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Leadership and Adolescent Girls: A Qualitative Study of Leadership Development

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Abstract This research investigated youth leadership experiences of adolescent girls who participated in a comprehensive feminist-based leadership program. This qualitative study utilized a grounded theory approach to understand changes that occurred in 10 female adolescent participants. The words of the participants revealed that initially they viewed leadership in traditional terms and were hesitant to identify themselves as leaders or to see themselves included within their concepts of leadership. Following the program their view of leadership expanded and diversified in a manner that allowed for inclusion of themselves within it. They spoke with greater strength and confidence and felt better positioned and inspired to act as leaders. Participants identified having examples of women leaders, adopting multiple concepts of leadership, and participating in an environment of mutual respect and trust as factors that contributed to their expanded conceptualization.

Keywords Leadership · Youth · Feminism · Adolescent development

Introduction

Adolescent girls are situated at an important crossroads, at which their potential and their identities are being profoundly and rapidly influenced and shaped, including their development of a leadership identity. They are at a stage when they possess idealistic visions and are making life choices that will serve to enhance or limit their future opportunities. Simultaneously, they are facing the challenge of negotiating what it means to be a woman within many domains, including personal, interpersonal, and societal; and often in contexts where femininity is both expected and devalued. They are at once developing a voice and being silenced by the forces that surround them (Brown and Gilligan 1992). During this critical developmental period, adolescent girls are more likely than boys to develop depression, eating disorders, and other manifestations of psychological distress (Nolen-Hoeksema 2002; Nolen-Hoeksema et al. 1991; Taylor et al. 1995). Further, there is substantial evidence that social conditions related to lesser power and social status contribute to such problems. The picture may be especially complicated for adolescent girls of color, who may not "buy into" traditional notions of white middle class femininity, who have to negotiate their identity in the face of racial, class, and gender discrimination. Thus, adolescence is also a critical time wherein interventions that offer opportunities to demonstrate self-efficacy, provide social support, and give voice to girls may serve as important influences to alter this potentially harmful trajectory.

There are many such interventions in the literature, some of which have been evaluated in outcome studies (Bowling et al. 2000). However, one important gap in our understanding of the impact of such interventions is the personal experience, reflection, analysis, and transformation as voiced by the participants themselves, in their own words. Additionally, few investigations have included samples largely comprised of young women of color from low income or working class backgrounds. In the current

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study, we examine how one such intervention, a feminist-based leadership development program for girls, affected the perspectives and ideas of adolescent girls with respect to leadership and their own leadership self-identity. This work, through its content and methodology, espouses a feminist approach to research and seeks to give voice to the experience of adolescent girls. Before describing the study, we will discuss concepts of leadership, adolescence, and leadership development in adolescence as they relate to the participants in this study.

Concepts of Leadership

The concept of leadership has been defined and examined in various ways across a range of disciplines. From education to organizational development, leaders have been studied with respect to the qualities, competencies, and behaviors that make them "great" (Northouse 2004, p. 15). Discussions about leadership have made a distinction between transactional and transformational approaches (see Chin 2004; Eagly 2007). The transactional view has focused on the exchange between the leader and the led (Hollander 1986). This point of view is well aligned with the perspective of trait theorists who have argued that leadership is based solely on the individual characteristics of the person. It should be noted however, that this perspective has been refuted and traits alone have been shown to be poor predictors of leader emergence and organizational performance (see Mumford et al. 1993; see also Zaccaro 2007). Transformational leadership, on the other hand, is a more inclusive perspective and focuses attention on the process of "being" a leader, yet still continues to focus on moving the individual from follower to leader.

Most of the work regarding the concept of leadership has focused on the study of male leaders and of leadership within the context of a dominant Caucasian, male-based, upper middle-class culture, with very little research that explores how women lead or how theories of leadership apply to women who also belong to other non-dominant groups. However, the field is currently witnessing a change in this pattern and an increase in focus on leadership and women. Jean Lau Chin, in her presidential address to Division 35 of the American Psychological Association (2003, p. 2), described a new leadership concept, "a feminist leadership," in which women lead to ensure "a seat at the table" in all venues promoting social change, advocating for policy change, and managing organizations. Leadership in a feminist context works to promote women and feminist goals through an emphasis on collaboration. Thus, a "process" approach to leadership conceptualization is more aligned with feminist leadership and so is better able to include female perspectives (Chin 2004). The emphasis on defining leadership in ways that include a female perspective has gained importance as feminists have brought to light the disconnection that may exist between women's ways of leading and/or feminist styles of leadership and the socially desirable leadership qualities that have been identified within models of masculine leadership. Drawing upon larger work in differences between men and women's psychologies, Carol Gilligan (1993a) and her colleagues (Brown and Gilligan 1992) have discussed the different voices, styles, and ethics of men and women. Applying work like Gilligan's in the context of leadership has led to an integration of the characteristics of feminist, collaborative, and egalitatarian leadership styles (Chin 2004). This nascent exploration permits a celebration and honoring of diversity of leadership style, and allows us to understand and nurture within women the skills and qualities that comprise their leadership.

One aspect of women's leadership that has been examined empirically pertains to styles of leadership. As women increasingly participate in leadership roles traditionally held by men, the interaction between women's gender roles and leadership roles has been theorized to result in leadership styles that differ from those of men. Eagly and Johnson (1990) utilized meta-analytic techniques to explore the relation between gender roles and the use of primarily agentic as opposed to primarily communal leadership styles. Specifically, the extent to which leaders use task-oriented versus interpersonally oriented styles, democratic (participative) versus autocratic (directive) styles, and transformational versus transactional styles was examined. Though research on the combined or interactive influence of gender roles and leadership roles is scant, this theoretical position provides some explanation both for why there may be similarities between men and women occupying similar leadership roles, as well as why there might be differences. As others who interact with women leaders carry expectancies both for gender-consistent and leader-consistent behavior, when these two sets of expectancies contradict one another, women leaders especially may face injunctive norms that help to shape their leadership behavior. However, one important finding of Eagly and Johnson (1990) was that studies comparing male and female managers in the same occupational role find very little evidence of gender-stereotypic styles. While women leaders were found to be more participative and democratic than men, they were not found to differ from men on dimensions of task-orientation or interpersonal-orientation. In contrast, in laboratory studies of leaders of groups, or in assessments of individuals not selected for leadership roles, women and men are more likely to exhibit gender-stereotypic leadership styles. This finding points to the influence of context and of the constraints of leadership roles on the manifestation of gender roles in leadership.

