THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN NEGOTIATING ADOLESCENT IDENTITY: VOICES OF FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

This narrative study presents a collection of personal experience stories from five young women enrolled in grades 11 and 12 of an alternative education program. The purpose of this study is twofold; exploring how the participants perceive and experience leadership in their lives and how their experiences with leadership affect the participants' development of a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self. The collected data is presented first as whole narratives and then through themes that emerged from a content analysis. The analysis revealed helpfulness as the defining characteristic of leadership and that the participants believe they are leaders, at least some of the time. The participants demonstrated having reached a stable sense of identity but expressed a lack of confidence as a barrier to becoming fully empowered persons. Using these findings, the researcher outlines ideas for the development, recruitment, and implementation of youth leadership development programming.

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Glossary

Alternative education: Alternative education broadly refers to schools or programs designed to "serve populations of students who are not succeeding in the traditional public school environment. Alternative schools offer students who are failing academically or may have learning disabilities or behavioral problems an opportunity to achieve in a different setting. There are many different kinds of alternative schools, but most are characterized by flexible schedules, small teacher-student ratios, and modified curricula" (Conley, 2002, p. 245). For the purposes of this study, the alternative education program refers specifically to the grade 10-12 alternate program offered at Northdale Secondary School.

At risk: "A phrase describing students with socio-economic challenges, such as poverty or teen pregnancy, that may place them at a disadvantage in achieving academic, social, or career goals. Such students are deemed 'at risk' of failing, dropping out, or 'falling through the cracks' at school" (Conley, 2002, p. 245).

Authentic self: "Authenticity can be characterized as reflecting the unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise. As I describe, authenticity has at least four discriminable components: awareness, unbiased processing, action, and relational orientation" (Kernis, 2003, p. 13).

Content analysis: The classical method for doing research with narrative materials in education, psychology, and sociology. This type of analysis involves "breaking the text into relatively small units of content and submitting them to either descriptive or statistical treatment" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 112).

Dogwood Diploma: The Dogwood Diploma is another name for the British Columbia Certificate of Graduation awarded to students upon the successful completion of all secondary school requirements. These requirements include a minimum of 80 credits; 48 credits for required courses, a minimum of 28 elective credits, and 4 credits for a Graduate Transitions Portfolio (B.C. Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Empowered: Persons who have the "confidence, competence, freedom, and resources" (Ciulla, 1996, p.1) to "become independent problem solvers and decision makers" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 46).

Female: For the purposes of this study, persons who self identify as women.

Field notes: "Text (or words) recorded by the researcher during an observation in a qualitative study" (Creswell, 2008, p. 640).

Homogenous sampling: "The researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics" (Creswell, 2008, p. 216).

In-depth interview: "A guided conversation between a skilled interviewer and an interviewee that seeks to maximize opportunities for the expression of the respondent's feelings and ideas through the use of open-ended questions and a loosely structured interview guide" (Conley, 2002, p. 249).

Intersectionality: An intersectionality perspective looks at issues holistically, exploring the "overarching relational or systemic" (Cassidy & Jackson, 2005, p. 448) factors.

Leadership: For the purposes of this study the notion that "leadership has as many definitions as there are writers of literature on the subject" (Howard, 2005, p. 384) is emphasized. An analysis of the participants' stories revealed a leader as someone

who is helpful, takes charge, leads people in the right direction, plans and organizes, and leads a team.

Marginalized: In this study, the term marginalized is used to refer to persons who face structural, attitudinal, financial, or other types of barriers in accessing mainstream privilege. For the purposes of this study, I refer to students enrolled in the alternate education program as a marginalized population (Hartwell, 2007).

Multiple intelligences: Gardner and Hatch (1989) outlined seven intelligences: logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal – arguing that intelligence is not a universal concept and that the types of intelligences that are valued vary culturally.

Myself response / Myself attitude: Bromnick and Swallow (1999) distributed a questionnaire to students aged 7 to 11 asking about their heroes and ideals. Their questions were based on a previous study carried out by Simmons and Wade in 1984. Bromnick and Swallow asked students, "If you were able to choose to be somebody else who would you choose?" (p. 120). Approximately a quarter of their participants responded that they were "happy to be themselves" (p. 125). This *myself response* is indicative of "personal happiness, a stable sense of identity, and high self-esteem" (p. 119). Based on the myself response, I have used the term, *myself attitude*, to describe a state of being happy with yourself.

Non-typical participatory population: The participants of this study are referred to as members of the non-typical participatory population. The profile of a typically involved student was outlined in a study by Feldman and Matjasko (2007) as an

upper middle class female student with outstanding grades. The participants are enrolled in an alternative education program; a population that is considered disenfranchised, marginalized, and at risk (Hartwell, 2007), who are often disengaged from their academics, the diploma itself, peer relations, and extra-curricular activities (Kelly, 1993).

Observation: "The process of gathering information by observing people and places at a research site" (Creswell, 2008, p. 643).

