational prestige score, 39.92 (SD = 10.41), is equivalent to blue-collar employment (e.g., automobile factory worker).

Parental education was measured at Wave 1 using the highest reported education level of the respondent's parents, where response options ranged from 1 (completed grade school or less) to 7 (graduate or professional school after college). The mean parental education score for this sample, 4.35 (SD=1.43), represents completion of high school and subsequent vocational training.

Eighth grade GPA was calculated on a four-point scale (1.0 = D, 4.0 = A), based on school records collected at Wave 2.

Self-esteem was measured at Wave 4 using the Self-Acceptance subscale of the Bentler Psychological Inventory (Bentler & Newcomb, 1978). Participants responded to four items asking them to report how true pairs of statements were for them (e.g., I am happy with myself or unhappy with myself). Response categories ranged from 1 (the first statement is true for me) to 5 (the second statement is true for me).

College status was measured at Wave 4 through Wave 7. Participants responded to one item asking whether they currently attended any type of education, including adult high school or GED, training, community college, or university. I conceptualized college status according to three groups (No College, Community College, University), which represented the highest level of education that the participant attended during the four waves of data collection. I created a dichotomous variable for Community College, where 1 indicated that the participant's highest level of education in the four waves of data collection was community college or training. I created a second dichotomous variable for No College, where 1 indicated that the participant's highest level of attainment was high school or a GED. The reference group, University, included participants whose highest level of attainment was a four-year college or university. Of the 851 participants in the sample, 351 were in the No College group, 252 were in the Community College group, 118 were in the University group, and 129 did not respond.

Data Analytic Strategy

I conducted a linear Latent Growth Model (LGM) with *Mplus*, Version 7 (Muthen, L. & Muthen, B., 2012) to explore change in perceived leadership ability during emerging adulthood. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, the model uses four waves of data to estimate two latent factors: participants' perceived leadership ability at age 18 (intercept) and changes in perceived leadership ability during emerging adulthood (slope). Factor loadings between the intercept

latent factor and all four waves of leadership were fixed to 1. Factor loadings between the slope latent factor and the four waves of leadership data were fixed to 0, 2, 3, and 4 to reflect the amount of time between waves of data collection, including the two year span between wave 4 and wave 5 (Preacher, Wichman, MacCallum, & Briggs, 2008).

To test the hypothesis that perceived leadership ability would decline most for individuals who did not attend college, I conducted two additional models. Model 2 includes time-invariant covariates: sex, race, parents' occupational prestige, parental education, and GPA. Self-esteem is also included as a fixed effect. I created two dichotomous variables for race (White and Multiracial) that use African Americans as the reference group. In Model 3, I added two dichotomous variables for college status (Community College and University) that use participants who did not attend any college as a reference group in order to detect an effect of college status on perceived leadership ability after controlling for sociodemographic and psychological factors. To compare the fit of Model 2 and Model 3, I conducted a Satorra-Bentler scaled chi square difference test (L. Muthen & B. Muthen, n.d.; Satorra & Bentler, 1999). I used a maximum likelihood estimator with robust standard errors (method MLR) in order to produce parameter estimates and standard errors that are robust to non-normality of variables and use all available data (L. Muthen & B. Muthen, 2012).

RESULTS

Model 1: Basic LGM

Mean intercept at Wave 4, which reflects age 18 and the senior year in high school (based on on-track progression through high school), was 3.63 ($p < .001$) and the mean slope was $-.06$ ($p < .001$), indicating that mean leadership decreased over time. Fit indices, listed in Table 2.2, show that the basic LGM model fit the data well. Variance in the latent variables for intercept

(.36, $p < .001$) and slope (.02, $p = .001$) indicate that this model does not fully account for differences in participants' perceived leadership ability at age 18 or their change in perceived leadership ability between age 18 and age 22.

Model 2: LGM with Covariates

To explain the variation in the intercept and slope of perceived leadership ability, I introduced covariates into the model: sex, race, parents' occupational prestige, parental education, GPA, and self-esteem. As compared to African American participants, White participants had lower perceived leadership ability at age 18 ($-.14$, $p = .002$). Parental education (.12, $p = .03$) and self-esteem (.22, $p < .001$) were both related to higher perceived leadership ability at age 18. Perceived leadership ability at age 18 (Wave 4 intercept) predicted slope ($-.37$, $p = .003$), such that the decrease in perceived leadership ability from age 18 to age 22 was greater for individuals who had higher perceived leadership ability at age 18. GPA predicted slope (.14, $p = .03$), such that higher GPA was related to a smaller decrease in perceived leadership ability from age 18 to age 22. Variance in the latent variables for intercept (.88, $p < .001$) and slope (.86, $p < .001$) indicate that this model still does not fully account for differences in participants' perceived leadership ability at age 18 or their change in perceived leadership ability between age 18 and age 22. Fit indices, listed in Table 2.2, show that the LGM model with covariates fit the data well.

Model 3: LGM with Covariates and College Status

Finally, I added college status to the model as a predictor of slope. College status was not included as a predictor of intercept because intercept data were collected at age 18, prior to high school graduation. I used University as the reference group and included two dichotomous variables (No College and Community College) in the model. As in Model 2, race predicted

perceived leadership ability at age 18; White participants had lower perceived leadership ability at age 18 than did African American participants (-.14, $p=.002$). Parental education (.12, $p=.03$) and self-esteem (.22, $p<.001$) continued to be related to higher perceived leadership ability at age 18.

As in Model 2, intercept was related negatively to slope (-.37, $p=.002$), indicating that participants with the highest perceived leadership ability at Wave 4 had the greatest declines in perceived leadership ability from age 18 to age 22. No college (-.21 $p=.02$) and community college (-.18, $p=.03$) both predicted slope, indicating that perceived leadership ability declined more for participants in these two groups than for participants in the university group. Variance in the latent variables for intercept (.88, $p<.001$) and slope (.84, $p<.001$) indicate that Model 3 still does not fully account for differences in participants' perceived leadership ability at Wave 4 or their change in perceived leadership ability between age 18 and age 22. Fit indices show that Model 3 fit the data well (Table 2.2). To look for differences between no college and community college, I also ran Model 3 with college variables calculated to use no college as the reference group. The analysis revealed no differences between no college and community college.

I performed a Satorra-Bentler scaled chi square difference test (L. Muthen & B. Muthen, n.d.; Satorra & Bentler, 1999) to compare the fit of Model 2 and Model 3. Results of the test indicate that adding college status (Model 3) improved the fit of the model, TRd (6)=18.87, $p<.01$.

DISCUSSION

This study offers four contributions to our understanding of perceived leadership ability and emerging adulthood. First, the results demonstrate that perceived leadership ability does

change over time. This finding contributes to our understanding of the nature of leadership as a set of skills and beliefs that can change over time, rather than characteristics that are innate and unchangeable. Although this premise of malleability is the basis of many contemporary theories of leadership development (e.g., Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2009), it is an idea that few researchers have explicitly tested. This study establishes support for the underlying assumption of contemporary developmental leadership theories.

Second, this study contributes to our understanding of the psychological and contextual processes that occur during emerging adulthood. My hypothesis that perceived leadership ability would decrease from age 18 to age 22 was supported. While the majority of existing contemporary leadership theories emphasize the idea that leadership ability can be learned, this study demonstrates that the reverse may also be possible. When individuals experience contexts that present obstacles to leadership development, such as the transitions that occur during emerging adulthood, perceived leadership ability may decrease. Decreased perceived leadership ability may reflect emerging adults' awareness of their relative lack of experience and deficits in the skills required to engage in leadership behaviors in their new postsecondary contexts. To understand whether decreased perceived leadership ability is a cause for concern or a normative developmental phenomenon, researchers might study changes in perceived leadership into later adulthood or explore relationships between emerging adults' perceived leadership ability and other indicators of thriving (e.g., job autonomy, mental health).

This study also provides insight into the experiences of individuals who do not attend four-year colleges after high school, a population whose experiences tend to be overlooked in the scholarly literature on both emerging adulthood and leadership development. Findings supported my second hypothesis and demonstrated that the decline in perceived leadership ability during

emerging adulthood was most pronounced among individuals who did not attend four-year colleges. For individuals who do not attend four-year colleges, the challenges to perceived leadership ability during emerging adulthood may be amplified because of the limited opportunities and structures for engagement in organized activities (e.g., sports, social clubs, political organizations). Accordingly, my findings suggest that interventions that create opportunities for leadership development among individuals who do not attend four-year colleges may be useful.

Although sociodemographic and psychological factors were included primarily as control variables, some interesting findings emerged. My finding that African American participants reported higher perceived leadership ability than White participants at age 18 is not consistent with past research which suggests African Americans have lower levels of perceived leadership ability than Whites (Festekijan et al., 2014). One possible explanation is that the relationship between race and perceived leadership ability is not a result of membership in any particular racial group, but is related to being a member of the majority. Participants in this study lived in an area that was predominantly African American and so they likely had frequent opportunities to view African American men and women in leadership positions. Notably, parents' occupational prestige and eighth grade GPA were not related to perceived leadership ability. These findings are not consistent with past research, although they may be explained by the limited variation in the SES and GPA of participants in the study sample.

Limitations

One limitation of the study is that the data were collected between 1994 and 2001. The age of the data raises questions about the contemporary relevance of the findings. Yet, the focus of this study was on testing a theory of leadership change over time and that change may not be

dependent on the moments in history in which data are collected. My results support contemporary notions of leadership and suggest that these perspectives were also relevant over a decade ago. Thus, the age of the data actually provides compelling evidence that contemporary theories of leadership development actually stand the test of time. Nevertheless, future research on leadership would be useful to test the theory of leadership development with more current samples.

Another limitation of the data is how college attendance was categorized. I assigned college status according to the participant's highest level of education between age 18 and 22 and so was unable to capture variation in individuals' experiences during that time. Individuals who are categorized as attending four-year colleges may differ with regard to the duration and nature of their participation in those institutions. Some study participants may have graduated from a residential university and another may have enrolled part-time for a semester in a local university. Students' experiences in community colleges also vary. Some community college participants may have had experiences that were more time-intensive and provided more opportunities for leadership than some participants in the four-year college group. Yet, the fact that a somewhat crude measure of college attendance demonstrated hypothesized relationships suggests that the association may be quite robust. The results suggest that context can play a role in hindering leadership development, as well as promoting it, but further nuances in these relationships could not be explored with the measures included in this study. Future research that includes additional measures of participants' college contexts, in addition to college status, will help us learn more about the factors that contribute to perceived leadership ability.

The measure of perceived leadership ability used in this study also presents limitations. The scale (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991) measures respondents' self-reported beliefs about

their leadership ability, as opposed to measuring specific skills or leadership roles. Accordingly, individuals' scores reflect their confidence in themselves and their abilities, as well as their actual leadership skills. The difference between skills and efficacy beliefs is difficult to disentangle, but researchers suggest that both are critical components of leadership ability (Komives, et al., 2005; Murphy, 2011; Popper & Maysless, 2007; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Further research on predictors of self-reported leadership ability, as well as research linking self-reported leadership ability to psychological and behavioral outcomes, would contribute to our understanding of the roles and relative importance of leadership skills and beliefs.

Conclusion

The question of whether leaders are born or made underlies longstanding debates about the nature of leadership (Komives & Dugan, 2010; Rost, 1993). This study provides support for the idea that leadership ability can change in response to contextual factors. Findings show a decline in perceived leadership ability among emerging adults, with a particularly large decline among individuals who did not attend four-year colleges.

Although this study is not intervention-focused, the findings may have implications for interventions that promote perceived leadership ability. For example, creating opportunities for emerging adults, especially those who do not attend four-year colleges, to engage in leadership behaviors and develop leadership skills may promote (or prevent declines in) perceived leadership ability during this developmental period. Another useful strategy may be to focus on individuals' beliefs about what it means to be a leader. This strategy has been successful in other domains. Interventions focused on changing individuals' beliefs about the nature of intelligence, for example, have been successful in promoting improved academic performance (Paunesku et

al., 2015). Students who believe intelligence is malleable are more likely to exert the necessary effort and, as a result, demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement than peers who believe intelligence is a fixed trait (Dweck, 2006). Similarly, interventions that help individuals learn to view leadership ability as developmental may help promote greater perceived leadership ability. Beliefs that leadership ability can be learned and can be demonstrated by any member in a group may encourage individuals to be more optimistic about their leadership potential. These beliefs may be especially motivating for emerging adults who do not attend four-year colleges, given that they are unlikely to hold leadership positions. My study suggests that research on competencies that contribute to effective leadership would be a useful direction for future work.