In a follow-up meta-analysis, Eagly et al. (2001) compared male and female managers' transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles. The transactional style is historically how leadership has been conceptualized, in terms of an exchange relationship, wherein the leader clarifies the subordinates' responsibilities, and then monitors, rewards, and corrects their behavior. This style has been contrasted more recently with a transformational style of leadership, which is based upon a leader's use of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Zacharatos et al. 2001). In the meta-analysis of Eagly et al. (2001) differences between men's and women's leadership styles were small but significant, with women exceeding men on several transformational scales, and with men exceeding women on two transactional scales and the laissez-faire scale. More specifically, women more than male managers motivated their followers to feel respect and pride because of their association with them, showed optimism and excitement about future goals, and attempted to mentor followers and attend to their individual needs. Male more than female managers paid attention to their followers problems and mistakes, waited until problems became severe before attempting to solve them, and were absent and uninvolved at critical times. There are several possible interpretations for these differences, one of which pertains to the interaction of gender roles and leadership roles. The female gender role may foster more communal and nurturing leadership styles; complimentarily, others' expectancies for women leaders may influence them away from more masculine "command and control" leadership styles and toward more interpersonally sensitive behaviors.

Comparisons of men's and women's leadership styles inevitably fall short in their conclusiveness. Any understanding of gendered leadership must take into account multiple interactions: Individuals' leadership behavior is intertwined with their gendered roles, and leadership is enacted in gendered contexts. The effectiveness of a leader depends greatly upon the "gender congeniality" of the social context in which leadership is enacted (Yoder 2001). Characteristics of gender congeniality include the group composition, the nature of the task (e.g., masculine-stereotypic, feminine-stereotypic), the nature of the outcomes that are valued, and the way in which power is distributed (Eagly and Johnson 1990; Yoder 2001). Thus, for example, while it is tempting to think of transformational leadership as a feminine style of leadership, much of the research on effective transformational leadership suggests that it is not the exclusive domain for feminine leadership, nor is it uncongenial for male leadership. It may, however, be a congenial context for the expression of effective feminine leadership (Yoder 2001).

The results of these empirical studies suggest that we must examine broadly the gender roles and expectancies, leadership roles and expectancies, and contexts in which leadership is enacted, if we are to understand how women and men lead effectively. Since women have historically been marginalized and left outside of leadership circles, it is critical that we understand where young women's beliefs about and proclivities toward leadership originate, how they are shaped and reinforced, and how they can be manifest in effective and fulfilling leadership.

Eagly and Karau's (2002) role incongruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders asserts that prejudice against leaders results when individuals perceive the leadership role as incongruent with the female gender role. According to theory, greater perceived incongruence is related to greater prejudicial behaviors toward female leaders. Eagly has extended this theory to suppose that women are responsive to their own perceived incongruence which in turn limits their leadership aspirations and likely contributes to decreased self-esteem and depression (see Killeen et al. 2006). This perspective highlights the influence of a socially constructed leadership ideal that is by design congruent with dominant cultural perspective. Thus, membership in groups with lesser power and influence in respect to race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation are positioned to experience greater incongruity and less likely to develop a self-identity as a leader.

Leadership Development in Adolescence

One critical period for nurturing women's leadership skills and qualities is undoubtedly adolescence. Adolescence is a developmental period in which individuals are grappling with questions of self-identity such as "Who am I?" and "How do I fit in?" Simultaneously, female adolescents are becoming aware that some of the aspects of their personalities and social selves (for example, their tendency toward empathy and desire for affiliation) are devalued in a male-dominated society (Denmark 1999; Gilligan 1990; Catelli 1996). Brown and Gilligan (1992) have suggested that self-esteem, confidence, and independence suffer in young girls in early adolescence. Their developing awareness of explicit and implicit cultural norms regarding women's roles, pervasive messages about beauty ideals, and well-protected patriarchal social structures can lead adolescent girls to develop self-doubt, distrust their own voices, and hesitate to express themselves freely (Gilligan 1990).

Within the context of such normative influences, Gilligan (1993b) has indicated that adolescent girls face a *psychological resistance* in which they are reluctant to "know what they know." Girls, unable to hear themselves

in the dominant discourse, experience a conflict between what they know and what they are permitted and expected to express outwardly. The resulting forced containment results in a silencing of voice. Further, issues of particular importance, including race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic background are too often overlooked in research and intervention development for adolescent girls (Erkut et al. 1996; see Leadbeater and Way 1996). Adolescent girls from low-income/working-class backgrounds and/or young women of color may be particularly engaged in a struggle between speaking one's voice and invisibility (Brown 1998), where silence and invisibility can be viewed as compulsory to gaining entry into the dominating patriarchy (Fordham 1993).

It is during this critical developmental period that adolescent girls may benefit most from models of women leaders, validation of feminine leadership styles, and empowerment to lead. However, questions remain regarding the critical processes and components involved in leadership development among adolescent girls. Van Linden and Fertman (1998) have noted that leadership development for adolescents must include the observation of others, actual life experiences, and general education (Van Linden and Fertman 1998). Additionally, because adolescence is a period of rapid growth in self-identity, processes intended to facilitate leadership development must include the consideration of idealism, negotiation of independence, and broader formation of identity including gender, class, and race (Van Linden and Fertman 1998).

One common misjudgment in the exploration of leadership is to limit one's definition to specific leadership tasks or concrete behaviors and accomplishments, thereby ignoring the experience and process of leadership development and denying the ongoing transformational experience of leadership and engagement. Because this experience of transformation may be especially relevant to adolescents, who are themselves undergoing significant transition, it is important to remain attuned to processes of change that occur in contexts of leadership development. This involves moving beyond strict measurement of leadership acquisition and behavioral outcomes and understanding the dynamic interplay of the individual and environment.

Recent research on adolescent leadership reflects this dynamic process whereby youth become sensitized to and socialized toward the need to take action. The work of Constance Flanagan, James Youniss and colleagues (Flanagan and Sherrod 1998; Metz et al. 2003) reflects the relationships among youth political socialization, community activism, and civic engagement. This sort of leadership is action- and activism-based, and captures the unique period of growth and examination that occurs during adolescence. Flanagan and Sherrod (1998) point out that the ages 14–25 are a period of flexibility and openness, a time when youth have not become fixed in social roles and are more likely to be examining social issues and questioning the social order. Flanagan et al. (1998) examined what factors relate to youth political engagement in seven countries of differing democratic stability. Two important factors were having experiences of engagement through volunteer work, and experiencing a sense of solidarity with others who commit their efforts toward the common good. Yates and Youniss (1998) and others (Bowen and Bok 1995) similarly found among adolescents of color that participatory experiences of community service inspired youth to confront social problems and become engaged in social action. They extend this finding to consider its implications for youth identity development, contending that participation in community service leads to political identity development by providing youth with the opportunity to envision the self and society they wish to create. At the same time, the failings of communities to provide adequate education and true "public accountability" has led poor and working class youth and youth of color away from civic engagement (Fine et al. 2004). Findings from work on youth development and civic engagement indicate that the experiences of youth during this stage of their lives are influential in determining their adult personalities and actions; thus, intervention toward leadership development and civic engagement profits from timing during this key point in youth's lives.