Personal experience story: "A narrative study of an individual's personal experience found in single or multiple episodes, private situations, or communal folklore" (Creswell, 2008, p. 514).

Reflexive research journal: A personal journal kept by the researcher to record insights, hunches, broad themes, thoughts and descriptive notes on all aspects of the study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2008).

Resilience: "The process of overcoming the negative effects of risk exposure, coping successfully with traumatic experiences, and avoiding the negative trajectories associated with risks" (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005, p. 399). Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) emphasized that resilience should be used to describe the process of overcoming the risk and not as an adjective describing a person.

Stable sense of identity: Based on the research by Bromnick and Swallow (1999) the *myself response*, where a person is happy being themselves, is indicative of having reached a stable sense of identity.

Voice: The concept of *voice* is used to draw attention to people who have previously not been given a space for their voices to be heard; "voice as resistance against silence, as resistance to disengagement, as resistance to marginalization" (L. Smith, 2006, p. 282). This study, as a narrative inquiry, brings participants' voices to the forefront by empowering them to talk about their experiences (Creswell, 2008).

Youth: For the purposes of this study, I use the term *youth* synonymous to *adolescence*.

Youth leadership development: A type of programming, whether structured or informal, that helps young people develop the competency to lead (MacNeil, 2006; Zeldin, 2004).

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My thesis journey has been a rollercoaster with a continual wave of highs and lows and an enormous amount of learning along the way. I am indebted to the many people who have taken this journey with me and who have offered their support and encouragement; without all of you I would not have made it this far.

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Dedication

In the midst of my thesis journey, I lost my grandfather, my poppa, to cancer.
In his last days, he expressed concern about my attention
being given to him and not to my school work.

I promised him that I would finish
my graduate thesis and now that I have finally done so,
I would like to dedicate this piece of work, with love, to the late David Joron.

I. PURPOSE

[Youth], after all, are not just adults-in-the-making.
They are people whose current needs and rights and experiences must be taken seriously.
- *Alfie Kohn* (as quoted by The Freechild Project, n.d.)

Students in alternative programs are sometimes defined as "disenfranchised, marginalized, at risk" youth (Hartwell, 2007) who exhibit varying levels of disengagement with their academics, the diploma itself, peer relations, and extra-curricular activities. Signs of disengagement may include poor grades, suspension, fighting with or alienation from peers, a lack of participation in and dislike for extra-curricular activities, and disbelief in the value or rewards of obtaining a degree (Kelly, 1993). The participants of this study were female secondary school students enrolled in an alternative education program. These students from the non-typical participatory population were given an opportunity to share stories about how they experience leadership in their lives. Their stories were explored in relation to the participants' development of a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self.

Adolescence is an important stage of life development. During these years young people continue the early socialization process of developing a sense of self and an awareness of the similarities and differences they hold between themselves and others (Gardner, 1995). This stage of human development also marks the starting point of a search for self-expression and identity development. The search for a sense of identity is "one of the most important goals for successful development during adolescence" (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999, p.117).

In addition to dealing with these complicated tasks of development, adolescents face a growing number of challenges in Western society, ranging from academic and peer pressures to a wide range of social issues (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999). The difficulty of navigating these many obstacles is compounded by ageism: "the negative construction of the meaning of youth" (MacNeil, 2006, p. 32). Abundant stereotypes paint teenagers as defiant, immature, and lacking ability (MacNeil, 2006; Takanishi, 1993; Zeldin, 2004). These commonly held beliefs inform the structures that adolescents live in and how they are treated (Bishop, 2002).

To navigate the process of identity development and the challenges that youth face, adolescents look for strength and guidance from within themselves as well as from parents, family, peers, media, and other figures in their immediate social environment (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999; Noddings, 2005). A number of studies have looked at students who create their social environment by joining sports teams, clubs, and community groups. Results have shown that participation in extra-curricular and community activities contributes to positive developmental outcomes indicated by lower rates of problem behavior and depression (Feldman & Matjasko, 2007; Palen & Coatsworth, 2007). A study by Feldman and Matjasko (2007) revealed that female students who are upper middle class with outstanding grades fit the profile of a typical student involved in multiple extra-curricular activities. In contrast, students in alternative education are typically at risk (Hartwell, 2007) youth who are disengaged from school life both in regards to academics and extra-curricular activities (Kelly, 1993).

Those students who are involved in multiple activities are the ones labeled as student leaders by their communities. The labeling of these students as leaders in the school community creates a division between the participants and non-participants. The process of labeling and celebrating positional status feeds into the common belief of "separation, competition, and hierarchy" (Bishop, 2002, p. 53), creating ordered divisions between different groups of students. The students who have been recognized as leaders by their communities are also the most likely participants to volunteer to complete a leadership development program. Youth leadership development consists of structured or informal programming that helps young people develop the competency to lead (MacNeil, 2006). As an aspiring leadership development programmer, I am interested in hearing the stories and ideas of students from the non-typical participatory group to learn how these students relate to leadership and what role this plays in their identity development and level of empowerment.