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Figure 2.1. Latent growth curve model of perceived leadership ability in emerging adulthood

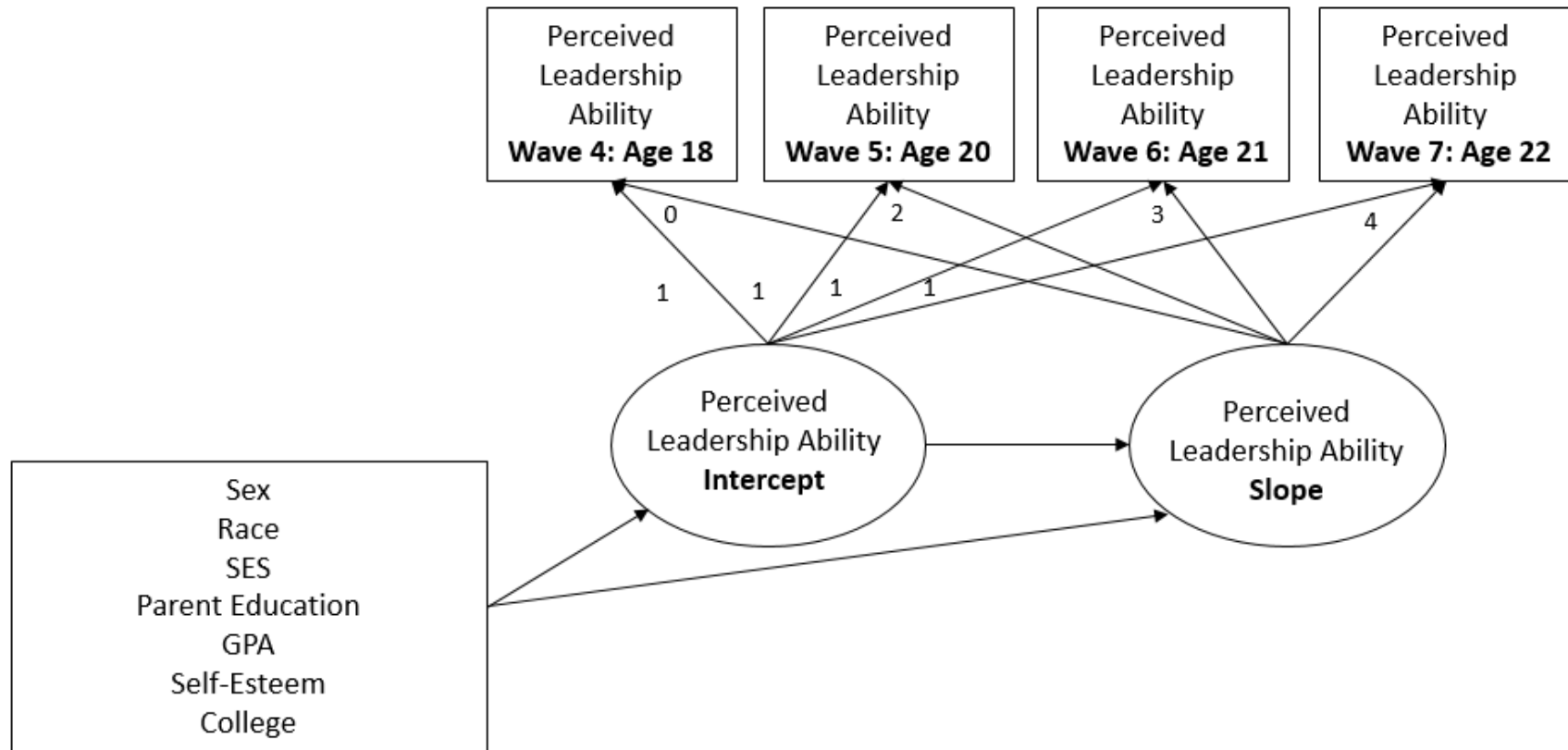


Table 2.1. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alphas for study variables

	n	Mean (SD)	α
Perceived leadership ability (Wave 4)	768	3.65 (.81)	.72
Perceived leadership ability (Wave 5)	565	3.47 (.81)	.72
Perceived leadership ability (Wave 6)	636	3.43 (.82)	.74
Perceived leadership ability (Wave 7)	574	3.40 (.81)	.78
Parents' occupational prestige (Wave 1)	750	39.92 (10.41)	-
Parental education (Wave 1)	810	4.35 (1.43)	-
Eighth grade GPA (Wave 2)	812	2.07 (.67)	-
Self-esteem (Wave 4)	770	4.45 (.72)	.74

Table 2.2. Standardized model estimates and fit indices

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Age 18	Slope	Age 18	Slope	Age 18	Slope
<i>Estimated means</i>	3.63	-.06	3.63	-.06	3.63	-.06
Leadership ability, age 18	-	-	-	-.37 (.12)**	-	-.37 (.12)**
Sex	-	-	-.06 (.05)	-.12 (.06)	-.06 (.05)	-.11 (.06)
Race: white	-	-	-.14 (.04)**	-.04 (.05)	-.14 (.04)**	-.03 (.05)
Race: multiracial	-	-	-.02 (.04)	.03 (.07)	-.02 (.04)	.04 (.07)
Parents' occupational prestige	-	-	.05 (.05)	.06 (.06)	.06 (.05)	.03 (.07)
Parent education	-	-	.12 (.06) *	-.01 (.08)	.12 (.06) *	-.03 (.06)
GPA	-	-	.06 (.05)	.14 (.07)*	.06 (.05)	.11 (.08)
Self-esteem	-	-	.22 (.05)***	.03 (.06)	.22 (.05) ***	.02 (.07)
No college	-	-	-	-	-	-.21 (.09)*
Community college	-	-	-	-	-	-.18 (.08)*
Fit Indices						
Log-Likelihood	-2784.37		-9256.57		-9951.96	
RMSEA/SRMR	.02/.04		.03/.02		.04/.03	
CFI/TLI	1.00/.99		.98/.96		.96/.93	
AIC	5586.74		18629.15		20061.92	
R^2	-	-	.12 (.03)***	.14 (.08)	.12 (.03)***	.16 (.08)*

Note: Sex: Males are reference category. Race: African American is reference category. University is reference category for college status variables.

Values in model columns represent standardized model estimates and standard errors.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

CHAPTER 3

Study 2. Adolescents' Perceived Leadership Ability and Leadership Roles as Predictors of Adult Thriving

Researchers have identified leadership as an indicator of adolescent thriving (Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011; Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). Adolescents who hold leadership roles typically possess other positive attributes such as self-confidence and respect for others. Leadership roles also provide a context in which individuals can refine existing skills and develop new ones (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). Although researchers have demonstrated linkages between leadership and other positive outcomes in adolescence, research linking adolescent leadership to adult outcomes is more limited. Existing research on adolescent leadership is also limited in that many researchers define leadership solely based on possession of leadership roles (e.g., Kuhn & Weinberger, 2005). In this study I explore relationships between perceived leadership ability and leadership roles in adolescence with adult outcomes. I also consider the possibility that adolescents' beliefs about their leadership abilities, in addition to their leadership roles, may serve as indicators of thriving. Notably, most studies of leadership ability focus on White individuals who are high achievers (e.g., Komives et al., 2006; Mortensen et al., 2014), but I examine leadership development among academically low-performing African Americans in order to better understand and support thriving for individuals that have traditionally been understudied and underserved.

Possession of Leadership Roles as an Indicator of Thriving

Thriving refers to both the absence of problem behaviors or pathology and the presence of signs of healthy development (Scales et al., 2011). Thriving indicators most often reflect

accomplishment of major developmental tasks of adolescence (Scales et al., 2000). Leadership is one such indicator of thriving. Engaging in leadership behaviors, for example, demonstrates that an adolescent is developing a sense of belonging, a desire to make useful contributions, and a sense of self-esteem derived from achievement and the respect of others. Researchers have demonstrated linkages between leadership roles and other positive outcomes in adolescence, such as decreased aggression (Komro et al., 1996). Teaching leadership skills (e.g., intentionality, self-regulation, self-reflection) has also reduced aggression (Burt, Patel, Butler & Gonzalez, 2013) and improved social and academic functioning (Orpinas & Horne, 2004).

Adolescent thriving is an indication that individuals are on the path to reaching a state of *idealized personhood*. Idealized personhood refers to the “enactment in adulthood of behaviors that contribute positively to the healthy structure of society and, in so doing, support and further self, family, community, and civil society” (Lerner et al., 2002, p. 23). As with adolescent thriving, scholars have proposed a range of capacities that provide evidence of adult thriving. Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde (2014), for example, describe five components of adult thriving: health and fitness, alert and vital mind, continuity of vocation, maintaining relationships with family and friends, and continued involvement in the community. Empirical research documenting relationships between adolescent thriving and positive adult outcomes is abundant (Catalano et al., 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Researchers have also documented evidence that leadership roles in adolescence predict positive outcomes in adulthood. Kuhn and Weinberger (2005), for example, found that adolescent leadership roles increased the chance of college admissions and were related to higher earning in adulthood. High school leadership roles also predicted adult political participation, including voting, participation in political campaigns and organizations, and participation in

community service organizations (McFarland & Thomas, 2006). Extracurricular activities, which provide opportunities for adolescents to adopt leadership roles, have also been linked to positive adult outcomes, including lower substance use, higher adult self-esteem (Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001), and higher political and civic participation (Duke, Skay, Pettingell, & Borowsky, 2009; Smith, 1999).

Yet, these studies of the long-term effects of adolescent leadership are limited by narrow conceptualizations of leadership that focus only on possession of particular roles and ignore other relevant beliefs, skills, and behaviors. Leadership researchers tend to rely on leadership roles as their sole measure of leadership. Adolescents who do not hold leadership positions may, however, demonstrate leadership within a group (e.g., Burns, 2012). Furthermore, inequities exist in the availability of opportunities for adolescents to hold leadership positions (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). To gain a more nuanced understanding of adolescent thriving, it is critical to consider leadership in more broad terms than simply holding a position.

Perceived Leadership Ability as an Indicator of Thriving

A complete understanding of leadership as an indicator of thriving requires attention to one's perception of ability, in addition to their leadership behaviors. I focus on perceived leadership ability because of its critical role in translating beliefs and skills into action. Perceived leadership ability promotes leadership behaviors because individuals who are confident in their ability to lead are more motivated to adopt leadership roles and demonstrate other leadership behaviors in groups (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Komives et al., 2006). Individuals who are confident in their abilities approach difficult situations as challenges and are likely to persevere in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 1994). Accordingly, perceived leadership ability contributes to the effectiveness of leadership behaviors by helping individuals persist in

difficult situations and experience less stress (Hoyt, Murphy, Halverson, & Watson, 2003). Researchers recognize leadership roles as an indicator of adolescent thriving, which in turn promotes adult thriving (Lerner et al., 2002); therefore, by encouraging individuals to adopt leadership roles, perceived leadership ability promotes adolescent thriving and, ultimately, adult thriving.

Yet, gaps exist in the literature with regard to the role of perceived leadership ability as a unique indicator of thriving, independent of its relationship with leadership roles. As discussed previously, individuals can demonstrate leadership behaviors without holding official leadership roles. Therefore, reliance on roles as the sole measure of leadership limits our understanding of leadership beliefs, skills, and behaviors as indicators of adolescent thriving. Furthermore, inequities exist in the availability of opportunities for adolescents to adopt leadership roles. Low-income adolescents and adolescents of color have fewer opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities or adopt leadership roles (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Spring, Grimm, & Dietz, 2008). Therefore, broader conceptualizations of leadership, including the implications of perceived leadership ability, are especially important to consider with regard to these traditionally underserved populations.

In addition to motivating individuals to engage in leadership behaviors, perceived leadership ability may directly promote thriving. The extensive literature on self-efficacy provides support for this direct relationship. Whereas perceived leadership ability is focused on individuals' beliefs about their capacity to lead, self-efficacy refers more broadly to "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects" (Bandura, 1994, p. 2). Self-efficacy affects individuals' coping abilities and their reactions to failure, as well as goal-setting and persistence (Bandura, 1977). Individuals with high self-efficacy attribute failure to external causes and

focus on solutions, whereas individuals with low self-efficacy view failures as reflections of their own deficiencies. As a result, individuals with low self-efficacy are subject to high levels of stress and depression (e.g., Pu, Hou, & Ma, 2016; Soysa & Wilcomb, 2015) and may be more prone to engage in substance use (e.g., Kim, 2001; Tian, Hasking, & Phillips, 2007).

Additionally, individuals with high self-efficacy set high goals for themselves. They are likely to consider diverse careers, engage in sufficient educational preparation, and ultimately experience success in their chosen occupations (e.g., Chang & Edwards, 2015; Wang, Hall, & Rahimi, 2015).

Perceived leadership ability is likely to predict indicators of thriving within the same domain, such as willingness to participate in groups and engage in leadership roles. Research demonstrating relationships between self-efficacy and various positive outcomes suggests that perceived leadership ability may also promote other forms of adult thriving. In the face of challenges working with others, perceived leadership ability is likely to promote positive coping, which may be reflected in mental health and the absence of negative coping behaviors, such as alcohol abuse.

Current Study

This study explores the relationship between perceived leadership ability in adolescence, leadership roles in later adolescence, and positive outcomes in adulthood. Figure 3.1 illustrates the proposed relationships. I hypothesize that perceived leadership ability will motivate adolescents to adopt leadership roles and that possession of leadership roles in adolescence will lead to adult thriving, including greater adult job autonomy, mental health, and community participation, as well as lower drug use. In addition to promoting leadership roles, I hypothesize that perceived leadership ability will directly predict positive adult outcomes.