In this paper we report the results of a qualitative study of the experiences of adolescent girls who participated in an intensive feminist-based non-profit youth leadership program in New York City. We were interested in better understanding young women's leadership development "in their own words" with the goal of ensuring that voices of adolescent girls from diverse backgrounds are included. In particular, we observed how their beliefs about themselves, their identities as young women, and their ideas about themselves as leaders changed with a more inclusive, broadened leadership concept.

Method

Participants

All young women attending high school in New York City were eligible to apply for the summer leadership program; however program staff focused enrollment efforts on public high schools in all five New York City boroughs. Specific efforts were made to encourage applications from students who might not initially consider themselves qualified or well-suited to be a "leader," in the traditional context. Recruitment strategies included classroom presentations; networking with school counselors, educators, and

administrators; in-school displays and posters; open-house events, as well as staffed tables and lunchroom visits. Based on a written essay and interview process, staff selected students who demonstrated both "traditional and non-traditional" leadership, and those who both desired and could commit to the experience. In general, girls were selected based on their assessed commitment to examining and developing their own leadership and the leadership of others. A total of 23 adolescent girls were selected to participate in the summer leadership program, ten of whom were ultimately identified by program staff for the current study and invited to participate. To assure an adequate sample size, data was systematically collected to the point of thematic saturation (Morse 1994). This involved the continued collection of data (addition of participants) until variation in responses was well understood and new data was accounted for in existing emergent themes. Thematic summaries from the interviews and focus group were compiled and reviewed simultaneously with analysis to ensure the criterion of thematic saturation was met. Thus, following each initial interview audio-recordings were reviewed and primary themes were identified. It was determined that saturation was met with the inclusion of 10 participants. The order of selection was determined to obtain a group that was generally representative of the full program cohort in terms of age, ethnicity, and New York City borough of residence. All participants who were invited agreed to participate and they were not paid for their participation in this study. There was neither attrition in participation in the leadership program nor this study.

All participants were currently attending a New York City public high school. Key demographic characteristics are reported in Table 1 for participants ($n = 10$) and the full program cohort ($n = 23$) including age, year in high school, ethnicity, and neighborhood. In addition, 5 of the participants reported New York City as their birth place (compared to 15 in the full cohort) with the remaining participants reporting Bangladesh, Colombia, Korea, Trinidad, and the Ukraine as their places of birth. Seven participants identified a language other than English as the primary language spoken in their home, though all participants were fluent in English. All participants reported eligibility for the New York City School's free lunch program. Free lunch eligibility is a commonly used poverty index for comparing the socio-economic status of students in public schools, and is defined as having a family income at or below 130 percent of the poverty level. Eight participants identified as heterosexual and 2 as bisexual.

Parental consent and minor assent were obtained as well as approval for research with human subjects by the Institutional Review Board at Arizona State University. Participants indicated a myriad of reasons for seeking entry into the leadership program which included to meet new people, academic/self-improvement, parental/teacher encouragement, and to learn how to be a leader.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of participants and full program cohort

	Participants	Full cohort
N	10	23
Age range	15–17 ($M = 15.9$)	15–19 ($M = 16.2$)
Year in high school		
First-year	1	1
Sophomore	4	9
Junior	5	12
Senior	0	1
Ethnicity		
Latina	3	5
East Asian	2	5
African American	2	7
Caucasian	1	2
South Asian	1	2
Latina/African American	0	1
African American/Hispanic/Native American	1	1
Neighborhood		
Brooklyn	5	12
Bronx	2	3
Manhattan	0	1
Queens	3	7

Intervention

The intervention consisted of a six-week curriculum that focused on leadership exploration through education, observation, and action. This educational model included rigorous coursework, multi-generational mentoring, and service/experiential learning in many forms, including independent youth-designed activism projects to be implemented within the participants' communities after program completion. The program goals included promoting leadership, service, and activism among adolescent young women. To achieve these, the program strove to provide a dynamic and intensive learning experience centered on the achievements of women, the use of role models, and independent social justice projects. The structure allowed participants to explore leadership, watch leadership in action by observing women who enact leadership in diverse ways, develop practical skills to support their own leadership, and be a part of the leadership of the program itself. The program was designed to challenge accepted notions of leadership, provide models of women leaders, and empower adolescent girls to draw upon their

life experiences and to see themselves as catalyst for social and political change.

Participants attended the program each weekday during the summer and were given a small weekly stipend to cover transportation, breakfast, and lunch expenses. Specific objectives of the intervention were for the participants to come to view themselves as agents for change in their world and understand the importance of their individual life experiences as well as how these experiences can be applied to taking action and making change. Additionally, the intervention promoted leadership perspectives and practices that were cooperative, accountable, ethical, and effective. During the 6-week intervention participants were encouraged to question and redefine the nature of leadership and to transform their notions of leadership through a process of deconstruction and reconstruction. Among the intervention objectives were to seek and value community action, service, and involvement, as well as to understand and seek the right to equality. There was an emphasis on restoration of voice and empowerment of decision-making ability, thus increasing self-esteem and allowing participants to envision themselves as leaders.

Procedure

Individual interviews were conducted at a major metropolitan university in New York City, where the program took place, both before and after the 6-week intervention by MH. The initial interview was conducted within 2 days before the program start and the follow-up interview was conducted within 2 days following the program's end. No official program activities occurred prior to the initial interview, aside from application procedures, and no program-related activities were missed as a result of participation. Participants were assured confidentiality and understood the interviewer as independent from program staff. Additionally, a focus group was conducted with all ten participants at the intervention's mid-point. Considerable time was spent time by the interviewer establishing familiarity and rapport with the participants and program staff through informal interaction prior to the start of data collection. Also, the interviewer had prior involvement with this leadership program as an instructor of a course to a previous cohort of students and was therefore partially integrated into the community at the outset, which was of particular importance given this author is a Caucasian male in his late 20 s. His partial integration was thought to have helped to minimize the possible barriers that his age and gender could create to the participants' honest disclosure. The second author, a Caucasian female in her late 20 s, was not directly involved in data collection procedures, but was immersed in the data at all phases of data coding and analysis. It should be acknowledged that in this, as in most qualitative studies, the interplay between the researcher and the participants is likely to result in some degree of "reciprocal shaping" (Strauss and Corbin 1994). Although this should be considered in the interpretation of results, various steps were taken to minimize this likelihood including the inclusion of a focus group and the involvement of youth from previous cohorts and program staff, as described below.

One advantage of using qualitative methodologies is the ability to examine the meaning that individuals ascribe to their own and collective experiences. In this study, procedures were chosen to give voice to the participants' understandings of leadership and reflections of their leadership development experiences. Interview questions and topic areas were developed with considerable input from youth from a previous leadership program cohort, staff from the leadership organization, as well as undergraduate level youth mentors working with the summer program. The previous leadership program cohort participated 1-year prior and was also comprised of young women from New York City public high schools. They were demographically similar to the current participants in respect to age, race, ethnicity, and class.