Purpose Statement

Students who participate in multiple school activities such as sports teams and student government are often labeled leaders by the school community. There are many types of leaders and what leadership is changes from author to author, as "leadership has as many definitions as there are writers of literature on the subject" (Howard, 2005, p. 384). MacNeil (2006) emphasized that leadership remains an "elusive concept" (p. 27) despite the many pages written about it. Other authors such as Burns (1995) and Senge (1996) argued that leadership as it is recognized today is equated with people in management positions. It is this notion of positional leadership that is being applied when the students who participate in

multiple activities are labeled as leaders. This labeling process assumes that other types of leadership do not exist and creates a dichotomy within the community between leaders and non-leaders. Ryan (2006) explained, "when an individual is awarded the title of leader, others are, by default, deemed to be followers and are excluded from leadership roles and activities" (p. 100). The hierarchical classification of students is another possible contributor to the multiple oppressions such as ageism, societal stereotypes, and structural barriers that play a contributory role in the powerlessness of youth.

This study involved a small sample of youth from the non-typical participatory or non-leader group to develop an understanding of leadership from their perspective. I have explored the concept of leadership in relation to the participants' process of adolescent identity development using Bromnick and Swallow's (1999) definition of a stable sense of identity: "the acceptance by a person of their unique individuality, value and worth" (p. 117) as indicated by the *myself response*. This acceptance indicates a high level of confidence and a strong sense of self, which are important indicators of positive development and a crucial part of becoming an empowered person. People who are empowered have confidence, along with the competence, freedom, and resources (Ciulla, 1996) to "become independent problem solvers and decision makers" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 46). The purpose of this study is to look at how female students in alternative education perceive and experience leadership and how this connects with the students' development of a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self.

Research Questions

This study is guided by two overarching research questions as outlined in the purpose statement.

1. How do female students in alternative education perceive and experience leadership?
2. How do the students' perceptions of and experiences with leadership affect the students' development of a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self?

Guiding Questions

These overarching questions are supported by seven more specific guiding questions. The guiding questions maximize the utility of my interview data in presenting a contextual and comprehensive answer to the initial research questions.

1. What is the experience of students in alternative education?
2. How do these students define leadership?
3. What have been the contributing factors to the definition of leadership formed by these students?
4. Are these students seen as leaders by either themselves or others?
5. What motivates these students' participation or non-participation in extra-curricular activities and/or leadership programs?
6. Have these students reached a stable sense of identity development?
7. Do these students feel empowered?

Significance

This study provided an opportunity for female students in alternative education, a group not generally associated with leadership, to tell their experience stories about

leadership; negotiating the processes of identity development; and decision making or problem solving, as related to empowerment. Collecting the narratives of these young women created an opportunity for the participants to reflect personally and to be heard. The opportunity to reflect on personal experience can bring forward new realizations that can be enlightening and empowering for the participants. Finding that there is space for their voices can also be an empowering experience for those who are often overlooked.

The participants' stories offer a new voice to the existing literature on leadership and adolescent identity development. Many authors including Burns (1995), Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy (1995), Senge (1996), and Covey (1991) have offered definitions of leadership, but no consensus has been reached. For this study, Bromnick and Swallow's (1999) definition of a stable identity is used as an indicator of the students' location in the process of identity development and their level of empowerment. Bromnick and Swallow asked adolescent students at an upper/middle-class school in England about their choice of heroes and who or what they aspired to be. Their results showed that 23% of the 244 respondents were content with being themselves, which is labeled the "myself response" (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999, pp. 122-123). The myself response is reflective of having a stable sense of identity and is also an indicator of a high level of confidence, which is a key component to being an empowered person (Ciulla, 1996). This study provides insight into the question raised by Bromnick and Swallow of whether surveying students of a different socio-economic class might offer new results. Although this study does not replicate the questions used by Bromnick and Swallow, the interview questions (see Appendix A) deal with the

myself attitude as an indicator of the students' location in the process of identity development.

The participants' understanding of leadership may assist school and community programmers who work with youth on the topic of leadership. The information that is collected regarding the factors that impact whether the students participate in extra-curricular or leadership development programs will be relevant to these same stakeholders. Examining the connections between leadership and identity development for these youth offers insight for anyone who works directly with adolescents including educators, parents, and counselors. The findings are also relevant to policy makers and persons who build the structures within which youth live and work. The stories that are shared may be of particular interest to those persons responsible for recognizing successful students and for defining who the leaders are in the community.

Self Location

To begin my narrative inquiry, I have composed my personal narrative in relation to the topic of study, or my set of personal experience stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) emphasized the "importance of acknowledging the centrality of the researcher's own experience - the researcher's own livings, tellings, retellings, and reliving" (p. 70). The authors further explained,

> One of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher's own narrative of experience, the researcher's autobiography. This task of composing our own narratives of experience is central to narrative inquiry. We refer to this as composing narrative beginnings as a researcher begins his or her inquiries. [...] As we compose our narrative beginnings, we also work within the three-dimensional space, telling stories of our past that frame present standpoints, moving back and forth from the personal to the social, and situating it all in one place. (p.70)

In this section I present a piece of my personal biography as the narrative beginnings of this study.