METHODS

Participants

Data were collected as part of a longitudinal study of 850 adolescents in four public high schools in Flint, Michigan. The initial study was focused on school dropout and substance abuse. Accordingly, students who were deemed at risk for high school dropout at the beginning of ninth grade were recruited for the study. Students were eligible to participate if they were enrolled in one of Flint's four main public high schools, had Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 or below in eighth grade, and were not diagnosed by the schools as having developmental impairments (Zimmerman, Ramirez-Valles, Zapert, & Maton, 2000). Structured interviews were collected annually from Wave 1-4 and Wave 5-7, with a two-year lapse between Waves 4 and 5 and a seven-year lapse between Waves 8 and 9.

In order to focus on the leadership experiences of an understudied population, I included only African American participants in this study ($n=681$). At Wave 1, participants in this sample were freshmen in high school with an average age of 15 ($SD=.65$). The sample was 51% female ($n=346$). Socioeconomic status was calculated as the highest occupational prestige score for either parent (Nakao & Treas, 1990) and ranged from 29.28 (household work) to 64.38 (professional) for participants in this study. The mean occupational prestige score was 39.81 ($SD = 10.48$), which represented blue-collar employment (e.g., automobile factory work). Ninth grade GPA was calculated on a four-point scale (1.0 = D, 4.0 = A), based on school reports at Wave 2. At the end of ninth grade, the mean GPA was 1.53 ($SD=.93$).

To maximize the sample size for this study, I created adult outcome variables calculated as the mean of participants' scores in Wave 9, 10, and 11, when participants were aged 30-32. The response rate from Wave 1 to Wave 11 was 47%, but using mean scores enabled me to

include 62% of the participants who responded in Wave 1. Participants that remained in the study until adulthood were 58% female ($n=243$), with a mean eighth grade GPA of 1.59 ($SD=.92$) and mean parent occupational prestige score of 39.54 ($SD=10.23$).

Measures

Perceived leadership ability was measured at Wave 2 using three items from the Leadership Competence subscale of Zimmerman and Zahniser's (1991) Sociopolitical Control Scale. The items were, "Other people usually follow my ideas," "I am often a leader in groups," and "I can usually organize people to get things done." Participants responded using a five-point scale where 1 = not true and 5 = very true. The sample mean was 3.59 ($SD=.84$) and Cronbach's alpha was .69.

Leadership roles was assessed as the number of leadership roles individuals held in Wave 3 and Wave 4. In each wave, participants were asked to list up to twelve organized activities in which they participated in their schools, churches, and communities during the previous year. For each activity listed, participants reported whether they served in a leadership role. Leadership roles included any officer position (e.g., president, treasurer, committee chair) in a listed activity. I summed the frequency of leadership roles in all activities at Wave 3 and Wave 4 to create an aggregate leadership role score that represents the total number of leadership roles held over that two-year span. The number of leadership roles could range from 0 to 24, but the highest score in this sample was 13.

Job autonomy was used as a measure of job quality and was measured using five items that asked participants to indicate how often they engaged in a range of independent and management activities in their primary job (e.g., develop your own way of doing things, manage the time of others). Participants responded using a four-point scale where 1 = almost none and 5

= a lot. For any wave that participants were unemployed, they received a score of 0 for all items. Participants' scores on each item were averaged across Waves 9-11, with missing values excluded from the calculation. Cronbach's alpha for Waves 9-11 ranged from .97 - .98. The five mean scores were used to create a latent variable that represents participants' job autonomy in adulthood.

Mental health was assessed as a latent factor measured with three variables: anxiety, depression, and self-acceptance. Participants' scores on each of the three variables represents the mean of their scores in Waves 9-11. *Anxiety* and *depression* were measured using subscales from the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis & Spencer, 1982). Participants used a five-point scale (1=never, 5= often) to indicate how often in the past week they experienced six symptoms of anxiety (e.g., nervousness or shakiness inside, suddenly scared for no reason) and six symptoms of depression (e.g., thoughts of ending your life, feelings of worthlessness). I reverse-coded items, so that high scores indicated an absence of anxiety or depression symptoms. I then averaged participants' scores across Waves 9-11 to create variables that represented adult anxiety and depression. Mean adult anxiety was 4.43 ($SD=.63$) and mean adult depression was 4.35 ($SD=.67$). Across Waves 9-11, Cronbach's alphas ranged from .80-.84 for anxiety and .86-.87 for depression. *Self-acceptance* was measured using four items from the Bentler Personality Inventory (Stein, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1986). Participants were asked to choose between opposing statements (1=first statement true, 5=second statement true) concerning whether they were happy or unhappy with themselves, discouraged or pleased with themselves, liked or disliked themselves, and regarded themselves as a failure or a success. I excluded missing values and averaged participants' scores across Waves 9-11 in order to create a variable that

represented adult self-acceptance. Mean self-acceptance was 4.50 ($SD=.68$) and Cronbach's alphas ranged from .77-.82.

Alcohol use was assessed using three items. Participants responded to one item asking how many times they drank alcoholic beverages in the past 30 days (1=0 times, 7=40+ times). Participants who did drink alcohol indicated the number of times in the past two weeks they consumed five or more drinks in a row (1=none, 6=ten or more times) and how often they drank enough to feel pretty high (1=never, 5=on all occasions). Cronbach's alphas for Waves 9-11 ranged from .73-.75. I excluded missing values, averaged participants' scores on each item at Waves 9-11, and then created z-scores to account for the difference in response scales. The three z scores were used to create a latent variable representing alcohol use in adulthood.

Community participation was calculated as the frequency of involvement in community and church activities during adulthood (Waves 9-11). At each wave, participants were asked to list up to six organized activities in which they participated in their communities and churches during the previous year. For each activity listed, participants reported how often they engaged in the activity using a 4-point scale (1=hardly ever; 4=most of the time). I summed each participant's frequency ratings in order to create a score for each wave that represents the individual's frequency of participation. I then used participants' scores at each wave to create a latent variable that represents participation in organized activities during adulthood. Community participation scores could range from 0 to 24 for each wave, but the highest score in any wave for this sample was 20.

Data Analytic Strategy

First, I conducted two confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) with *Mplus*, Version 7 (L. Muthen & B. Muthen, 2012) to assess the measurement model. I compared the fit of a one-factor

CFA with a five-factor CFA in which items loaded on five latent variables: adolescent perceived leadership ability and adult job autonomy, mental health, alcohol use, and community participation.

Next, I conducted a structural equation model to explore the relationship between perceived leadership ability in adolescence, leadership roles in later adolescence, and outcomes in adulthood. Figure 3.1 illustrates the proposed relationships. I tested the direct effect of perceived leadership ability on the four adult outcomes: job autonomy, mental health, alcohol use, and community participation. I included leadership roles as a mediator between perceived leadership ability and adult outcomes and tested the indirect effects of perceived leadership ability on each adult outcome. In order to control for sex, socioeconomic status (SES), and GPA, I included them as predictors of each variable in the model.

I used a maximum likelihood estimator with robust standard errors (method MLR) in order to produce parameter estimates and standard errors that were robust to non-normality of variables and non-independence of variables (L. Muthen & B. Muthen, 2012). Adolescent leadership roles (skewness=2.36, kurtosis=10.79) and adult community participation (skewness=1.84, kurtosis=5.91), in particular, were positively skewed; a large number of study participants engaged in minimal or no leadership roles or organized activities. In order to use all available data, I use full information maximum likelihood procedure to handle missing data.

Finally, I conducted follow-up analysis using a multiple imputation approach in order to verify the results of the structural equation model, while taking missing data into account (Rubin, 2004). The dataset had high rates of missing data due to survey nonresponse and attrition, so using multiple imputation allowed me to run analyses with a complete dataset. Mplus is unable to display specific indirect paths for structural equation models that use imputed data, so I was

unable to run the full structural equation model hypothesized in this paper while using imputed data. Rather, I conducted a subsequent analysis in Mplus that used the multiple imputation approach and excluded specific indirect paths. I generated missing values for all study variables using ten imputations and then compared results of the model with the full structural equation model.

RESULTS

Measurement Model. The one-factor CFA did not fit the data well (RMSEA=.13, SRMR=.15, CFI=.70, AIC=20681.57). Strong fit indices for the five-factor CFA confirmed that the five latent variables accurately represented the data (RMSEA=.03, SRMR=.05, CFI=.99, AIC=19,356.28). Standardized model estimates for the five-factor CFA are shown in Table 3.1.

Full Structural Equation Model. The full structural equation model is shown in Figure 3.2 and complete model estimates are included in Table 3.2. Leadership roles in Waves 3 and 4 were predicted by SES ($\beta=.09$, $p=.048$), ninth grade GPA ($\beta=.24$, $p<.001$), and were more often held by males ($\beta= -.16$, $p<.001$). Ninth grade GPA was also directly related to job autonomy ($\beta=.23$, $p<.001$). Males reported more adult mental health ($\beta= -.10$, $p=.03$) and greater alcohol use ($\beta= -.13$, $p=.02$) than females. Females reported more adult community participation than males ($\beta=.11$, $p=.03$).

After controlling for sex, SES, and GPA, perceived leadership ability in Wave 2 was related to more adult community participation ($\beta=.15$, $p=.02$). Perceived leadership ability was also associated with taking on more leadership roles ($\beta=.21$, $p<.001$). Leadership roles were associated with greater adult mental health ($\beta=.10$, $p=.02$) and community participation ($\beta=.33$, $p<.001$). Tests of specific indirect effects revealed that leadership roles mediated the relationship between perceived leadership ability and two outcomes: mental health ($\beta=.02$, $p=.03$) and

community participation ($\beta=.07$, $p=.002$). Neither perceived leadership ability nor leadership roles were related to job autonomy or alcohol use. Fit indices indicated that the model fits the data well (AIC= 28786.67, RMSEA=.03, CFI=.98, SRMR=.05).

Model with Imputed Data. The model with imputed data was equivalent to the full model with regard to the existence of significant paths and yielded only minor differences with regard to path coefficients. After controlling for sex, SES, and GPA, perceived leadership ability in Wave 2 was related to more adult community participation ($\beta=.16$, $p=.02$) and more leadership roles ($\beta=.20$, $p<.001$). Leadership roles were associated with greater adult mental health ($\beta=.10$, $p=.02$) and community participation ($\beta=.33$, $p<.001$). Neither perceived leadership ability nor leadership roles were related to job autonomy or alcohol use. The model did not produce estimates for specific indirect effects of perceived leadership ability on adult outcomes. Fit indices indicated that the model with multiple imputations fit the data adequately (AIC= 41750.78, RMSEA=.07, CFI=.95, SRMR=.05).

DISCUSSION

This study illustrates the importance of adolescent perceived leadership ability and leadership roles as indicators of thriving among African American adolescents and predictors of adult mental health and community participation. Findings suggest that our understanding of leadership development would benefit from further inquiry regarding the role of perceived leadership ability and its relationship to healthful developmental outcomes in adulthood.

Adolescents' perceived leadership ability indirectly predicted adult mental health and community participation, which suggests that perceived leadership ability may have motivated adolescents to engage in leadership roles, helping them develop skills and beliefs to thrive as

adults who are psychologically healthy and actively involved in their communities. Findings also revealed a direct effect of adolescent perceived leadership ability on adult community participation that could not be accounted for by adoption of leadership roles during adolescence alone. This finding suggests that adolescent perceived leadership ability plays a unique role in promoting adult thriving and, therefore, may serve as a valuable indicator of adolescent thriving and a potential target for intervention.

This study contributes to our understanding of leadership development in three ways. First, the study differentiates between leadership beliefs and leadership behaviors as indicators of thriving, a distinction that is relatively understudied. Second, the study uses a longitudinal dataset to explore the relationship between adolescent leadership roles and adult thriving. Researchers consider leadership roles to be an indicator that adolescents are thriving and are on the path to becoming generative adults (e.g., Scales et al., 2011), but empirical evidence illuminating the long-term effects of adolescent leadership roles is relatively limited. This study demonstrates a relationship between adolescent leadership roles and positive adult outcomes.

Third, the study considers the development of a population whose leadership abilities and beliefs are understudied. Researchers have most often focused on the positive development of White youth (e.g., R. Lerner & J. Lerner, 2013) and the leadership abilities of high achievers (e.g., Komives, et al., 2006; Mortensen et al., 2014). In contrast, this study focuses on the experiences of African American youth deemed at risk of high school dropout. As a result of the history of racial discrimination in the United States, African Americans continue to face unique forms of oppression and experience contexts differently from individuals of other racial groups (Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998). Researchers must consider the unique developmental experiences of African Americans, especially with regard to competencies like

leadership ability that are vital for individuals' success and improved social conditions. My findings suggest that adolescents' perceived leadership ability and leadership roles are both important indicators of adolescent thriving for African American youth.