Emergent areas of inquiry included understanding youth leadership within a feminist context, and how enacting such a concept of leadership relates to ideas of self, activism, civic engagement for adolescent girls. In the first interview, participants were asked to share their ideas about concepts of identity, leadership, and power, including their thoughts about how these concepts relate to one another, where leadership qualities originate for an individual, and barriers or challenges to leadership (especially for women leaders, adolescents, and women of color). In addition, participants were asked to share what they hoped to gain from their participation, what they saw as impediments and obstacles to leadership for them and for women in general, and how they related aspects of their self-identity to their leadership concept. In the second interview participants were asked to reflect on changes in themselves and in their conceptualizations of leadership that occurred throughout the course of the program. They were also asked to share what aspects of their experience they felt contributed to or influenced such change and what they think will result from this experience in their lives. Although the interviews were guided by an interview protocol, they were semi-structured; participants had considerable flexibility in determining the direction of the conversation. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

In addition to the individual interviews, a focus group was conducted with all 10 individuals at the program midpoint. The primary purpose of the focus group was to create an opportunity for an alternate mode of data collection to both verify and enhance interview data. The environment

in a focus group allows for the balance of power to tilt toward the group in a manner that is not possible in the individual interviews (Madriz 2000). Not only does this allow for a check of consistency between focus group and interviews, but as Madriz (2000) indicates, the collective group voice can be expressed through a focus group that may not be heard through a collection of interviews, also minimizing the potential effects of interviewer-interviewee interactions. Therefore, the content of the interview schedule for the focus group was created to reflect similar areas of inquiry as the interviews. Again, participants had substantial flexibility in directing the conversation.

Data Analysis

In the current study, a grounded theory approach to data analysis was used. Strauss and Corbin (1994) define grounded theory as a "general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed" (p. 273). The data analysis process in a grounded theory study is systematic and rigorous and involves a process of interplay between data collection and analysis. From this process meaning emerges that is closely matched or "grounded" to the data. The authors drew upon feminist perspectives on leadership development and adolescence as well as psychological theories of development to help interpret the emergent themes and coding categories.

The HyperResearch software program (Version 2.0) was utilized throughout the coding process. Creswell (1998, p. 57) presents a coding sequence that was largely adopted for this study, and data was coded on a line-by-line unit of analysis. First *open coding* was used to form initial categories of information. This entailed the identification of properties of such categories as well as the recognition of subcategories. Further, each category was dimensionalized or conceptualized on a continuum to gain a better understanding of its construction. For instance, the notion that one's age can act as a barrier to leadership was discussed and can range from an absolute to a contributing factor which can be self-imposed or socially determined. Second, *axial coding* involved assembling the data in new ways. In this phase, central phenomena, causal conditions, intervening conditions, and the specific context were identified and considered. This step involved relating central ideas identified in the open coding phase to each other. An example would include relating references to educational spaces to identified consequences (i.e., lack of safety in an educational space as a barrier to a leadership self-concept.) Third, *selective coding* involved the identification of a "story line" from the data. Here, conditional hypotheses emerged and are presented. The result of this step forms the foundation of the discussion below. See Tables 2–4 for final coding structure. The authors worked through the coding procedure independently initially and then together to reach full consensus. Discrepancies were resolved through systematic discussion and member checking procedures. Throughout this process thematic categories and codes were refined and expanded.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have offered that trustworthiness, determined by confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability, provides an appropriate standard of evaluation and protection of scientific rigor and standards for qualitative research. In the present study, confirmability was determined through the use of two auditors, both of whom are students of psychology trained in qualitative research methods and independent from the authors. Both auditors were chosen for their experience and training, at the same time both are women of color who attended large urban public high schools. They evaluated thematic summaries, coding structures, and results of the member check. The auditors independently read through several transcripts to develop open codes and document the emergence of major themes. The auditors subsequently evaluated the final coding scheme in terms of the coding structure as well as the definitions, parameters, and examples of codes developed by the authors. They also coded transcripts of the focus group to check for any themes or ideas not accounted for in the coding scheme. These steps were taken to ensure that the codes were developed as objectively as possible, and that any influences of the researchers' biases were made explicit and transparent. The dependability of the analysis, which is akin to reliability in traditional research, was evaluated with respect to the consistency of themes that emerged from the data as well as the coding structure that was developed. To determine dependability, auditors' and authors' interpretations were compared for consistency and were found to match closely. The criterion of credibility, or plausibility, was satisfied through the use of member checks, a technique used to ensure that the findings seem plausible to the participants and in which the participants confirm the presence of their "voice." To ensure the accuracy of interpretations, participants were presented with a thematic summary and supporting quotations for evaluation at several points in the data analysis process. Summaries from initial interviews were presented at the program mid-point, post-program summaries were presented shortly after the program's end, and integrated thematic summaries were presented in the final phases of data analysis. Finally, transferability must be achieved through future research in which such findings are both corroborated and/or applied to new contextual environments.

Qualitative analysis within a feminist paradigm also calls for the researchers themselves to be examined within the same critical plane as the overt subject matter (Harding 1987). As co-authors of this study we have worked to

Table 2 Thematic summary: constructions of leadership

Coding theme	Description of theme	Pre-program interviews*	Post-program interviews*
Leadership qualities			
Traditional leadership concept	Includes qualities typically associated with traditional leadership such as aggressiveness, out-spoken behavior, and a take-charge attitude	9	4
Cooperative leadership concept	Includes leadership qualities associated with collaboration and nurturance such as compassion, selflessness, and trust	9	9
Neutral leadership concept	Includes leadership qualities that are outside a traditional or a cooperative leadership paradigm	7	1
Identifying diverse forms of leadership	Includes recognition that leadership comes in various forms and spans multiple dimensions	2	8
Leadership processes			
Task-focused/activity oriented leadership processes	Includes references to specific tangible things leaders do as leaders to accomplish a task. This would not include personal qualities, traits, or skill sets. Examples include working for a cause, participating in groups, holding official leadership positions	8	7
Transactional	Includes social and communication skills such as public speaking, active listening, and self-expression which are used for the purpose of accomplishing a task	8	2
Knowledge-based	Includes processes related to knowing how to do something such as having specialized training in a specific area	4	3
Relational-focused leadership processes	Includes references to specific processed that leaders engage in that involves fostering interpersonal or inter-group relationships		
Social/interpersonal	Includes specific references to interacting with others, as well as the social constructions of leadership. Includes references to leadership as cooperation, working with a group, influencing/motivating others, teamwork	8	5
Self/intrapersonal	Includes processes of leadership that come from or are developed within the self, including self-reflection, personal growth, and wisdom gained from previous mistakes	4	1

* Refers to the number of interviews, of ten, in which this theme emerged

scrutinize our own assumptions, biases, and perspectives, which must be an acknowledged frame within which the results of this investigation are positioned. This involved continued critical discussion and documentation of the author's expectations at all phases of the project to help identify inherent assumptions and biases. As an example, it was the authors' acknowledged expectation at the outset that participants would have only a limited ability to recognize how some systems of oppression might affect their identities as leaders, which was not supported when listening to the data.