I believe in the intrinsic value and uniqueness of every person and that each person deserves to be recognized and respected as such. These beliefs are the foundation of my aspirations to work to empower youth. People who are empowered have the "confidence, competence, freedom, and resources" (Ciulla, 1996, p.1) to "become independent problem solvers and decision makers" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 46).

Other definitions of empowerment add a focus on transforming lives and giving people the ability to change their situations (Ciulla, 1996; Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006). A person who understands that they have value and ability will be better able to face the world in everyday life and to achieve whatever they aspire including socio-political change.

I am interested in leadership development as a tool for youth empowerment. My interest in leadership development as a source of empowerment stems from personal experience. In 2001, as a 16 year old grade 11 student, I attended the Ontario Secondary School Students' Association's south-eastern regional annual student leadership conference. I was encouraged by classmates who had attended in previous years to spend my hard earned money on this three day retreat. I was pleased with my investment, as it was at that first conference that I discovered the power of youth leadership development. The conference atmosphere was open and supportive, encouraging me to let go of previous inhibitions, be myself, learn who that is, and have fun. I described the atmosphere as a utopia to friends and family when I returned.

My conference experience created a means for me to access the four elements of empowerment: confidence, competence, resources, and freedom (Ciulla, 1996). I gained *confidence* from the energy of the conference environment and from the support that I received from my group members and leaders. Several of the closing activities created opportunities for people to hear from their group members how their actions influenced others in the program and which of their positive qualities shone through. I came away from these sessions each time full of emotion but also with a new sense of self and empowerment. The conferences covered a variety of topics pertaining to leadership that were taught using interactive activities, literature, and discussion. Through these sessions I learned new skills and built *competence*. I gained *resources* by making connections with the people at the conference. This networking provided me with support and information. *Freedom* came as a result of having the first three criteria, and was increased with power awarded to me by virtue of positions that I pursued. I believe that leadership development programming has the ability to empower people while bringing them together in an environment that emphasizes mutual respect and the unique value of each person, which resonates with my beliefs.

Since that initial conference I have participated in and organized a number of similar events. This is something that I still do today and hope to continue in the future. I have a desire to bring the same sense of empowered energy and passion that I experienced to other youth. As a university student, I have embraced an additional interest in social justice issues. I aspire to combine my interests in leadership and social justice in my future endeavors.

The students that I worked with on student leadership initiatives were individuals who for the most part had already been named leaders by their communities. Although none

where exempt from issues of race, class and other barriers to participation or leadership, we all fit the profile of the typical involved student. We had honor roll grades, participated in multiple activities in our schools and communities, held positions, and had large dreams for the future. I would like to deliver youth leadership development programming that incorporates aspects of social justice and equity and that reaches out to a wider youth population. I hope to design programming that is more inclusive in order to offer these benefits to those who do not generally access them, whether due to choice or issues of accessibility. Bringing together a wider and more diverse group also holds the potential of fostering a better understanding amongst the participants of the challenges each person faces as well as the talents they have to offer. This study allowed me to speak with youth from the typical non-participatory population to gather an understanding of their perceptions on leadership and leadership development. Working with a small number of students to get in-depth responses has aided my ability to look at the larger picture and the intersectionality of the many factors involved, including the ideas of identity development and empowerment.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In a narrative inquiry, literature takes a secondary role to the shared narrative of participant and researcher (Creswell, 2008). For the purposes of this study, I have aimed to honor the priority of story telling while incorporating literature to provide context, increase accessibility of the data for the reader, and to assist with the restorying of the shared narrative. The literature review serves to inform my field observations, probing questions during interview sessions, and analysis of the resulting field texts. I have explored literature on leadership, youth leadership development, alternative education, adolescence and marginalization, adolescent identity development, empowerment, and gender.

Leadership

The prominent names in the field of leadership have each put forth a different perspective on what leadership is, many admitting that it does not have a widely accepted definition (Howard, 2005; MacNeil 2006). Hughes et al. (1995) described leadership as a "complex phenomenon involving the leader, the follower, and the situation" (p. 41) and Covey (1991) spoke about leadership as a choice between power bases. MacNeil (2006) succinctly stated that leadership remains an "elusive concept" despite there being "tens of thousands of pages written about it" (p.27). This study contributes additional pages to the existing research, providing the unique perspectives of the research participants.