My first hypothesis was partially supported by the data. As predicted, adolescent perceived leadership ability predicted leadership roles in later adolescence. Furthermore, adolescent leadership roles predicted adult mental health and community participation. In other words, adolescent perceived leadership ability may have promoted adult mental health and community participation by encouraging adolescents to adopt leadership roles. By adopting leadership roles, adolescents have opportunities to develop skills, beliefs, and relationships that promote mental health and community participation in adulthood.

The hypothesized relationship between adolescent leadership roles and adult job autonomy was not supported by the data. The lack of relationship between leadership roles and job autonomy may be partly attributable to the challenges of measuring job quality. Job autonomy is a limited measure of job quality that does not take other indicators of job quality into account, such as earnings or individuals' satisfaction with their employment. Furthermore, the measure does not account for nuances based on occupational prestige. For example, an individual with few leadership roles in high school may hold a leadership role in a job with low occupational prestige at age 30 (e.g., manager in fast food franchise), whereas an individual who had many leadership roles in high school may have pursued further education and at age 30 may hold a lower-ranking position within an occupational field with greater prestige (e.g., Assistant Professor).

Contrary to my hypothesis, adolescent leadership roles were not related to adult alcohol use. The lack of relationship between adolescent leadership roles and adult alcohol use is

contrary to theories that suggest positive adolescent outcomes generally promote positive adult outcomes (e.g., Lerner et al., 2002). Yet, the idea that leadership roles may not be related to alcohol use is consistent with previous research revealing a complex, context-dependent relationships between adolescents' extracurricular participation, leadership roles, and adolescent alcohol use (e.g., Hoffman, 2006; Lewis, 2008; Spratt & Turrentine, 2001). One possible explanation for the finding in this study is that the measure did not include clinical assessment and may not have captured alcohol use that is detrimental to adult thriving. Alcohol use is common in adulthood and having more than five drinks over the course of an evening, for example, may be a social activity that does not negatively affect one's personal or professional life. Future research on alcohol as an indicator of adult thriving may benefit from using measures of alcohol abuse and clinically-defined addiction.

My second hypothesis was also partially supported by the data. Adolescent perceived leadership ability directly predicted adult community participation, but not the other three adult outcomes. The relationship between individuals' perceived leadership ability at age 16 and their community participation over a decade later is noteworthy because it suggests that perceived leadership ability plays a unique role in predicting adult thriving, independent of its role as a predictor of adolescent leadership roles. Access to leadership roles may be limited, especially for adolescents of color or those from low-income families (Flanagan & Levine, 2010), but study findings suggest that perceived leadership ability can serve as an additional indicator of adult thriving that is relevant to low-income African American populations. Perceived leadership ability may lead to greater involvement in leadership behaviors that are not reflected in a measure of the number of leadership roles held. By engaging in leadership behaviors such as organizing and motivating others to accomplish a task, youth are likely to gain skills and beliefs

that promote their involvement in the community over time, regardless of whether they possess a leadership title to accompany those behaviors.

The proposed relationship between adolescent perceived leadership ability and the other three adult outcomes, however, was not supported by the data. One possible explanation for the lack of relationship between adolescent perceived leadership ability and adult job autonomy, mental health, and alcohol is that self-efficacy may be domain-specific. Although many researchers argue for the existence of generalized self-efficacy that exists across domains of human functioning (e.g., Luszczynska, Gutiérrez-Doña, & Schwarzer, 2009), Bandura (1977) originally defined self-efficacy as being task and context specific. For example, someone who believes they are competent at interpersonal relationships (high social self-efficacy) would likely have positive relationships, but may not be confident in their academic abilities (low academic self-efficacy) and may exhibit low academic performance. Likewise, individuals' beliefs regarding their abilities to lead others may not be related to beliefs or outcomes in other domains of life, such as mental health and alcohol use. This explanation does not fully account for the lack of relationship between perceived leadership ability and job autonomy, which represent similar domains of human behavior. As noted above, the lack of relationship may be due in part to lack of nuance in my measurement of job autonomy.

Limitations

Several limitations of the study require attention. One limitation of this study is the amount of missing data. This study is one of the first to examine leadership in adolescence and its effects over a decade later. Because data were collected over a period of seventeen years, participants occasionally missed waves of data collection or dropped out of the study altogether. Attrition is a common methodological challenge in longitudinal research and limits the

generalizability of study findings, due to the possibility that participants who remain in the study may differ from those who drop out. The attrition rate in this study was 38%, which is relatively low for a longitudinal study of this magnitude (Gustavson, von Soest, Karevold, & Roysamb, 2012). To account for missing data, I used the multiple imputation approach to generate missing values and then ran a follow-up analysis with the complete dataset (Rubin, 2004). The analysis using imputed data produced nearly identical results to the model without imputed data, providing assurance of the validity of the original model and suggesting that missing data does not present a major threat to generalizability.

The measure of perceived leadership ability used in this study may also be somewhat limited. The scale (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991) provides a general measure of respondents' self-reported beliefs about their leadership ability. Accordingly, individuals' scores reflect their confidence in themselves and their abilities, but also likely reflect their actual leadership behaviors and skills. Further research using more nuanced, multi-dimensional measures of perceived leadership ability would be helpful. Bobbio & Manganelli (2009), for example, developed a measure of perceived leadership ability that included additional items measuring self-awareness, ability to delegate responsibilities, and ability to gain consensus, as well as items similar to those included in this study.

Conclusion

This study helps expand our conceptualization of leadership beyond the possession of leadership roles by demonstrating that adolescents' beliefs about their leadership abilities also matter for long-term development. Furthermore, the study extends our awareness of leadership development in an understudied population. Study findings regarding the importance of leadership beliefs for African American adolescents' long-term development extend our

understanding of positive youth development in contexts and populations that are faced with disadvantage. Perceived leadership ability may be especially important for African American youth who, as a result of interpersonal and structural racism, may be presented with few opportunities to adopt leadership positions. Confidence in their leadership abilities may encourage youth to be resilient when they are faced with obstacles to leadership and may promote continued pursuit of leadership roles. Study findings underscore the importance of youth leadership interventions for African American youth and suggest that such interventions should strive to promote perceived leadership ability, as well as offering access to leadership roles.

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Figure 3.1. Proposed structural equation model

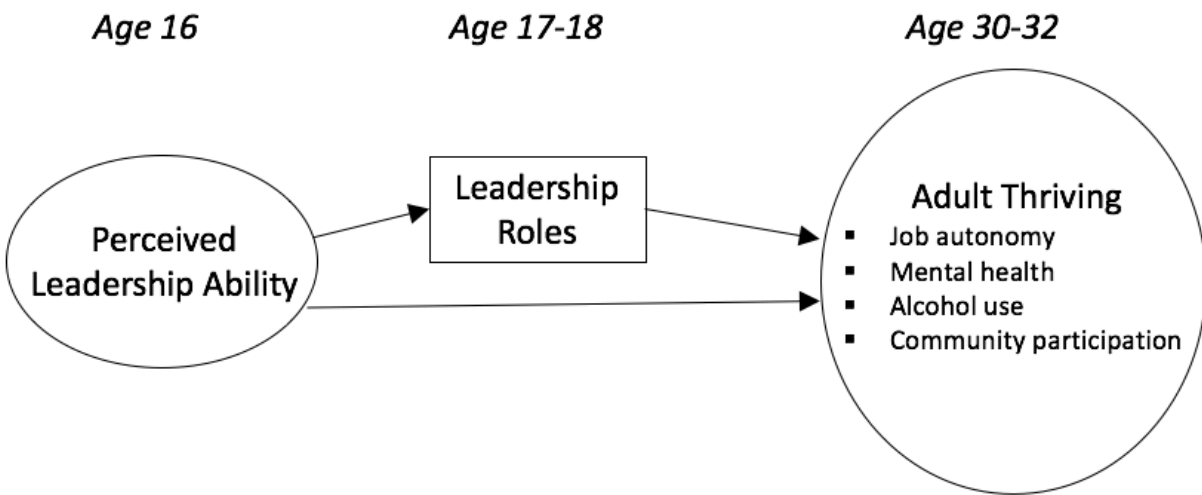


Table 3.1. Standardized model estimates and fit indices for five-factor confirmatory factor analysis

	Perceived Leadership Ability (Age 16)	Job Autonomy (Age 30-32)	Mental Health (Age 30-32)	Alcohol Use (Age 30-32)	Community Participation (Age 30-32)
<i>Lead</i> : Other people usually follow my ideas.	.67 (.04)***				
<i>Lead</i> : I am often a leader in groups.	.61 (.04)***				
<i>Lead</i> : I can organize people to get things done.	.72 (.04)***				
<i>Job</i> : Develop own way of doing things.		.95 (.01)***			
<i>Job</i> : Manage your own time.		.92 (.01)***			
<i>Job</i> : Manage the time of others.		.95 (.01)***			
<i>Job</i> : Freedom to make decisions without supervision.		.97 (.01)***			
<i>Job</i> : Freedom to determine tasks, priorities, or goals.		.98 (.004)***			
<i>Mental Health</i> : Anxiety			.79 (.04)***		
<i>Mental Health</i> : Depression			1.00 (.04)***		
<i>Mental Health</i> : Self-Acceptance			.53 (.05)***		
<i>Alcohol</i> : How many drinks in past 30 days?				.81 (.05)***	
<i>Alcohol</i> : Five or more drinks in a row?				.75 (.05)***	
<i>Alcohol</i> : Drink enough to feel high?				.55 (.05)***	
<i>Participation</i> : Age 30					.77 (.06)***
<i>Participation</i> : Age 31					.81 (.06)***
<i>Participation</i> : Age 32					.76 (.06)***

Note: Values in model columns represent standardized model estimates and standard errors.

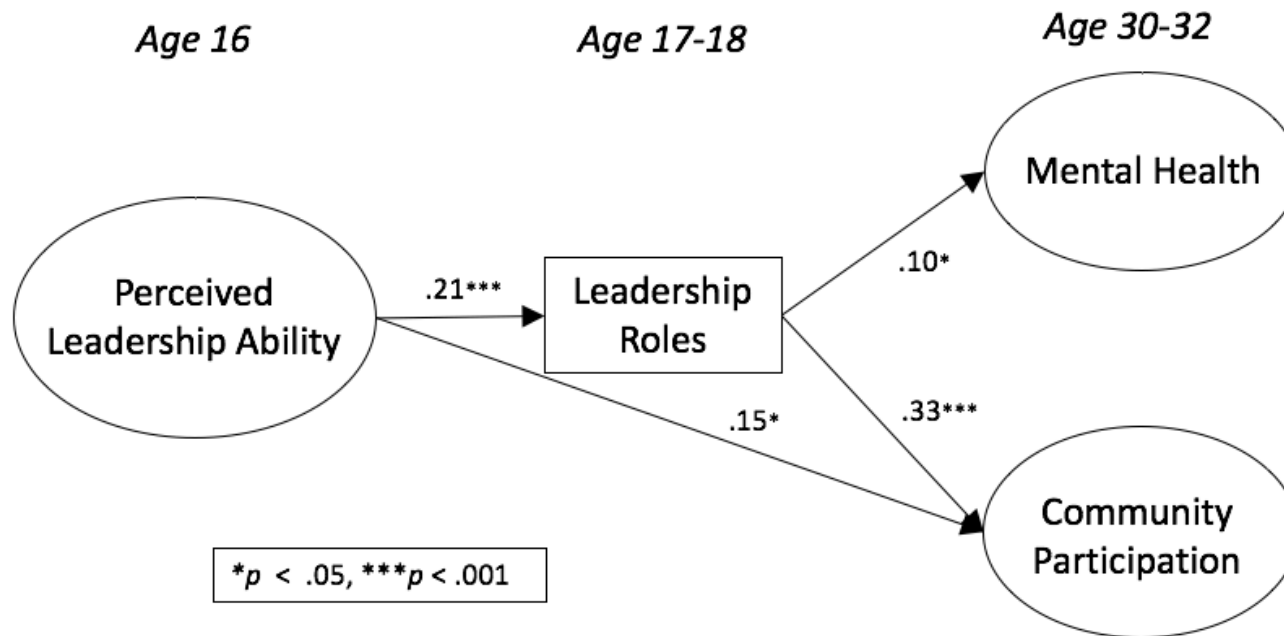
Fit Indices: Log-likelihood= -9617.14; RMSEA= .03; SRMR= .05; CFI= .99; TLI =.99; AIC= 19356.28

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3.2. Standardized model estimates and fit indices for structural equation model

	Leadership Roles (Age 17-18)	Job Autonomy (Age 30-32)	Mental Health (Age 30-32)	Alcohol Use (Age 30-32)	Community Participation (Age 30-32)
<i>Estimated means and standard deviations</i>	.20 (.84)	1.85 (1.42)	4.42 (.63)	-.02 (.81)	2.04 (3.35)
Sex	-.16 (.04)***	-.04 (.05)	-.10 (.05)*	-.13 (.06)*	.11 (.05)*
SES	.09 (.04)*	.08 (.05)	.10 (.05)*	.04 (.06)	.03 (.07)
GPA	.24 (.03)***	.23 (.05)***	-.03 (.06)	.00 (.07)	-.01 (.05)
Perceived Leadership Ability (LA)	.21 (.04)***	.06 (.06)	.01 (.07)	-.05 (.07)	.15 (.06)*
Leadership Roles (Roles)	-	.03 (.05)	.10 (.04)*	-.04 (.06)	.33 (.08)***
R^2	.14 (.03)***	.07 (.03)***	.04 (.02)*	.02 (.02)	.17 (.05)**
Specific Indirect Paths					
LA → Roles → Job Autonomy			.01 (.01)		
LA → Roles → Mental Health			.02 (.01)*		
LA → Roles → Alcohol Use			-.01 (.01)		
LA → Roles → Community Participation			.07 (.02)**		
Note: Sex: Females are reference category. Values in model columns represent standardized model estimates and standard errors.					
* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.					