Results and Interpretations

The purpose of this study was to identify changes that occur in adolescent girls when the traditional leadership paradigm is feminized and broadened to include their experience. The changes that emerged can be broadly categorized into three thematic areas that are reflected in the final coding structure. These categories include (1) views of leadership and how leadership is constructed (see Table 2), (2) influences on leadership enactment including barriers and facilitators of leadership (see Table 3), and (3) leadership self-concept and how participants self-identify with leadership (see Table 4). Although these areas are presented in three thematic categories, it was found that these domains have a unique interaction, as will be discussed below.

Constructions of Leadership

There were distinct thematic changes with respect to how participants viewed leadership. Initially, participants viewed leadership in largely (though not exclusively) traditional terms, defined both in terms of qualities and actions of the leader. This perspective espoused the belief that leaders should be confident, brave, able to express themselves, and able to influence and motivate others. Following the intervention participants focused on qualities or actions that might be considered more cooperative, such as listening to the opinions of other people, being respectful, and persuading people in a way that is not forceful when constructing leadership. For example, prior

Table 3 Thematic summary: influences on leadership

Coding theme	Description of theme	Pre-program interviews*	Post-program interviews*
Impairments of leadership			
Familial factors	Includes ways in which family, family pressures, or family expectations inhibit the leadership or leadership development of teens	1	0
Stereotypes of women	Refers to stereotypes of women and feminine characteristics as less capable and less respected as leaders. Also refers to elevated expectations for women to rise above the stereotypes	10	8
Age	Includes stereotypes of teens or perceptions of teens as less capable of leading. This also includes contextual societal barriers to leadership due to age (e.g., still dependent on parents, lack of access to job, transportation)	9	1
Ethnicity/race	Includes pressure from own ethnic group and other ethnic groups to fit into the ethnic stereotype as well as pressure to overachieve to disprove the stereotype. This also includes barriers to leadership that come in the form of discrimination based on ethnicity	9	0
Men	Includes men's behaviors that inhibit women leaders—have difficulty following or respecting women leaders	2	0
Facilitators of leadership			
Recognition of one's own leadership qualities	Refers to instances where teens discuss recognizing how their own personal qualities facilitate leadership. Examples include discussion of confidence, belief in self, beliefs and values, critical thinking. This is similar to traits of leadership in CL, but refers to instances where women talk about how these qualities promote leadership	5	7
Having overcome societal barriers	Includes reference to the advantage of overcoming societal challenges (limitations) due to social/identity factors such as gender or ethnicity, including ways in which the challenges of being female or a woman of color contributed to greater leadership	8	6
Support of family of friends	Includes family beliefs and values, how one is raised	6	3

* Refers to the number of interviews, of ten, in which this theme emerged

to the intervention one participant, Minh (age 17) described:

> Leadership to me just means somebody who has enough power and the motivation to influence other people to follow them.

In her post-program discussion Minh said:

> Leadership is about keeping the balance, like keeping the balance between community and business. You have to think about who your decisions will benefit and fighting for what you think is right. It's a way of making change that is really taking a stand but at the same time a caring and giving a community a voice to, like, try out new things.

Another participant, Eileen (age 16) in her initial interview said:

> Leadership is somebody that does something.

In the follow-up interview Eileen's idea of leadership better reflected a relational process in which she now saw herself as a player in the interaction. She said:

> I'm a leader because I take the time to find out where I best fit. This is the contribution I can make.

Tina's (age 15) initial concept of leadership was similar. She talked about what she believes leadership is about:

> Leadership is about how much influence and impact you have on other people.

In her closing interview, her leadership concept was clearly more cooperative:

> A leader can be relaxed, calm, humorous, sometimes not in a rush, and appreciating every moment. A leader can be happy and really interested in what others have to say.

Additionally, there was a change in the manner in which participants discussed action in relation to leadership. Prior to the program, action and accomplishments were primary foci of the leadership construct. Rather than an abandonment of action, the broadening of the leadership ideal transformed the role of action-orientation from a place of isolated mandated action to cooperative motivation.

Table 4 Thematic summary: leadership self-identity

Coding theme	Description of theme	Pre-program interviews*	Post program interviews*
Perceptions of self as leader			
Leadership self-identification	Includes references to involvement or behaviors of self that qualify as leader (e.g., Involvement in clubs, leadership roles, mentoring younger sibs, influencing others, recognizing ones power	6	6
Denial of leadership identity	Includes feelings of resistance to or discomfort with the term leader as label for self, (e.g., not possessing the qualities of a leader–outspoken, assertive, feeling powerless)	3	0
Recognition of self in process of becoming a leader	Includes references to the process of developing as a leader (e.g., not yet, becoming, have done small things, more prepared now	5	3
Recognition of possessing power	Includes discussion of when/whether they feel they do or do not possess power	2	1
Leadership self-identity development			
Identification of sources of development	Includes a vision of roles/capacities of women leaders and refers to the factors which help one to see oneself within a concept of leadership. This includes the support/safety/trust of a space where leadership is encouraged and facilitated. This may also include having examples of women as leaders	5	9
Recognition of development experience	Refers to the experience of the process of leadership development. What is it like, how is it challenging, how is it gratifying?	1	8
Leadership development outcomes	Refers to sense that one needs to do something with one's own leadership development. For instance, feeling obligated to use one's power for action, find one's own voice, speak out, etc. once one identifies as a leader	0	9
Awakening/consciousness raising experience	Refers to awareness of forces of oppression, privilege, discrimination, and identity and inspiring leadership/action	0	10

* Refers to the number of interviews, of ten, in which this theme emerged

Participants moved away from viewing specific traditional actions (e.g., organizing an event) and toward characterizing action (and activism) as a collaborative process that incorporates not just what one *does* but also who one *is* and what one believes. Janelle's (age 16) initial leadership concept was also action-oriented, self-interested, and included the notion of perseverance:

> Leadership is about standing up and not settling for half, just getting the full amount, you know, always trying, always work hard, always be strong and never letting nobody hold you down, you know, stand up against your peers, be the one who stands out. It's about experiencing things first yourself and not waiting for other people to tell you to do it.

In her closing interview Janelle also spoke of how a leader must consider those that she leads:

> I'm more of a leader now than I was 6 weeks ago. A leader is someone who is aware of people, not just females, but all people. It's about lifting those people up and carrying them to the finish line with you.