Traditional conceptions of leadership focus on individuals in management positions. The association of leadership with managers places a focus on hierarchy and power over followers (Manolis et al., 2009; Ryan, 2006; Senge, 1990). In this style, authority is distributed exclusively by position and the leadership goals center on efficiency and

productivity (Ryan, 2006). Senge (1996) argued against this conception calling it a narrowed vision of leadership. Managerial leaders have traditionally been men and the characteristics used to describe them, decidedly masculine (Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) outlined masculine leadership traits as agentic, task oriented, and autocratic; in contrast to feminine leadership traits that are communal, interpersonally oriented, and democratic. The traditional correlation between leadership and masculinity creates an additional barrier for women pursuing leadership roles.

Other conceptions of leadership focus on the individual leader as opposed to the person's position. Ryan (2006) called this humanistic leadership. Leadership styles that fall into this realm look at the qualities that make people leaders and emphasize personality traits such as charisma. Transformational leadership falls in this category as it emphasizes the abilities of the leader (Ryan, 2006; Van Eeden, Cilliers, & Van Deventer, 2008). Van Eeden, Cilliers, and Van Deventer (2008) described two types of transformational leadership. A leader who presents idealized influence empowers group members with their dedication, purpose, confidence, and ethical behavior. A second type of transformational leader uses enthusiasm, optimism, and vision to inspire and motivate followers. Burns (1995) criticized the humanistic vision of leadership, asserting that we know very little about leadership and too many details about those people who are considered leaders.

A further understanding of leadership values participation, collaboration and inclusion. Leaders in this category have been described as empathetic leaders or as having emotional intelligence (Fullan, 2007; Golman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002); as supportive leaders or who offer individual consideration (Fullan, 2007; Reynolds & Rogers, 2003; Van

Eeden, Cilliers, & Van Deventer, 2008); and as communal leaders (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Fullan (2007) and Ryan (2006) both described leadership as a process that is focused on inclusion. Ryan defined inclusive leadership as a "collective influence process" (p. 2), where individuals may be a key influence in one situation and an observer in another.

Youth Leadership Development Programming

Youth leadership development is a type of programming, whether structured or informal, intended to help young people develop the competency to lead. Some youth leadership development programs follow the deficit model. The deficit model corresponds with the negative images of youth and approaches adolescents as problems to be fixed or persons lacking ability that need time to develop and knowledge to fill in the gap (MacNeil, 2006; Zeldin, 2004). Programs based on the deficit model focus on providing youth with skills that they can use to become leaders in the future, once they become adults (Cassidy & Jackson, 2005; MacNeil, 2006; Zeldin, 2004). This approach ignores the positive contributions that youth are able to make to their communities as adolescents.

The resource model stands in contrast to the deficit model. This model focuses on what youth have to offer as opposed to what they may lack (MacNeil, 2006; Zeldin, 2004). Zeldin presented a case study of one organization going through the process of incorporating youth in their governance structure. The adult members of the organization focused on the stereotypical problems of youth and resisted the change. However, after working with the youth for a period of time they came to see their strengths; a shift from seeing youth as deficits to resources. The organization discovered that youth spark innovation and enthusiasm and provide valuable input that allowed more informed decisions to be made.

The adults realized that youth have perspectives and experiences to offer that they do not (Gardner, 1995; MacNeil, 2006; Zeldin, 2004).

Leadership development programming based on the resource model provides opportunities for youth to take on tasks that make meaningful contributions to their peers, the program, and/or larger society (MacNeil, 2006). These opportunities might involve activities such as leading sessions and activities at the next program, organizing an event for their school or community, or doing volunteer work with a service learning focus. These real life projects "provide [youth] with experiences of success in reaching high for ambitious projects, developing a confidence in their collective ability to dream big dreams and then working hard to achieve them" (Chamberlin & Chamberlin, 1994, p. 15). Inviting youth to participate as present day leaders combats the viewpoint that children and adolescents lack the maturity and ability to make meaningful contributions. This dual focus on learning and doing contributes to healthy youth development as it boosts confidence by demonstrating value, ability, and the support of caring adults.

Youth leadership development programs provide adolescents with opportunities and places to invest their energy. Programs may be based on mentorship, sport, or a variety of other activities. Nakkula (2003) explained the important role these programs can play in an adolescent's identity development.

> Identity development happens every day and everywhere, but it develops most actively where energy is invested most thoroughly. In this regard, a program, an activity, or a hobby that calls for a deep investment of time and energy does more than build skills and interests in a particular area; deep investment builds into and upon the very sense of who we are. (pp. 12-13)

Alternative Education

An alternative is a different way of reaching one's goal; in this case a secondary school education (Fenstermacher, 1975). Alternative education is an alternate form of achieving education for students who are not succeeding in the traditional public school environment (Conley, 2002). "Until very recently children who were culturally different, disturbed, learning handicapped, or experiencing trouble at home were simply shoved out of the way because someone in authority decided they did not need or deserve a serious education" (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1992, p. 4).

Fenstermacher (1975) framed alternative education as differing from conventional education in three main areas: instruction, environment, and time. Instructional methods in the conventional classroom tend to include lectures and group work but alternative programs offer a more individualized lesson plan. The classroom environment may include such things as the set up of desks, behavioral expectations, and student-teacher interaction. Time deals with assignment deadlines and expectations placed on the student to finish a certain course or their entire degree on a particular schedule. Alternative programs often provide the student with more generous timelines.