Figure 3.2. Structural equation model with standardized coefficients



Note: Nonsignificant paths are not shown in the figure (e.g., no direct or indirect paths between adolescent perceived leadership ability and adult job autonomy or alcohol use).

CHAPTER 4

Study 3. Interpersonal Skills as Predictors of Adolescents' Perceived Leadership Ability

Researchers have dedicated a great deal of attention to identifying the skills required for effective leadership (B. Bass & R. Bass, 2008). Leadership is a process that requires people to work with one another so interpersonal skills are critical (Goleman, 1995; Riggio, 2010). The majority of leadership research is focused on adults, but researchers have also found that interpersonal skills are related to leadership behaviors among adolescents (Charbonneau & Nicol, 2002). The relationship between interpersonal skills and leadership ability is widely accepted, however, the mechanisms by which interpersonal skills may promote leadership development have received less attention. In this study, I test the hypothesis that interpersonal skills promote leadership development by facilitating peer engagement.

Many researchers who study leadership ability utilize samples from colleges or selective leadership programs and, accordingly, their samples tend to consist of predominantly White individuals who are high achievers (e.g., Komives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006; Mortensen et al., 2014). In order to understand and support thriving for individuals that have traditionally been understudied, I examine leadership development among participants in programs designed for youth in underserved communities. Social inequities exist in the opportunities available for individuals to hold leadership positions (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). I focus on perceived leadership ability, rather than leadership roles, in order to gain insight into leadership development among individuals who may have limited access to leadership positions.

Interpersonal Skills and Leadership

Rost (1993) defined leadership as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p. 102). This definition highlights the idea that leadership is a mutually influential *relationship* that transforms both leaders and followers. Although some scholars assess successful leadership according to output and achievement of group goals (e.g., Segal, 1981), Rost defines success based on the quality of the relationship and the nature of the goals. Accordingly, successful leadership requires interpersonal skills.

An enormous amount of research has been dedicated to describing the interpersonal skills required for effective leadership behaviors. Examples of interpersonal skills that promote leadership behaviors include competence in communicating, authenticity, and ability to handle conflict (B. Bass & R. Bass, 2008). For example, Moss and Barbuto (2010) found that the ability to interpret effectively and react to social situations, change one’s behavior in order to gain cooperation from others, and network within organizations predicted effective leadership relationships, as well as promotion and advancement within leadership roles. Interpersonal skills are also a component of emotional intelligence, which has received a great deal of scholarly attention as a prerequisite for transformational leadership behaviors (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence refers to the soft skills required for leadership and includes the abilities to understand others’ emotions and manage relationships (interpersonal skills), as well as understanding and managing one’s own emotions (intrapersonal skills).

Empathy is one example of an interpersonal skill that is vital for leadership. Effective leadership behaviors require that an individual is able to accurately assess group members’ motives, attitudes, and level of effectiveness (B. Bass & R. Bass, 2008). Empathy, the ability to understand others’ emotions, enables individuals to communicate effectively, respond to others’

unique needs, and motivate followers toward common goals (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000; Megerian & Losik, 1996). Social competence is a related concept that refers to individuals' beliefs about their abilities to interact with peers (Harter, 1982). Self-reported social competence predicts higher likelihood of being nominated by peers as a good friend and more adaptive coping when faced with interpersonal stressors (Zimmer-Gembeck, Lees, & Skinner, 2011). Accordingly, social competence reflects the presence of interpersonal skills.

Research linking interpersonal skills to leadership behavior among adolescents is less prevalent, but reveals similar themes. For example, Charbonneau and Nicol (2002) found that adolescents' responses on self-report measures of empathy and ability to manage relationships were related to their likelihood of being identified as leaders by their peers. Based on a longitudinal study that followed youth for over a decade, researchers identified social competence and empathy as two elements of positive youth development that enable youth to adopt leadership roles and engage in other actions intended to contribute positively to self, family, community, and society (R. Lerner & J. Lerner, J. V., 2013).

The necessity of interpersonal skills for effective leadership behaviors is well documented, but the extant research is limited by a narrow focus on possessing leadership roles and exhibiting leadership behaviors (e.g., Moss & Barbuto, 2010). Opportunities to hold leadership roles are not equally available to all youth and tend to be more limited for low-income adolescents and adolescents of color (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Spring, Grimm, & Dietz, 2008). Therefore, adopting a broader conceptualization of leadership may provide additional insight into the leadership development of underserved groups. Perceived leadership ability plays a critical role in translating beliefs and skills into actions and, as shown in Study 2 in this dissertation, provides a useful indicator of adolescent thriving among youth from underserved populations.

Accordingly, I focus on perceived leadership ability in order to study the role of interpersonal skills and leadership development among underserved populations.

Research on interpersonal skills and leadership tends to identify skills and explain why they are necessary for effective leadership behaviors (e.g., Goleman, 1995). Yet, little attention has been given to understanding the mechanisms by which interpersonal skills promote leadership development over time. Youth with interpersonal skills may be more likely to engage in social activities, such as participating in community service or extracurricular activities. Through those opportunities, they may experience opportunities to perform leadership behaviors and may gain confidence in their leadership ability.

Theoretical Framework: Leadership Identity Development Theory

Leadership Identity Development (LID) theory (Komives et al., 2009) offers a framework for understanding the role of interpersonal skills in promoting leadership development. LID suggests that individuals' leadership identities develop in a series of stages, although these stages are not necessarily linear and individuals' progression is heavily influenced by context. In the first stage of LID, individuals begin with a basic awareness that leaders exist in the world. In the second stage, referred to as *exploration and engagement*, young people engage in activities that allow them to explore their interests and develop relationships with peers. Involvement in group activities helps youth develop skills, identify their own strengths and weaknesses, and build self-confidence. These experiences prepare them for the third stage of LID, in which they begin to adopt leadership positions. In the later stages of LID, individuals conceptualize leadership as a process that is not contingent on possessing leadership roles and, ultimately, they are able to demonstrate effective leadership behaviors in diverse contexts.

LID theory suggests that, in addition to predicting leadership ability directly, adolescents' interpersonal skills may promote leadership development by making youth more likely to engage in activities with peers (stage two of LID; Komives et al., 2009). Youth who find it easy to relate to others and who feel confident in their social abilities are likely to choose to participate in social activities with peers. Moreover, because youth with prosocial interpersonal skills are likely to be popular with their peers, they are likely to be invited to participate in social activities regularly (de Bruyn & Cillessen, 2006). Accordingly, youth with strong interpersonal skills are likely to spend more time in social settings than their peers who are less socially adept. In addition to having more frequent social engagement, youth with strong interpersonal skills are likely to have more positive interactions in these settings.

Engaging in social activities exposes youth to role models who exhibit different leadership styles and allows them to gain confidence in their own leadership abilities (Komives et al., 2009). Youth who demonstrate strong interpersonal skills are likely to be nominated by peers and adults for leadership roles. They are also likely to engage in informal leadership behaviors in these settings, such as encouraging other team members or speaking out against an unfavorable policy. All of these leadership behaviors provide opportunities for youth to practice leadership skills, experience success, receive positive feedback, and gain confidence in their leadership abilities.

Current Study

In this study, I explore the role of interpersonal skills in promoting perceived leadership ability. Based on existing research about the relationship between interpersonal skills and leadership ability (e.g., Goleman, 1995), I hypothesize that empathy and social competence will promote perceived leadership ability among adolescents. Based on research and theory

regarding the role of social support and community engagement in promoting leadership development (Komives et al., 2006; Komives et al., 2009), I hypothesize that community participation and peer support will mediate the relationship between interpersonal skills and perceived leadership ability. Specifically, I predict that adolescents with high empathy and social competence will have greater engagement in community activities and more supportive peer relationships, and that community participation and peer support will promote perceived leadership ability. To test these two hypotheses, I compare a partial model in which only empathy and social competence are predictors of perceived leadership ability (Model 1) with a full model that also includes community participation and peer support as mediating variables (Model 2).

METHODS

Participants

Data were collected as part of a program evaluation of Badges for Baseball, a juvenile crime prevention program developed by the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation. This program engages local law enforcement officials with youth in sports games and character development lessons. The program serves children and adolescents from underserved communities across the country.

The evaluation study used a two-group quasi-experimental design in which one group of participants enrolled in Badges for Baseball and the other group enrolled in a different youth program. Participants completed paper surveys at three time points: pre-program, post-program, and three months after the end of the program. Some formatting changes were made to the survey after the first wave in order to improve clarity. This study used data from the second wave of data collection, which had the most complete responses on variables of interest.

Participants in the sample (n=488) ranged between age 9 and 14 at the time of the study, with a mean age of 11.52 (SD=1.51). The sample was 61% male (n=297) and 45% of participants reported their race as African-American (n=221), 27% as White (n=131), and 28% as American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, or Other (n=130); six participants did not respond to the race item.

Measures

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alphas are shown in Table 4.1.

Empathy was measured using a six-item scale that asked participants to indicate their level of agreement with statements such as, "I believe that there are two sides to every conflict and try to look at them both," and, "Before I say something bad to a person, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place" (Davis, 1980). Participants responded using a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Social competence was measured using five items from the social competence subscale of Harter's (1983) Perceived Competence Scale for Children. Each item presented descriptions of two different types of children; for example, "Some kids find it hard to make friends," and, "For other kids it's pretty easy to make friends." Participants first chose which of the two types was more like them and then indicated whether that description was "sort of true" or "really true" of them. Response categories included a four-point scale (1 = first type is really true and 4 = second type is really true).

Community participation was measured using four items (US Department of Education, 2004) in which participants indicated their level of agreement using a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree). Items included "I actively participate in my neighborhood's activities," and "I try to help people in my neighborhood when they are in need."

Peer support was measured using four items, including “I trust my friends,” and “My friends are there when I need them” (Small & Rogers, 1995). Participants indicated their level of agreement with each statement using a five-point scale (0=never true, 4=always true).

Perceived leadership ability was measured using three items from the Leadership Competence subscale of Zimmerman and Zahniser’s (1991) Sociopolitical Control Scale. The items were, “Other people usually follow my ideas,” “I am often a leader in groups,” and “I can usually organize people to get things done.” Participants responded using a five-point scale (0 = not true, 4 = very true).

Data Analytic Strategy

First, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis in *Mplus*, Version 7 (L. Muthen & B. Muthen, 2012) in order to check the fit of the five measures included in the study. Next, I conducted two structural equation models to explore the relationships between interpersonal skills (social competence, empathy), contextual variables (community participation, peer support), and perceived leadership ability. In Model 1, I only tested the direct paths from the interpersonal skills of social competence and empathy to perceived leadership ability. The model also includes a path representing the correlation between social competence and empathy. Figure 4.1 illustrates the proposed relationships in Model 1. I included age, race, and sex as predictors perceived leadership ability to control for them.

In Model 2, I tested the hypothesis that community participation and peer support mediate the relationship between social competence and empathy and perceived leadership ability. Figure 4.2 illustrates the proposed relationships in Model 2. I tested the direct effects from social competence and empathy to community participation, peer support, and perceived leadership ability, as well as the direct effects from community participation and peer support to

perceived leadership ability. I also tested the indirect effects of social competence and empathy on perceived leadership ability, with community participation and peer support serving as mediators. The model also includes a path representing the correlation between social competence and empathy. In order to control for age, race, and sex, I included them as predictors of community participation, peer support, and perceived leadership ability. To compare the fit of Model 1 and Model 2, I conducted a Satorra-Bentler scaled chi square difference test (L. Muthen & B. Muthen, n.d.; Satorra & Bentler, 1999). To test the directionality of the relationships proposed in Model 2, I also ran the model with mediators and independent variables reversed, so that empathy and social competence mediated the relationship of community participation and peer support with perceived leadership ability.

RESULTS

Results of the confirmatory factor analysis with all five measures (empathy, social competence, community participation, peer support, and perceived leadership ability) revealed that the measurement model fit the data well (CFI=.95, RMSEA=.04, SRMR=.05).

In Model 1, empathy ($\beta=.30$, $p<.001$) and social competence ($\beta=.46$, $p<.001$) were both associated with higher perceived leadership ability. No correlation existed between empathy and social competence. Sex, age, and race were not related to perceived leadership ability. Fit indices for Model 1 were acceptable (AIC=20,785.433, RMSEA=.03, CFI=.95, SRMR=.05).