In alignment with the goals of the program, the participants' words reflected an expansion of their conceptualization of leadership to include multiple, diverse forms of leadership. In this paradigm leadership is not one thing to all people, but can be constructed differently based on different contexts or different individuals. Mai (age 15) said:

> I learned different types of leadership, some that were cooperative, ethical, and effective. [Before] I only knew one leadership, you're a leader and that's it. From this program I learned that there are different types of leadership.

Anita (age 15) said:

> Traditionally I believed [leadership was] the person leading the protest. That has changed for me. As long as you believe in something a lot, you're a leader.

Maura (age 16) reflected on her own process of change:

> In the beginning I said that leadership is getting someone who didn't want to do something and to help them enjoy it. But now I guess it is less aggressive. I see leadership now as something that is more persuasive on the passive side, more informing people and getting them motivated. Not converting people to new ideas but more along the lines of breaking a resistance.

Finally, Sarita (age 17), in her post-program interview very succinctly said:

> Leadership is about caring.

Influences on Leadership

Identity Factors

Initially, participants discussed identity factors such as gender and race as impediments to the ability to act as leaders and as barriers to leadership development. Stereotypes about women and about adolescents were primary areas of impediment. Minh explained:

> Women leaders in particular face that whole sexual barrier thing and also most females in today's society are still perceived as less than a male or incapable of doing certain things.

Shanon (age 16):

> Some people think 'oh, because they're young that they're not focused on what they're doing' or 'Oh, all they think about is party and friends. They don't care about their lives, their future or where they're going.

With respect to their own personal experience, participants described their feelings of loss of voice and disempowerment initially, but did not explicitly link this experience to the barriers to leadership that result from their own self-identity factors. Anita explained:

> I'm really passionate about things but I don't really show it because I don't voice my opinions that much. I usually put my friends in front of me.

She went on to say:

> I'm more of a follower, so…the biggest thing I'm trying to do right now is I have this club, it's AIDS Awareness…I'm thinking of getting volunteer opportunities for my club but I haven't really succeeded in that because maybe I haven't tried hard enough but I'm trying to be a leader for the club.

Following the intervention, however, the discussion regarding leadership barriers, particularly in regard to personal identity factors, shifted to include evidence of empowerment and restoration of voice. Here, with a broadened conceptualization of leadership, there was room for self-identity factors to serve as a useful perspective and a unique source of leadership. Janelle (age 16) said:

> …it would be allowing myself to have more than one answer to a topic, or allowing myself to have to just speak out, speak out not that I didn't do it before, but I got much more, I don't care what nobody says, someone might disagree with you, okay keep that in mind but just speak up, do whatever you want, you're a female…a young powerful strong female. Do what you want to do.

Gender itself cannot be divorced from its interrelationship with race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. It would follow that for women gender prejudice reflected in the positioning of traditional leadership would be compounded by membership in other non-dominant groups. As described, the participants in this study were largely comprised of young women of color from poor or working class backgrounds and with great ethnic and linguistic diversity. In large, the young women in this study not only spoke of how prejudice related to their race and ethnicity and how this was compounded by gender prejudice, but also how norms and expectations from their ethnic ingroup also positioned them further from a leadership identity. Anita talked about the invisibility of her Dominican identity in society and her comments suggest that this disallows her to claim a leadership identity:

> I went to the Dominican parade and someone passing by asked me what country this is for—like he didn't know the Dominican flag. They don't even teach us about all countries in Global Studies. People don't know Dominicans. We're not leaders in the world.

Janelle says:

> Being a woman and being a woman of color is, you know, being oppressed in both ways.

For instance, Minh said:

> Having Chinese parents or Asian parents in general, they have the whole humbleness thing. Like the more you speak, the more things can go wrong. So you speak less and nothing can go wrong. You know, [my parents] don't like that I'm such an activist and speak my mind. It hinders me. It's not expected.

In her closing interview Minh, with a broadened leadership concept, was better able to envision the possibility of not having to resist her cultural/familial expectations:

> So many in my own community are not proud of their own heritage. Like, I'm Chinese American. I do know a lot about my heritage and I'm proud of it. I like to connect with my culture. It's an integral part of who I am. I don't want to fight with it like some of my friends do. I want to use it, make it fit in.

In fact, following an expansion of their leadership construct many of the participants incorporated notions of diversity, including their own diversity, into their

leadership construct. In the beginning interview Sarita talked about the difficulties associated with her ethnicity and how this disadvantaged her in her ability to see herself as a leader. She says:

> I guess South Asians are the minority among the minorities in New York City. I feel only self-conscious of myself and what I'm saying. Being a minority by gender and by being South Asian, I tend to think of myself as already down and I constantly have to forget that feeling. Even if people don't discriminate, I always have the feeling that they will. That is the feeling.

However, in her closing interview she talked about being knowledgeable and having now spent time deconstructing and reconstructing leadership she has better incorporated her identities with leadership:

> I'm more knowledgeable now about issues of oppression, race and power, identity, and privilege—now I know. I'm more confident of a person. I had that safe space with these girls. I'm more knowledgeable and can think of myself as more of a leader.

Others also spoke of this incorporation of diversity and leadership. Eva:

> Different people can have a lot of things in common. Different…people from different ethnicities, racial backgrounds, religious backgrounds—they can have so much in common that they don't even know about. Leaders go beyond it and have to be seen in a different light. They grab onto it.

Similarly Maura said:

> When I lead, people will be astonished. And being a minority I'll have a lot of people behind me—other minorities. They will be like 'someone can do this who is also a woman and a minority.' They'll be behind me. I'll do this despite of who I am.

Learning Environment

Examination of the ways in which institutional or educational "spaces" are "gendered" may be vitally important to understanding how notions of leadership are developed. Space refers to the physical, emotional, relational, intellectual environment in which one acts and interacts (see Holliday et al. 1993). Safety in an educational or institutional space involves both safety to build new constructions of leadership, to explore the experience of women, and to create new knowledge based on this exploration. It also involves being safe from harassment, violence, and silencing gender constructions. The creation of safety in the space in which transformation occurred and consciousness was raised was a consistent and emergent theme. An environment of mutual respect and learning was frequently touted as a facilitator to the changes the participants experienced as a result of the program. Additionally, the existence of a primarily female space was also emphasized. Within this space, they spoke of what an enlightening and eye-opening experience it was to learn about new concepts of power, privilege, identity, racism, oppression, and discrimination. Maura explained:

> Why this program was so real and so successful and moved me so much was because it was just for women and it was such a safe space. There were a lot of things that I think we wouldn't have been able to say because we weren't ready for other people to hear it. We wanted a place where we could all trust each other like a place where we can all trust each other and we can let out what we really think and what we really feel, like our deepest insecurities and I was able to do this because mostly because we were all young women and we could all relate in certain ways even though we are all different.

For many of the girls in this study, safe space was often talked about in terms of having a space that was entirely women, in other words, a space without (or with very few) men. Within a space that is thought to be safe, girls were seemingly freer from gender dichotomy and related dynamics of power. In some way, the emotional, relational, and intellectual space was co-constructed by the participants and so was created as a safe space in regard to gender, race, and class.