Alternative education takes a variety of different forms. Conley (2002) presented home schooling, theme based schools, private schools, virtual learning, and schools within schools (such as Northdale's alternate program) as examples of alternatives currently available in education. These different programs are united in offering students options for achieving their secondary school education and providing an environment that supports students' individual needs (V. Smith, 1974).

Adolescence and Marginalization

Adolescence has been described from a wide range of perspectives including, "a period of physical development, as an age span, as a discrete developmental stage, as a sociocultural phenomenon, and as a way of life or a state of mind" (Manaster, 1989, p. 4). Stanley Hall famously labeled adolescence as a period of "storm and stress" in 1904 (Berzonsky, 2000, p. 12). Many theorists have contributed their input since Hall's initial claim, looking at the latin root of the word adolescence, *adolescere*, meaning "to grow to maturity" (Rogers, D. as cited in Manaster, 1989, p. 4), presenting adolescence as an age of ideals and theories, and debating the age span encompassed by this period.

Youth, regardless of their other identifiers, may be seen as an oppressed group because of their age. Ageism is the name for discrimination based on age, whether because a person is considered too old or too young (Bishop, 2002). For the purposes of this study, the term *ageism* is used to explain the oppression of persons based on being too young, or "the negative construction of the meaning of youth" (MacNeil, 2006, p. 32). This type of discrimination is also known as *adultism* (Bishop). According to Bishop and Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1992) the oppression of youth has been institutionalized in Western culture. In this culture, there is little or no value placed on the opinions of youth and they are barred from participating in adult activities. This attitude towards youth is the basis for the deficit model, which overlooks the positive contributions youth can and do make in their societies as children and adolescents.

Adult power over youth is unavoidable yet sometimes out of control (Bishop, 2002). The safety and well-being of youth must be protected but often adult power is used to force

obedience instead of for protection of the child or adolescent. Bishop (2002) offered the example of a school program in Oregon to illustrate this power struggle. The program was designed to teach children decision making skills but parents protested that it undermined their authority. Bishop named the parents' attempt in this scenario to undermine the students' development of self-esteem and independence, "emotional abuse" (p. 64). As adolescents are perceived in North American culture as children, they continue to experience the painful processes outlined by Bishop. Adolescents are looked down upon as children until they enter the adult world of work or parenthood. As this entry into the adult society of work, in or outside of the home, takes place at a different point in each person's life, for example after completing or leaving secondary school, or after post-graduate school, the developmental expectations of youth are confused and varied.

The powerlessness that goes along with experiencing ageism and emotional abuse is compounded by the many other stressors adolescents face. Labeling is one of these additional factors. Cassidy and Jackson (2005) outlined some of the negative consequences of labeling students as *at risk*. These effects can be applied to the broader process of labeling, including the distinction of *leader*. Labels are problematic because the behavior is interpreted through the lens of the observer. These differences of perspective create inconsistency where a student's behavior may be rewarded in one context and punished in another. Actions that may seem characteristic of a student with behavior problems may be seen by others as leadership qualities, for example, being very outspoken. Labeling also places a focus on the person being labeled, removing the focus away from the structure that creates or shapes the person's behavior (Cassidy, 2005; Chamberlin & Chamberlin, 1994). In this way, labeling

creates an *other* and reinforces exclusionary practices. Labeling can also limit a person's achievements through the Pygmalion effect, which states "people act in accordance with others' expectations" (Hurlburt, 2006, p. 4). Youth who have been labeled as at risk, underachievers, or non-leaders may internalize these low expectations as their personal goals.

Each person holds multiple identities, for example I am a woman in my twenties, white, educated, able bodied, a student, and a daughter, among a long list of other characteristics. Youth may experience additional forms of oppression based on these identities in addition to ageism. These oppressions may include such things as racism, poverty, ableism, or sexual discrimination. When the oppression is experienced by just one person and not the rest of her family, dealing with the struggles can become more difficult. The family may not know how to offer help and support or might attempt to change or reject the person (Bishop, 2002). Ageism, emotional abuse, labels, negative stereotypes, the deficit model, and the force of multiple oppressions are all contributors to the powerlessness of adolescents. With this large number of heavy forces working to keep power from youth, the achievement of a stable sense of identity can be a truly difficult journey.

Adolescent Identity Development

From the vast literature available on human development, this study draws on a specific niche of adolescent identity development. Cognitive and social development have been discussed briefly, where appropriate, in support of the identity development research. The focus of this study is further specialized, looking at the notion of a stable or achieved level of adolescent identity development. Although the different identity types as outlined by

Marcia (as cited in Adams, Abraham, & Markstrom, 2000) and based on the work by Erikson (as cited in Berzonsky, 2000) are discussed in this section, I have provided these details solely for background information. The participants were asked only about whether they were happy being themselves, as an indicator of a stable or achieved identity, and were not asked to answer further questions dealing with the various identity types.