Results of Model 2 are illustrated in Figure 4.3 and complete model estimates are included in Table 4.2. Fit indices for the full model were acceptable (AIC= 29768.64, RMSEA=.04, CFI=.94, SRMR=.05). The chi square difference test revealed that the mediation model, Model 2, was a better fit than Model 1, $\chi^2(150)=260.49$, $p<.001$. Fit indices did not

improve when I reversed the mediators and independent variables in Model 2 (AIC= 29767.20, RMSEA=.04, CFI=.94, SRMR=.04).

In Model 2, empathy was associated with higher community participation ($\beta=.45$, $p<.001$) and peer support ($\beta=.47$, $p<.001$), but was not directly related to perceived leadership ability. Social competence was associated with higher peer support ($\beta=.21$, $p=.001$) and perceived leadership ability ($\beta=.40$, $p<.001$), but was not related to community participation. Community participation ($\beta=.30$, $p<.001$) and peer support ($\beta=.28$, $p<.001$) were both associated with higher perceived leadership ability. Tests of specific indirect effects revealed that the relationship between empathy and perceived leadership ability was mediated by both community participation ($\beta=.17$, $p<.001$) and peer support ($\beta=.17$, $p=.002$). Peer support mediated the relationship between social competence and perceived leadership ability ($\beta=.08$, $p=.01$), but community participation did not serve as a mediator. No correlation existed between empathy and social competence.

Community participation ($\beta=-.13$, $p=.02$) and peer support ($\beta=-.13$, $p=.02$) were both higher among younger participants. Sex and race did not predict either community participation or peer support. Perceived leadership ability was higher for females ($\beta= .09$, $p=.048$) and older participants ($\beta= .15$, $p=.001$). Perceived leadership ability was lower among White participants ($\beta= -.11$, $p=.04$) compared to participants who reported membership in other racial groups.

DISCUSSION

This study contributes to the literature on leadership development by suggesting multiple ways that interpersonal skills may promote perceived leadership ability. The first model indicated that adolescents' social competence and empathy were directly related to adolescents' perceived leadership ability after controlling for sex, age, and race. These findings support my

hypothesis that interpersonal skills promote perceived leadership ability. Results are consistent with past research that demonstrate relationships between interpersonal skills and leadership ability (e.g., Charbonneau & Nicol, 2002).

Most notably, however, this study contributes to our understanding of the possible mechanisms by which interpersonal skills promote leadership development among adolescents. The second model tested partially confirmed my second hypothesis that interpersonal skills promote perceived leadership ability by promoting prosocial engagement with peers and community members. These findings are consistent with LID theory (Komives et al., 2006), which suggests that interpersonal skills will promote social exploration and continued leadership development.

Study findings support my hypothesis that the relationship between empathy and perceived leadership ability is mediated by peer support and community participation. Adolescents who had high levels of empathy were more likely to be involved in their communities and have positive relationships with their peers. Empathy can motivate individuals to help others and facilitate positive relationships (Megerian & Losik, 1996; Sahdra et al., 2015). In addition, highly empathetic individuals might be more likely to be recruited and accepted as friends or as leaders by their peers (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000). Adolescents who are positively engaged with their community and peers will have opportunities to demonstrate formal and informal leadership behaviors. For example, an adolescent might help a neighbor by babysitting or might organize a soccer game with friends. When youth engage in leadership behaviors and experience success, they can gain increased confidence in their leadership abilities (Bandura, 1977). The direct relationship between empathy and perceived leadership ability disappeared when community participation and peer support were included in the model, which

indicates that the entire effect of empathy on perceived leadership ability was explained by its effect on community participation and peer support. The lack of direct relationship provides further support for my hypothesis that empathy is related to perceived leadership ability because it motivates individuals to engage in positive social interactions.

Findings provided mixed support for the hypothesis that the relationship between social competence and perceived leadership ability is mediated by peer support and community participation. Social competence did predict peer support, although the relationship was not as strong as the relationship between empathy and peer support. Social competence was not related to community participation, however, and it remained directly related to perceived leadership ability. The sustained direct relationship suggests that beliefs about social competence predict perceived leadership ability, regardless of one's actual engagement in social settings. One possible explanation is that social competence and perceived leadership ability both reflect adolescents' self-reported beliefs about their abilities. Perhaps the relationship between the two is the result of a third factor, such as self-esteem, which prompts some individuals to rate themselves highly on all measures of perceived ability. Future research that controls for self-esteem (e.g., Oakes, Brown, & Cai, 2008) or self-awareness (e.g., Killian, 2012) may help disentangle the relationship between individuals' beliefs and their actual level of competence in social situations. Ideally, future research will also include behavioral measures of social competence, including observations by researchers and evaluations by peers, teachers, or parents (e.g., Bohlin, Hagekull, & Andersson, 2005).

The lack of relationship between empathy and social competence is noteworthy and unexpected, given extant research suggesting that empathy promotes positive interpersonal relationships (e.g., Hoffman, 2000). This finding, in combination with the divergent pathways

linking empathy and social competence to perceived leadership ability, suggests that different profiles may exist among adolescents who are high in perceived leadership ability. These differences, rooted in the presence of empathy, may be the difference between engagement in prosocial and antisocial leadership behaviors. For example, some youth with high perceived leadership ability possess high levels of empathy, participate in activities that benefit their community, and have supportive, trusting relationships with peers. Other youth are confident in their abilities to make friends and influence others, but have low empathy and little engagement in activities that promote the good of their community. These two profiles are reminiscent of two types of leaders that researchers have described as differing in their goals and behaviors (Howell & Avolio, 1992; Popper, 2002). *Socialized leaders* aim to serve social causes and lead by engaging in two-way communication and motivating followers to work toward collective goals. Conversely, *personalized leaders* seek personal gain and lead by authoritarian means. They are self-aggrandizing and maintain personal distance from their followers in order to maintain an aura of mystique. Both types of leaders would likely have high perceived leadership ability, however, only socialized leaders would be expected to demonstrate empathy or participate in community activities that serve a common good.

Although research and theory on socialized and personalized leaders emerged from studies of adult leaders (e.g., Popper, 2002), researchers studying peer relationships among adolescents provide support for the idea that some leaders may act without empathy. For example, de Bruyn and Cillessen (2006) found that early adolescents distinguished between peers who were popular and well-liked and those who were popular, but not well-liked. Notably, adolescents who were popular and *not* well-liked were most likely to be seen as leaders. Those individuals, who were also described as bullies and as aggressive and arrogant, would likely

demonstrate high social competence, high perceived leadership ability, and low empathy. Popular and well-liked adolescents were described as affiliative and helpful, which likely indicates high empathy, but were less likely to be identified as leaders.

Future research using mixed methods approaches may provide insight into how adolescents' beliefs about themselves and others shape their leadership behaviors. For example, researchers could conduct observations of adolescents in settings where they are group members and settings where they hold leadership positions, in order to document the frequency and style of their leadership behaviors (e.g., giving instructions, encouraging others). Comparing adolescents' behaviors with their responses to survey measures of empathy, social competence, and perceived leadership ability may provide insight into the emergence of prosocial and antisocial leadership behaviors.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the reliance on cross-sectional data. Because all data were collected at the same time, I cannot draw conclusions about the directionality of the proposed relationships. Interpersonal skills may promote perceived leadership ability, as I have proposed, or the reverse may be true and perceived leadership ability may promote interpersonal skills. Extant research suggests that leadership beliefs and skills are mutually reinforcing (e.g., Komives et al., 2009), so most likely relationships exist in both directions. Likewise, interpersonal skills may promote community participation and peer support, as suggested by my model, or the reverse may be true. Again, the relationship is likely bidirectional. Findings revealed no change in model fit when mediators and independent variables were reversed, which strengthens my confidence in the conclusion that interpersonal skills promote community participation and peer support in the hypothesized direction. Future research using longitudinal

data would allow for stronger conclusions about the directionality of proposed relationships and the underlying mechanisms. Despite the limitation presented by the nature of the data, this study makes a valuable contribution by not only suggesting the existence of a relationship between interpersonal skills and perceived leadership ability, but also offering a theoretically-driven model to explain *how* interpersonal skills promote leadership development.

A second limitation of the study is the narrow focus on perceived leadership ability as the only measure of leadership. Leadership beliefs are a vital part of leadership development, but the translation of these beliefs into leadership behaviors is also critical. Adolescent leadership beliefs and behaviors are both predictors of thriving and, as demonstrated in Study 2 (Chapter 3) in this dissertation, much of the relationship between leadership beliefs and adult thriving is the result of the ability of leadership beliefs to motivate youth to adopt leadership roles.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that differences may exist in participants' leadership styles that are not captured in the measure of perceived leadership ability.

Nonetheless, this study contributes to our understanding of leadership development of underserved groups by utilizing a measure that is not contingent on the availability of leadership opportunities. Future research that includes measures of leadership beliefs and behaviors would be useful to gain a more robust understanding of leadership development. For example, measures of behaviors that reflect different leadership styles (e.g., prosocial vs. antisocial) could provide insight into differences that occur with and without the presence of empathy.

In addition, generalizability of findings is limited by the nature of the sample. Participants in this study were predominantly youth of color, all of whom were selected to participate in either a juvenile crime prevention program or another similar youth program. All programs intentionally recruited youth from underserved communities. Accordingly, these

findings may not be generalizable to populations that are predominantly White or more affluent. Future research that compares leadership development among different racial or socioeconomic groups may help identify differences and provide information that can be generalized more broadly. Yet, the sample under consideration in this study offers a major contribution to our understanding of leadership development among underserved youth, a population that has received little attention in the extant research on leadership development.

Conclusion

This study provides insight into the mechanisms by which interpersonal skills promote perceived leadership ability among adolescents. In addition to suggesting that empathy promoted perceived leadership ability by encouraging community participation and peer support, the study revealed unexpected findings about the role of social competence. Social competence was related to perceived leadership ability regardless of individuals' empathy or community participation, which may indicate variation in the ethics of participants' leadership beliefs and, potentially, behaviors. Whereas some youth may engage in prosocial leadership behaviors intended to benefit society, others may engage in leadership behaviors as a way of promoting self-interest.

Our understanding of leadership development will benefit from future research that seeks to identify more nuanced profiles of adolescents with high perceived leadership ability and explores the relationship between those profiles and individuals' leadership behaviors. The ability to identify adolescents who exhibit tendencies toward antisocial leadership behaviors may allow educators and practitioners to intervene in ways that help young people apply their leadership skills toward prosocial goals. Promoting empathy may motivate youth to channel

their leadership skills in positive directions and, as a result, may prevent antisocial behaviors and allow for the emergence of leaders who will effect positive social change.

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Table 4.1. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alphas for study variables

	Mean (SD)	α
Empathy	3.65 (.77)	.76
Social Competence	3.03 (.74)	.69
Community Participation	3.30 (1.04)	.88
Peer Support	3.00 (.90)	.85
Perceived Leadership Ability	2.33 (1.08)	.83