MacPherson and Fine (1995) have discussed a process in which adolescent girls, within a supportive feminist environment of mutual exploration, eventually begin to "do difference," where girls begin to challenge each other and each other's differences in a collaborative unity. In the current study, participants spoke of the importance of mutual respect as an element of change. The emphasis placed on communal exploration further emphasizes this more cooperative perspective on learning and leadership. Maura:

> I think the fact that we all sort of all had a pact, it's not written or anything, it's like we had an understanding that we are all coming here not to hurt each other but to bring each other up it's like a rising tide. All the knowledge that we bring and everything that we learn we know that we are sharing it and not to be a nuisance and not to get on your nerves, but to help each other… sort of like understanding each other …we're in it together, we are here to help each other and to understand ourselves.

Leadership Self-Identity

Prior to the intervention, many of the girls did not see themselves as leaders, often noting that they were not very assertive or outspoken especially in groups; some saw themselves as in the process of becoming a leader, or pointed to what they considered to be minimal evidence that they had acted as a leader to this point. As their vision of leadership was expanded to include multiple, diverse forms of leadership, participants at the conclusion of the program were able to include themselves in a definition of leadership. Participants spoke with more strength and noted that they felt empowered and inspired to act as a leader now, by the examples and role models they met over the summer and by their increased awareness, confidence and assertiveness. Eva (age 16):

> I think that I have more confidence to stand up for what I believe…hopefully I'll be able to bring this confidence with me into school.

She goes on to say:

> It has cleared the doubts about who I am, my identity. I am more comfortable with myself…..It will be easier for me to stay strong more on my views.

Sarita:

> Everyone supposed that we were leaders; we were someone. And I guess that helped build self-confidence. Now, I think I know more as to who I am, more knowledgeable, more self-confident. I think of myself more as a leader than I used to six weeks ago.

Several participants linked their recognition of an expanded leadership concept to an ability to identify themselves as leaders. As their view of leadership expanded and diversified to include multiple forms of leadership, participants could envision a way to capitalize on their own strengths and to utilize their own worldview to embody leadership. A vision of diverse leadership thus provided for inclusiveness when adopting a leadership self-identity. Mai said:

> …this is a program for girls mainly to tell 'em that they could be as strong as men. They could be leaders also. They don't have to, like be rich or be white or be a different- be different to be a leader. You could just stay the same. You know? And they could show 'em that they do have power in certain ways and they could use it.

The outcome of the transformation wherein the participants could see themselves within a concept of leadership was that many of the participants felt a sense of responsibility to act in some way with the consciousness and empowerment they gained.

They felt that their consciousness of their privilege necessitated that they take action to help others, be involved, and share the information they gained. Maura said:

> I feel like I have this obligation because I went to [this program] to take the information and spread it and tell people about it, and not only that, but more importantly to act on it myself. Like sort of what I learned in my PIP [Power, Identity, and Privilege] class that I should you know, now that I know the privileges that I have I should use it to help other people that don't have those privileges and even though it would be stepping out of my comfort zone and even though it would mean making sacrifices that would not be easy for me…I think that is something that I should do with my privilege…

Models of Female Leadership

Having models of female leadership emerged as a facilitator of participants' constructions of leadership as well as a source of the development of participants' self-identity as leader. Reflecting on the impact of seeing women who espouse leadership, Mai said:

> Before if I were to see a woman as a leader it would be WOW, like strange… So, I never thought that women could do such great things because all their lives they were like okay the women behind the men in terms of power. Now I think it is totally different.

An important aspect of leadership models was the observation of women of various cultural and ethnic heritages. Also, participants were inspired by women leaders who overcame specific obstacles and societal challenges to which they could themselves relate. Maura said:

> I felt most moved by Wilma Mankiller…she really touched me. She led [the Cherokee Nation] and did not let all the people with an opposition to her because she was a woman keep her down. She was so real about it and I thought I could really relate to her.

Consciousness-raising

All of the participants became more aware of the societal forces that challenge women leaders, frequently discussing their new understanding of the concepts of power, privilege, identity, racism, oppression, and discrimination. This consciousness-raising experience was profound and caused them to think more critically about societal forces and their

place within them. In so doing, the participants also became inspired by the ways in which women have overcome these challenges. Whereas in the beginning they could not proficiently articulate ideas about the ways in which women, and women of color in particular, experience challenges to leadership, post intervention they were equipped with a consciousness and language to name and identify sources of challenge. This new awareness was thus a source of power and voice in the face of challenge, rendering them more resilient and better equipped to face such challenges. Anita:

> I am not even sure what I thought in the beginning, but umm, [I'm] definitely a lot more aware of women's issues now, umm, and the fact that oppression is not really something that paranoid feminist feels, it's really real. We see it in history, there is so much fact.

Shanon:

> …they [instructors] just opened my eyes to so many different things and gave me a different perspective and questioned my actions and the things I believed in. And that's sort of like critical thinking and that's the sort of leadership that most people don't really provide you with…

A Broadened Leadership Concept of Inclusion

In the context of research on adolescent girls' psychological development (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Ward 1996) the effect of this intervention may have been its ability to interrupt the self-silencing and discounting of the participant's ways and sources of knowing. Based on the descriptions of their experience, the intervention empowered the participants to recognize and value their identities and experiences, as well as build their efficacy to effect change in the systems that create and perpetuate the forces of silencing. From the participants' words and reflections on their experience, an understanding of the development and adoption of a leadership identity is exposed. At the foundation is the lack of inclusion of self-identity factors in the compulsory traditional leadership concept. Adolescent girls were more inclined to have common characteristics and identify with a broadened, feminized leadership concept. From this frame girls began to explore their own leadership identity as opposed to adopting a traditional leadership concept only defining an ideal to which one can only aspire. Qualitative reflections indicated that the participants have many important goals for what they aim to do as a result of their experience of the program and their newfound awareness. Participants, when supported in their newfound consciousness, are able to view themselves as more efficacious, cooperative, included, vocal, and as leaders. Thus, girls in this study were able to adopt and enact a leadership identity when self-identity factors such as race and ethnicity could be aligned to broadened, feminized leadership concepts.

Discussion

Among the goals of this project was to deepen the understanding of leadership within a feminist context and how it relates to ideas of self, social activism, and internalized norms displaced from the dominant societal power structure. Drawing upon the bodies of literature pertaining to women leaders and adolescent civic engagement, it was important to discover the ways in which adolescent girls conceptualized their potential as leaders, where the points of identification and "disidentification" existed, and what they construed as barriers to leadership and action. Research in the broader literature is beginning to reveal the effectiveness of women leaders and the creation of space for multiple ways of leading. Recent attention to adolescent leadership development reveals the impact of participatory service experiences in the development of youth civic action. However, the gap in understanding at the crossroads of these two bodies of literature has been the origins of feelings of empowerment and confidence to give voice to one's own leadership style among adolescent young women, particularly young women of color.