Although the search for identity is a lifelong process (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999), late adolescence is a "particularly important time in an individual's identity formation" (Johnson & Schelhas-Miller, 2000, p. 94). This is when a person gains the maturity to make the quest possible. "Who am I as a distinct person, who am I in relation to others, and who will I be in the future?" (Johnson & Schelhas-Miller, 2000, p. 94) are some of the questions adolescents face.

The body of literature on adolescent identity development begins with Sigmund Freud. As part of Freud's fourth stage of psychosexual development, latency, adolescents are expected to develop an ego ideal; a personal sense of who they would like to be (Balk, 1995; Berzonsky, 2000; Manaster, 1989). Manaster (1989) looked at authors who elaborated on Freud's notion of adolescence, describing it as a time for,

> Accepting one's new sexuality while becoming an increasingly independent individual who must develop an identity, make new attachments, understand how societal rules apply at this new age level, and resolve the problem of wanting to remain close to one's family of origin while becoming personally more independent (p. 145).

Following her father's work, Anna Freud made important contributions to the literature on adolescent identity development. Her focus was on adolescence as a "period of turmoil"

(Balk, 1995, p. 16) resulting from a fight between the ego and the adolescent's increased sex drive and libidinal energy.

The most well known author on the subject is probably Erik Erikson, a student of Anna Freud (Balk, 1995; Berzonsky, 2000; Manaster, 1989). Archer (1992) raised some concerns as to whether Erikson's identity research applies equally to women as it does to men. She argued that Erikson's work "portrays a primarily Eurocentric male model of normality" (p. 29) and does not include distinct female examples. Archer warned that Erikson's work may not be applicable universally to all persons as his research sample included a specific subset of the population, namely upper class European men. Despite this warning, Erikson's work on adolescent identity formation is still widely discussed.

Erikson developed a psychosocial model of identity formation as a life long journey with eight forks in the road along the way known as the *eight ages of man* (Balk, 1995). The crisis faced at adolescence is that of identity formation versus identity confusion, where adolescents actively attempt to build a stable sense of personal identity (Berzonsky, 2000). Berzonsky (2000), elaborated,

> At this stage, despite a lifetime of changes, adolescents need to be able to see themselves as products of their previous experiences – to achieve an adaptive sense of identity they need to experience a unified sense of spatial and temporal self-continuity. Positive resolutions of prior crises – being trusting, autonomous, willful, and industrious – facilitate the process of identity formation, whereas previous failures may lead to identity diffusions (p. 20).

Jim Marcia (Balk, 1995; Berzonsky, 2000; Manaster, 1989) operationalized Erikson's theory by establishing four identity statuses: 1) identity diffusers, 2) identity foreclosure, 3) identity moratoriums, and 4) identity achievers, listed in sequence with the fourth stage indicating a stable sense of identity development. Diffused adolescents have confused

identity, while foreclosed adolescents have established an identity by adopting it from others, for example parents, without testing to see if it fits them personally (Adams, Abraham, & Markstrom, 2000). Adolescents with an achieved identity have experienced some sort of crisis and have established a personal committed identity. Foreclosed and achieved adolescents can be easily confused; they often lead similar lifestyles. Manaster (1989) spoke about the application of Marcia's statuses to high school students whose "responses reflect less considered, more superficial choices and thus may be coded at achievement status when they are actually foreclosing" (p. 161).

Adams, Abraham, and Markstrom (2000) described identity achieved adolescents as having inner assurance, self-direction, self-certainty, a high acceptance of self, a stable self-definition, emotional stability, and the capacity for interpersonal perspective-taking, accompanied with higher levels of social and cognitive development. What matters most for these individuals is feeling proud of themselves as opposed to focusing on making others proud. In contrast, diffused adolescents are described as "having deep feelings of guilt and rejection" (p. 74). The authors hypothesized that,

> Identity-achieved adolescents would be likely to perceive themselves with self-assurance and would anticipate that others would also view their commitments positively and within the context of alternatives; therefore, they would be unselfconsciously willing to reveal themselves to others. In contrast, adolescents who had not undergone the ideal identity-formation process, or had not completed the process of making a self-definition (i.e. diffused, foreclosed, or moratorium youths), would be likely to view themselves negatively and, therefore, be more self-conscious and less willing to reveal information about the self to others (p. 74).