Figure 4.1. Model 1

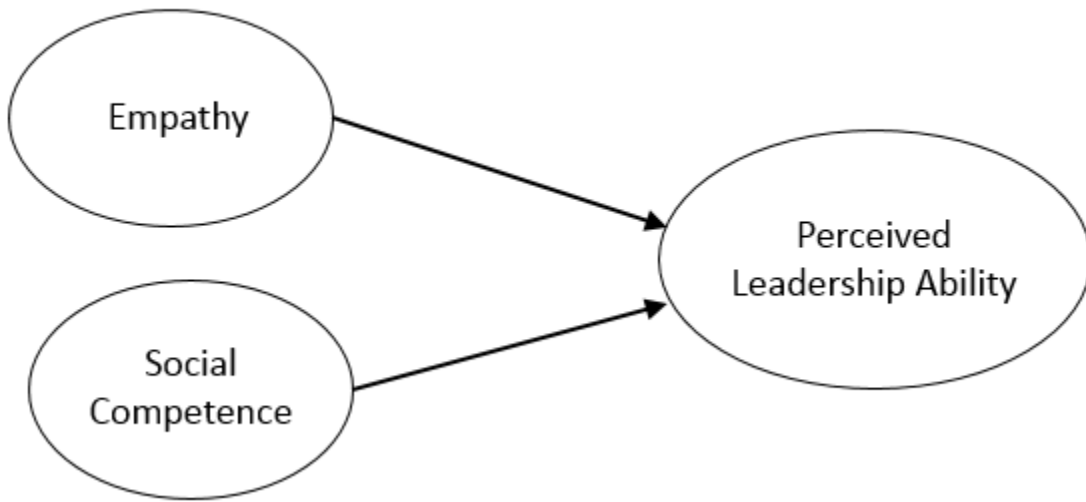


Figure 4.2. Model 2

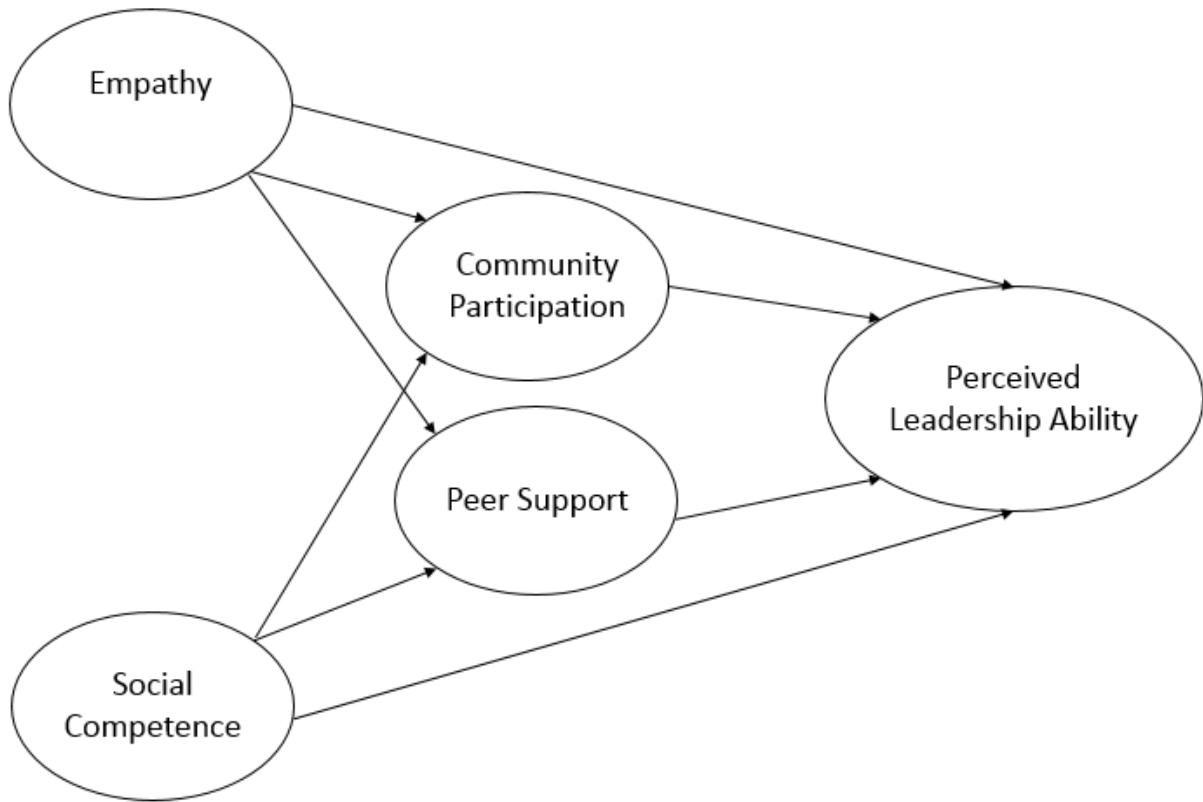
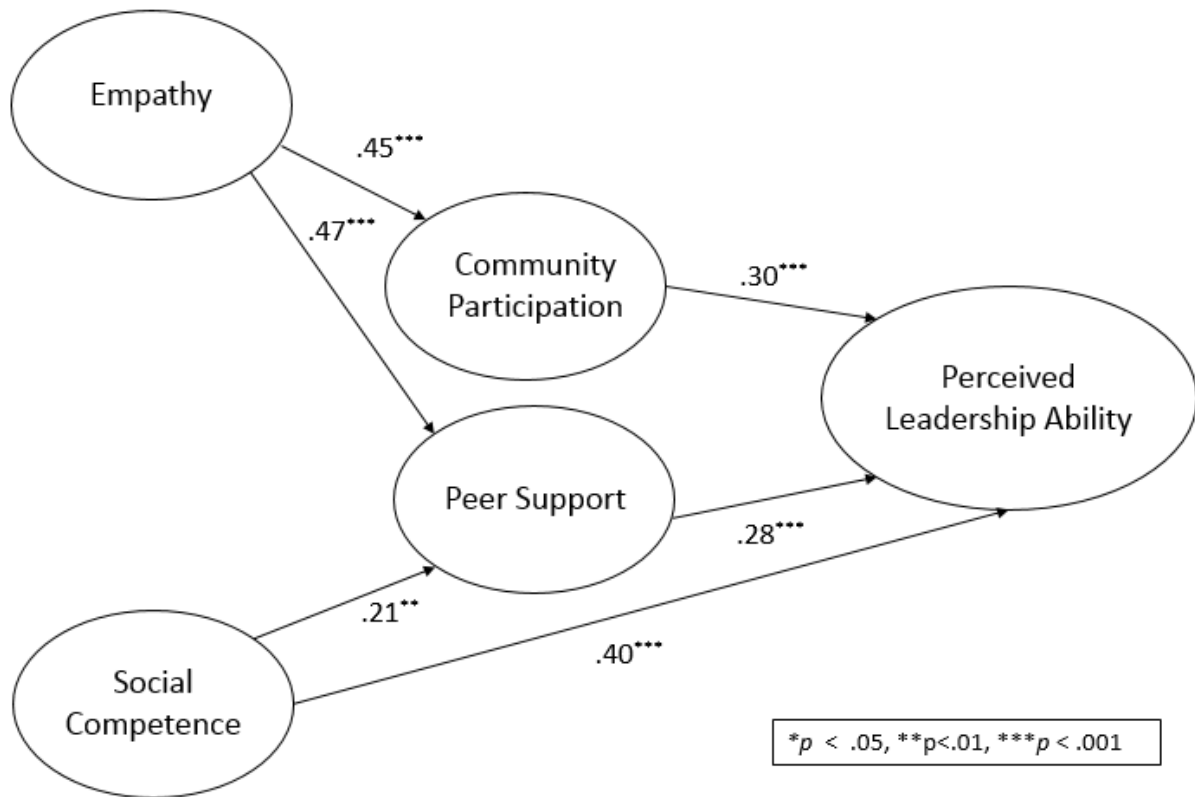


Figure 4.3. Final structural equation model with standardized coefficients



Note: Nonsignificant paths are not shown in the figure (e.g., paths from social competence to community participation and empathy to perceived leadership ability).

Table 4.2. Standardized model estimates and fit indices for Model 2

	Community Participation	Peer Support	Perceived Leadership Ability
Demographics:			
Sex	-.04 (.05)	.03 (.05)	.09 (.04)*
Age	-.13 (.06)*	-.13 (.06)*	.15 (.05)**
Race: Black	.08 (.06)	.01 (.06)	-.08 (.05)
Race: White	.04 (.06)	.02 (.06)	-.11 (.06)*
Empathy	.45 (.06)***	.47 (.06)***	.04 (.08)
Social Competence	.02 (.06)	.21 (.06)**	.40 (.06)***
Community Participation	-	-	.30 (.06)***
Peer Support	-	-	.28 (.08)***
R^2	.23 (.05)***	.30 (.06)***	.51 (.05)***
Specific Indirect Paths			
Empathy → Community Participation → Leadership			.14 (.03)***
Empathy → Peer Support → Leadership			.13 (.04)**
Social Competence → Community Participation → Leadership			.01 (.02)
Social Competence → Peer Support → Leadership			.06 (.02)**
Note: Sex: Females are reference category. Values for specific indirect paths represent Beta estimates and standard errors.			
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.			

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

Historical and popular narratives in the United States often emphasize images of leaders as exceptional individuals who perform heroic acts (Zinn, 2005). This limited conceptualization of leadership may be disempowering for young people. Youth may find it difficult to relate to these heroic leaders and, as a result, may not recognize their own potential for leadership. This challenge may be especially relevant for individuals from marginalized groups, whose images are rarely reflected in traditional narratives of heroic leaders. Young people who do not believe that they have the ability to be leaders are unlikely to seek out leadership roles or engage in other leadership behaviors. In a society that places high value on leadership, leadership experiences are important for personal and professional thriving. Research that seeks to understand how young people develop perceived leadership ability, as well as the role those beliefs play in contributing to other positive outcomes, may play a critical role in promoting leadership development among underserved groups.

The three studies of this dissertation extend our understanding of leadership development through a close examination of perceived leadership ability among underserved adolescents and emerging adults. These studies make four major contributions to the study of leadership development. First, they present a broad conceptualization of leadership that acknowledges the roles of beliefs, skills, and an array of behaviors. Second, these studies contribute to ongoing debates about the nature of leadership by demonstrating that leadership ability is a developmental phenomenon that can change over time. Third, these studies demonstrate the long-term implications of adolescent leadership for outcomes in adulthood. Fourth, these studies

provide insight into leadership development among samples that have not traditionally been the focus of leadership research.

Contribution 1: *Leadership is more than a position.*

This dissertation contributes to the literature by adopting a broad conceptualization of leadership that acknowledges the importance of leadership beliefs, skills, and behaviors. I adopted Rost's (1993) definition of leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 102). The definition highlights the idea that leadership is a mutually influential relationship, with leaders both influencing and being influenced by their followers. This perspective reflects contemporary thinking about leadership as a relationship that does not require an official position or title (Komives & Dugan, 2010).

To organize the array of beliefs, skills, and behaviors that have been identified in the extant literature as components of leadership (e.g., B. Bass & R. Bass, 2008), I used a conceptual framework inspired by Zimmerman's (1995) empowerment theory. I differentiated between three components of leadership (beliefs, skills, behaviors) that each have unique benefits and can be demonstrated independently, but are all necessary in order to realize the leadership relationship. This framework acknowledges the role of perceived leadership ability (belief) as a necessary precursor to leadership that is independent from leadership roles (behavior). This framework also includes leadership behaviors that can be demonstrated by individuals regardless of whether they hold leadership positions (e.g., challenging the status quo, organizing complex projects, motivating others to work toward a goal).

This conceptualization of leadership allows for nuanced and inclusive research on leadership development. Limited numbers of leadership roles exist in any group or organization,

but effective groups benefit from an array of leadership behaviors demonstrated by group members. In an effective group, one person may be elected as president of a school club, another person may come up with the vision for a club project, a third person may organize the group to accomplish the task, and a fourth may provide the encouragement necessary to see the project to fruition. Researchers focused only on the individuals in possession of official leadership roles are likely to overlook relevant behaviors exhibited by group members and will perpetuate a limited understanding of leadership behaviors.

Implications for Practice

The conceptualization of leadership used in this dissertation may help frame conversations about leadership for educators and practitioners who work with youth. Popular discourse about leadership tends to focus on individuals who hold prominent leadership positions, which may lead youth to believe that one must serve in a similar position in order to demonstrate leadership. These narratives are likely to be especially disempowering for youth from underserved communities who may have limited access to leadership roles and may not feel as though the images in popular media are relevant to their own social identities (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Reframing conversations to focus on diverse leadership behaviors and explicitly debunking the notion that leadership requires a title may boost young people's confidence in their own leadership potential.

One strategy for reframing these conversations is to share the stories of history's unsung heroes, individuals who have made valuable contributions to society and received little recognition (Zinn, 2000). Traditional accounts of the Civil Rights Movement, for example, highlight the actions of public figures like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Lyndon B. Johnson. These units might expand to include stories of individuals like Ella Baker or Septima

Clark, who made major contributions to the Civil Rights Movement by inspiring, organizing, and educating others without holding any major leadership positions (Payne, 2007). Emphasizing stories like these may help students expand their thinking about leadership and may provide role models that feel more relevant and accessible than the traditional historic figures.

Another strategy to communicate the importance of leadership behaviors is to apply this broad conceptualization of the term as a basis for organizing classroom activities and recognizing student behaviors. Rather than assigning one leader during group activities in class, a teacher might define a number of positions and require each student in the group to adopt a role. One student might be responsible for facilitating the conversation, another takes notes, a third keeps time, and the fourth presents to the class. This practice allows each student in the group to engage in leadership behaviors and also reinforces the idea that effective groups require many forms of leadership behavior. These practices, rooted in a broad conceptualization of leadership, may encourage young people to think more optimistically about their own leadership abilities, seek training and experiences that will help them develop leadership skills, and engage in leadership behaviors that reflect their unique abilities and interests.

Contribution 2: *Leadership ability is malleable.*

These studies contribute to our understanding of leadership ability as a set of skills and beliefs that are influenced by context and can change over time, rather than characteristics that are innate and unchangeable. In the ongoing debate about whether leaders are born or made, some scholars suggest that born leaders will demonstrate strong leadership ability throughout their lives (e.g., Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Zaccaro, 2007), while others argue that leadership ability is context-dependent, accessible to anyone, and will vary over time (e.g., Burns, 2012; Komives, Longersbeam, Owen, Mainella, & Osteen, 2006). Study 1 contributes to this debate by

demonstrating that individuals' perceived leadership ability declined during emerging adulthood, especially among those who did not attend four-year colleges. These findings suggest that perceived leadership ability is influenced by context and is not a fixed trait.