Taking the experience as a whole, we heard within these girls' voices that before being exposed to a feminist, cooperative leadership, their vision of leadership was somewhat narrow and traditional in nature, and because of this they were hesitant to see themselves as leaders. However, through exposure to diverse forms of leadership and leadership styles, and through becoming aware of their social location, challenges, and ways to overcome barriers, the women felt empowered to lead in diverse ways, to take action through civic engagement, and to claim their identity as leader. A feminized leadership concept provided more inclusiveness and overlap with self-identity factors than a traditional leadership concept, thus increasing the opportunity to espouse a leadership self-identity. With this change came a greater, more embodied focus on action and activism in which being engaged in one's community is more aligned with one's self-identity.

Sarita:

> And I think now I–I think [change] is possible maybe not in your lifetime but as long as you start something and, it's better to respond to something rather than not doing anything because you're so frustrated or you're so depressed about it. Like, if you do

> something at least you can live with yourself because you are doing something but just to think that, 'Well, I will not be able to make a difference. You know, things will not change in our lifetime,' and not do anything about it is worse. I think before I thought that. That's a big change in how I view.

Research on adolescent development has revealed that adolescent girls, as a result of social pressures and societal sanctions, often begin to silence or censor themselves to maintain relationships (Gilligan 1993a). This suppression of opinions and tendency to choose not to say what one thinks or believes has been found to lead to psychological distress, including depression and eating disorders (Taylor et al. 1995). Given that adolescence, particularly early adolescence, is a critical period for the development of leadership and engagement and a time during which girls may begin to both internalize societal messages of leadership and suppress their strength and self-confidence (Catelli 1996), interventions that teach girls to deconstruct such expectations may act as a buffer to many of the negative consequences associated with such processes, or even interrupt the processes by which they occur. The normative developmental trends create a crucial need for social interventions that lead to the empowerment and re-voicing of adolescent girls. This intervention provides an example of the ways in which empowerment of women through models of diverse forms of leadership, consciousness-raising, and a safe space for personal and social exploration may help to strengthen the voices of adolescent girls. The program helps them to value their experiences, knowledge, and diverse ways of knowing, to respect themselves for who they are, and to use their identity as a starting place of voice and action, rather than one of silence. In this way, the program serves as a source of strength to resist the cultural messages that may undermine their self-confidence, diminish or discount their self-identity and encourage them to exist within limited and limiting roles proscribed by society. To the extent that girls feel empowered, confident and efficacious to make choices, pursue their goals, identify and act as leaders, they may be protected against some of the many societal and interpersonal challenges they face and only then are they given power to truly "do difference." This can only happen effectively and cooperatively when young women feel safe and challenged. As this study suggests, this type of leadership environment allows them to be both introspective & critical while being empathetic and cooperative. Sarita discusses her plans to "do difference":

> I want to be a doctor…I also want to be a social activist. I don't have to be that person to speak at a rally, but I want to be that participant in a rally. I do know what kind of leader a doctor *does*, but I want to be a leader-doctor and in the community be a leader. Where ever I live, I will *do* leadership.

Limitations and Implications

As indicated by Harding (1987, p. 3), traditional epistemologies have not provided the possibility of women's voices to be heard as a "knower" or agent of knowledge. The qualitative approach utilized in this study is well aligned with the feminist research perspective in that it gives voice to women's experiences. Further, this work strives to understand phenomena within a broader context that includes constructions of race, class, and gender.

Adolescent girls have been thought to unconsciously recognize having less power in society than their male counterparts (Pipher 1994). Theoretically, this recognition may be associated with adopting a traditional or masculinized leadership concept that is marked by a competitive, logical, and even aggressive style. Emotional expressiveness, cooperation, and nurturance thus become actively devalued leadership concepts. Further loss of power becomes evident through body objectification through the media, overt and covert expression of stereotypes against women, less opportunity for athletics in the school, and conflation of gender and racial prejudice. This study demonstrates a model in which the consequences of this experience of oppression and powerlessness can be lessened through the mechanisms of giving voice to the experience of adolescent girls in the context of leadership, shedding light onto the inherent messages internalized from societal influences, and empowering girls to reject such influences through action and cooperation. Young women, particularly young women of color, articulated that they do not have to silence themselves or disconnect from community and self to be successful and to lead. Thus, a new definition of leadership emerges in which youth leadership is defined as a transformative process in which young women come to understand the importance of their individual life experiences and how these experiences can be applied to taking action and making change.

Greenwood and Levin (2000) in a discussion of the responsibility of academic research to its social constituency suggest that the research agenda too often ignores the needs of individuals outside of the academic and governmental power structure. They call for an action-oriented scientific research approach that fosters social change. The communication of these results itself represents an action-orientation by dialoguing with both youth workers and educators as well as the scientific community. These results call for social change in the way in which societal structures, particularly those that surround adolescents, dispense expectations about leadership, power, and success. In light

of this study's findings, future programs that intend to promote adolescent leadership development and engagement among girls will benefit from presenting diverse models of leadership, demonstrating the power of multiple ways of relating, and thus encouraging adolescents to broaden their own leadership concepts to include themselves. It is this feeling of inclusion within a leadership concept that counters the feelings of marginalization and silencing that result from recognizing only one possibility. Such programs will also benefit from careful attention to cultivating an atmosphere of mutual respect in the environment in which intervention takes place, as well as from introducing models of women leaders who dispel the stereotypes the girls may hold and/or who contradict traditional masculinized leadership styles.

This study provided insight into adolescent girls' reflections on the process of change that was catalyzed by this program. However, the study is limited in its ability to detect what may be a subtle difference between the participants' ability to espouse the ideals offered in the intervention in words, and their genuine ownership of new ideas, consciousness and motivation to action. To clarify this distinction, it will be important to conduct a follow-up study of this sample to learn how the participants think about leadership concepts and their own identities as leaders after time has elapsed since the program. We expect that a follow-up will allow us to discover the extent to which participants have incorporated these new ideas into themselves and their actions, and will allow for a richer examination of the manner in which change may be catalyzed by interventions such as this. In this study, a "cognitive shift" was observed in which girls were able to conceptualize themselves as leaders by altering how leadership is constructed. Although all participants identified a plan to implement a community action project following the program, actualization of the shift in a leadership concept could not be assessed. However, it may be that visualization of oneself as a leader must precede actualization of leadership.

Furthermore, although there was diversity with respect to the race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation of the participants, this study did not explore all possible ways leadership development may differ with various group affiliation. Additional research is needed to better understand how membership in multiple marginalized groups positions young girls further from an ideal leadership self-identity. The young women of this study were not all alike, and although our analyses examined their words as a whole, future research that explores subgroup differences among adolescent girls will no doubt be useful.

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