Leadership Identity Development (LID) theory describes leadership development as a context-dependent process that occurs according to a series of non-linear stages that correspond with changes in individuals' leadership beliefs, skills, and behaviors (Komives et al., 2006). Individuals move from viewing leadership as positional and groups as hierarchical to understanding leadership as a shared group process that is not defined by a position, an understanding that reflects Rost's (1993) definition of leadership. LID is particularly useful for the study of perceived leadership ability because the theory suggests that perceived leadership ability plays a critical role in leadership development, both as an indicator of leadership identity and as a critical motivator for continued development.

Implications for Practice

By demonstrating that leadership ability is malleable, these studies provide assurance that educators and practitioners can play a role in promoting leadership development. Rather than merely identifying some youth as born leaders and assigning them any leadership roles that arise, practitioners can create contexts that promote leadership development for all. One strategy for promoting leadership development is to explicitly frame leadership ability as a capacity that improves with effort and practice. This strategy is similar to the widely replicated educational technique of teaching students that intelligence is malleable as a way of promoting academic motivation and achievement (Paunesku et al., 2015). When people believe their abilities can change with effort, they are more likely to work hard and persist in the face of challenges (Dweck, 2006). Understanding that leadership ability is malleable may encourage individuals to

seek out leadership experiences and embrace challenges with the view that failure is a learning experience and not a reflection of their innate capacity to lead. The belief that leadership ability is malleable may be especially important for individuals with limited access to leadership roles, including emerging adults who do not attend four-year colleges and youth from underserved communities, and may serve as a reminder that the availability of leadership opportunities is no reflection of their capacity for leadership in the future.

Contribution 3: *Adolescent leadership has lasting implications.*

These studies demonstrate the long-term implications of adolescent leadership on individuals' development. Researchers consider leadership roles to be an indicator that adolescents are thriving and on the path to becoming generative adults (e.g., Scales, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 2011), but empirical evidence illuminating the long-term effects of adolescent leadership roles is relatively limited. Study 2 revealed that possession of leadership roles in adulthood predicted mental health and community participation over a decade later. This finding provides empirical support for the importance of adolescent leadership roles as an indicator of youth thriving. Leadership roles allow individuals to develop beliefs and skills that promote their continued leadership development and help them thrive in other domains of life.

In addition, Study 2 revealed that adolescents' perceived leadership ability predicted community participation in adulthood, regardless of their engagement in leadership roles as adolescents. This finding suggests that perceived leadership ability can serve as an additional indicator of thriving. Perceived leadership ability among adolescents contributes to their likelihood of engaging in effective leadership behaviors, promotes continued leadership development, and predicts positive outcomes in adulthood. Accordingly, it is an important focus for research and intervention.

Implications for Practice

The lasting implications of adolescent leadership (Study 2), in combination with the declines in perceived leadership ability that take place during emerging adulthood (Study 1), suggest a need for interventions that promote leadership development among youth and emerging adults. Community organizations and schools can promote leadership development by creating opportunities for young people to work together on common prosocial goals. Participation in activities with peers and in the community may provide youth with opportunities to practice various forms of leadership behaviors, develop relevant skills, and gain confidence in their abilities.

Schools and community organizations can also encourage leadership development by increasing the number of leadership positions available to youth and emerging adults. For example, governing boards of community organizations or school planning committees might reserve several seats for youth representatives. Organizations hiring individuals to lead groups of youth might prioritize emerging adults for those positions. In doing so, they create leadership positions for emerging adults and provide role models for youth. Emerging adults' proximity in age may facilitate their reception as relevant and influential role models. Accordingly, this strategy may promote leadership development for both emerging adults and youth.

Contribution 4: Leadership among underserved populations requires attention.

These studies provide insight into leadership development among samples that have been traditionally understudied and underserved. Much of the extant research on leadership development has relied on data from individuals in post-secondary institutions or selective leadership programs and, accordingly, reflects samples of predominantly White individuals who are high achievers (e.g., Komives, et al., 2006; Mortensen et al., 2014). In contrast, this

dissertation focused on leadership development among individuals who live in underserved communities, the majority of whom were African American.

Individuals from other groups that have not traditionally had access to leadership roles, including African Americans, low-income individuals, and women, face continued obstacles to obtaining leadership positions, including both systemic inequities and interpersonal prejudice (Eagly, 2005; Festekjian et al., 2014). Youth in low-income neighborhoods typically have more limited access to extracurricular activities at school and in the community than their more affluent peers (Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Spring, Grimm, & Dietz, 2008). Accordingly, they have fewer opportunities to serve in leadership roles. Conceptualizing leadership to include beliefs, skills, and diverse behaviors may provide a valuable tool for studying the leadership development of populations lack equitable access to leadership roles.

Perceived leadership ability may be especially important as an indicator of thriving among underserved youth. For these youth, lack of leadership roles may reflect systemic issues (e.g., discrepancies in school funding, availability of extracurricular activities), rather than any deficits within the individual. Including perceived leadership ability as an indicator of thriving may allow for more nuanced depictions of adolescent thriving that take these structural inequities into account. For example, an African American adolescent who reports high perceived leadership ability may not have participated in any leadership roles in the past year, but may have demonstrated other forms of leadership behaviors and may be inclined to adopt leadership roles if they arise in the future. Confidence in their leadership abilities may encourage the youth to be resilient when faced with obstacles to leadership and may drive the continued pursuit of leadership roles. Accordingly, perceived leadership ability may contribute to other positive outcomes in adolescence and adulthood, even when leadership positions are scarce.

Implications for Practice

Findings underscore the importance of leadership interventions for African American and low-income youth and emerging adults that both promote perceived leadership ability and offer opportunities for leadership behaviors. Interventions that facilitate awareness of social inequities may be especially effective for motivating leadership behaviors among individuals from underserved groups. Rather than framing leadership development as a step toward professional or personal success, leadership education might situate the need for leadership in the context of injustice and the need for social change. Moore, Hope, Eisman, and Zimmerman (in press) suggest that awareness of systemic injustices may serve as a motivating factor for civic engagement among emerging adults of color. For example, a person who views homelessness as the result of housing discrimination and unequal access to mental health services may be more likely to organize an event to end homelessness in her community than someone else who attributes individuals' lack of housing to their poor decisions or lack of effort. Among groups that have been historically disenfranchised, leadership interventions may be especially effective if they can both affirm the idea that youth *can* lead and also help them recognize the reasons why they *should*.

Future Directions for Research

Sex Differences

One interesting and unexpected finding that emerged from these three studies was the lack of relationship between sex and perceived leadership ability. Sex was not a focus of this dissertation, but it was included in all studies as a control. Boys held leadership roles more often than girls (Study 2), however, sex was not related to perceived leadership ability in any of my studies. This finding is unexpected, due to the extensive literature suggesting that women tend to

have lower perceived leadership ability than men (Dugan & Komives, 2007), lower motivation to lead (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2012), and continue to be underrepresented in top management positions (Catalyst, 2016).

This surprising finding may be a factor of the samples under consideration and may reflect sociodemographic variation in the relationship between sex and leadership beliefs. Social role theory suggests that the cause of sex differences in leadership beliefs lies in the unequal distribution of men and women in leadership roles (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2002). Same-sex role models are particularly influential for youth (MacCallum & Beltman, 2002) and more men in leadership positions means that boys have greater access to same-sex role models in leadership positions. As a result, boys may develop stronger motivation to lead and greater confidence in their leadership abilities (Elprana, Felfe, Stiehl, & Gatzka, 2015). Yet, differences may exist across racial groups with regard to the availability of same-sex role models. African American women are more likely to lead single parent homes than White women (Kids Count, 2014) and African American men are more likely to be unemployed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016) or incarcerated (Carson, 2014) than White men. In predominantly African American communities, therefore, girls may be exposed to same-sex role models in leadership roles more frequently than their male peers. Differences in gender roles across racial groups offer a potential explanation for why my studies, which focused on predominantly African American samples, did not replicate prior research with regard to sex differences in perceived leadership ability.

Future research may lend insight into how individuals' multiple identities interact and influence leadership development. To explore the hypothesis that sex differences in perceived leadership ability are related to the availability of same-sex role models, researchers might explore whether the availability and characteristics of leadership role models vary across

different contexts and social groups. Interviews with youth may help extend prior research about the characteristics of effective role models (e.g., MacCallum & Beltman, 2002) and contribute to our understanding of the specific characteristics of role models who shape youths' beliefs in their leadership potential. Survey research that includes the number of role models available to youth, as well as characteristics of those individuals and their interactions with youth, may provide insight into how these factors are related to leadership development. Furthermore, this research may illuminate differences in the characteristics and availability of role models across various social identities (e.g., race, socioeconomic status, religion).

Differentiating Between Prosocial and Antisocial Leadership Behaviors

Whereas this dissertation has framed perceived leadership ability as a desirable outcome and an indicator of adolescent thriving, findings of Study 3 suggest that perceived leadership ability may not always lead to prosocial leadership behavior. Findings revealed that adolescents' empathy and social competence were unrelated and they contributed to perceived leadership ability in different ways. The effects of empathy on perceived leadership ability were mediated by community participation and peer support. Conversely, social competence was directly related to perceived leadership ability. These findings suggest that different profiles may exist among youth with high perceived leadership ability and raises questions about how their leadership behaviors may differ.

For adolescents who possess a sense of empathy, high perceived leadership ability will likely manifest in positive behaviors. For example, empathetic adolescents may communicate supportive messages to encourage their followers or initiate activities to improve the community. Yet, findings of Study 3 suggest that some youth with high perceived leadership ability believe themselves to be adept in social situations, but lack empathy. These individuals may engage in

leadership behaviors that do not reflect an understanding of their followers' perspectives and emotions. Without empathy, their goals may not serve the good of the community or their followers. They may communicate with their followers through demands, manipulation, or even physical force. Accordingly, possession of perceived leadership ability without empathy may lead to antisocial behaviors such as bullying and violence. These differing goals and behaviors are consistent with past research that differentiates between prosocial and antisocial leaders (Howell & Avolio, 1992; Popper, 2002).

My findings provide inspiration for future research into the developmental precursors and processes that contribute to the emergence of different types of leadership behaviors. Mixed methods approaches may provide insight into how adolescents' beliefs about themselves and others shape their engagement in either prosocial or antisocial leadership behaviors.

Observations of adolescents in settings where they are group members and settings where they hold leadership positions would allow researchers to document the frequency and style of leadership behaviors they exhibit. By juxtaposing adolescents' behaviors with their responses to survey measures of leadership beliefs and skills, we may gain insight into the emergence of prosocial and antisocial leadership behaviors.

The ability to differentiate between developmental paths that lead to prosocial and antisocial leadership behaviors may have major implications for the way researchers and practitioners understand and promote leadership development. If researchers can identify precursors to antisocial leadership behavior, then educators and practitioners may be able to identify warning signs that indicate potential emergence of antisocial leadership behaviors. Additionally, researchers could identify specific strategies that practitioners might implement to help youth redirect their leadership skills into prosocial behaviors. For example, a teacher might

notice that one student who is popular among her peers frequently initiates jokes that belittle or insult other people. The teacher might recognize the presence of leadership beliefs and skills (e.g., confidence, ability to influence peers) and intervene to encourage development of empathy, so that the student's skills are applied in more positive ways. Schools and youth programs could encourage empathy development through language and culture, as well as creating intentional opportunities for young people to do good for others and to adopt the perspectives of individuals who are different from them.

Conclusion

The studies in this dissertation contribute to our understanding of leadership as a relationship that requires beliefs, skills, and an array of behaviors. Findings suggest that leadership ability is malleable and that adolescents' beliefs about their leadership ability are important for continued positive development, regardless of whether they have access to leadership roles. These studies demonstrate a need for interventions to promote leadership development among underserved youth and emerging adults.

The *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools*[®] program provides an example of an intervention that incorporates many of the strategies suggested in this chapter and has demonstrated success promoting leadership development among emerging adults and adolescents from underserved groups (Bethea, 2011; Children's Defense Fund, 2015a). The summer program serves school-aged children and adolescents from underserved communities and is led by emerging adult interns. In preparation for their role, interns participate in a week of training that explores the history of racial injustice and educational inequity in the United States, inspires shared vision, and prepares them to implement the literacy curriculum (Jackson, 2011). Interns experience intense and meaningful leadership roles, in which they plan and implement

daily lessons for groups of ten youth. Through these activities, interns gain confidence in their leadership abilities and develop their skills as classroom leaders. Interns also serve as role models and support the leadership development of youth in the program.

Youth participate in a literacy curriculum that promotes perceived leadership ability and motivation to lead through its theme, *I can make a difference*, and the multicultural stories of people who engage in various leadership behaviors to improve the world (Children's Defense Fund, 2015b). The curriculum encourages development of leadership skills, such as empathy, communication, and critical thinking, through engaging and collaborative activities. The program also provides opportunities for youth to engage in leadership behaviors as they adopt various roles in group projects, mentor younger children in the program, and participate in community action events to serve their communities.

Future research into the mechanisms by which the *Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools*[®] promotes youth leadership development may help increase the effectiveness of programs intended to promote leadership development among underserved populations. Through high-quality leadership development programs, we can help young people realize their potential for leadership and engage their collective power to make the world a better place.

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