Of Marcia's (as cited in Adams, Abraham, & Markstrom, 2000) four identity statuses, the image of adolescents in moratorium is the most prevalent in Western society. Teenagers in Western society are believed to be rebellious, unmanageable, impressionable,

unmotivated, and lacking ability (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999; Takanishi, 1993; Zeldin, 2004). These negative images are based on the behavior and experimentation that comes from the search for a stable identity. Erikson (as cited in Johnson & Schelhas-Miller, 2000) explained that adolescents may engage in "transitional delinquency" (p. 113), which can include breaking laws or exploring antisocial behavior as part of the "crisis" experienced by adolescents in moratorium (Adams, Abraham, & Markstrom, 2000, p. 73). Recognizing that this process is an important part of finding one's identity and gaining adult maturity, "society takes a relatively hands-off posture, allowing the adolescent to experiment behaviorally and attempt to find himself and his place" (Manaster, 1989, p. 162). The image of all teenagers as being in moratorium denies the existence of those located in the remaining three identity statuses and paints adolescents as a homogenous group, discounting their individual needs and desires (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999; Takanishi, 1993).

While stereotypes describe adolescents as belonging to the moratorium status and as pulling away from adults, Takanishi (1993) argued that teenagers complain about a lack of available adults to "listen, hear, understand and guide them" (p. 461). Adolescents require nurturing of their whole person and desire secure relationships, to be valued members of groups, and to have a promising future (Noddings, 2005; Takanishi, 1993). Neufeld and Mate (2004) presented the idea of *attachment* to articulate this need for belonging. They discussed attachment as a necessity for all human beings, particularly children and youth; "our children must be attached to us emotionally until they are capable of standing on their own two feet, able to think for themselves and to determine their own direction"(p. 18). This

divide between the perceived and actual needs of adolescents is why, "adolescents may well be the most maligned and misunderstood age group in our culture" (Takanishi, 1993, p. 460).

Empowerment

In this study, I focused on Ciulla's (1996) four elements of empowerment: confidence, competence, freedom, and resources as a means for people to "become independent problem solvers and decision makers" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 46). Confidence is "the mental attitude of trusting in or relying on a person or thing" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989), including one's self. A person with high self-confidence or self-esteem believes that they are worthy, good, and deserving of respect (Kernis, 2003). Similarly, a person who has reached a stable sense of identity development recognizes her "unique individuality, value and worth" (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999, p. 117). To achieve optimal self-esteem, a person must honor her "authentic self" (Kernis, 2003, p. 13). Kernis (2003) outlined four components of authenticity. The first component is an *awareness* of one's true self: one's needs, values, feelings, personality, and roles. The second component involves the *unbiased processing* of information. To process self-relevant information without bias, one accepts positive and negative attributes of the self. The third component is entitled, *action*. Action builds on awareness, calling for one's actions to correspond with that self-awareness. The last component of authenticity is *relational orientation*, which involves "valuing and achieving openness and truthfulness in one's close relationships" (p. 14).

Competence is the "capacity to deal adequately with a subject" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Competence is an asset to youth for resilience; "Competent youth are expected to be more likely to overcome the negative effects of a risk" (Fergus &

Zimmerman, 2005, p. 400). A person with freedom is able to approach problems and decisions without encumbrance or hindrance. Resources supply a "want or deficiency" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989) and may include capital, information, and people or networks.

Gender

Gender, as L. Smith (2006) explained, is not only about women but about the roles of both men and women and the relations between them. "Like class and ethnicity, gender is a marker of collective identity, exploitation, and difference" (Kelly, 1993, p. 28). The following two studies demonstrate leadership and school participation as gendered phenomena.

Feldman and Matjasko (2007) profiled adolescent school-based activity participation. Their results demonstrated a gender divide in the types of extra-curricular activities in which students participate. Female students were more likely to participate in school, academic, performance, and multiple activities and male students were found more likely to participate in sports or not at all. This division reflects gender stereotypes of women in the arts and men in sports. Further analysis revealed that the students most likely to be involved in multiple activity portfolios were not only female but also from the upper middle class and held the highest grades in the school. Although female students are more likely to participate in school activities than their male counterparts, socio-economic class, academic achievement and other factors play an equally large role in defining the typical participatory population. This portfolio of the high achiever student in both academics and school life is the group that is given the label of leader, creating the hierarchical division between portfolios.

Bromnick and Swallow's (1999) study on heroes and admired qualities of adolescents also showed gendered results. When asked to identify their hero, both male and female students named mostly male figures. This result relates to the idea of leadership being defined by current leaders or managers who, in Western society are frequently men. Most of the male students spoke about sport figures and physical strength, either through their choice of hero or description of desired qualities. The small number of male students who identified a female hero justified their choice with sexual desire by describing the woman's physical attributes. The focus on sport in both studies and on heterosexual desires in the latter reflects stereotypes of gender divisions where men are strong and active and women are admired objectively.

Although this study focuses on the fact that the target population is in alternative education as a defining factor for belonging to the non-typical participatory population, gender is also considered. As women, the participants' narratives are affected by the gender roles, expectations, and stereotypes as indicated by the results of these two studies. Gendered ideas of leadership are incorporated into this study and the presentation of its findings.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented a survey of literature introducing the key concepts of this study: leadership, youth leadership development, alternative education, adolescence and marginalization, adolescent identity development, empowerment, and gender. This survey of related literature is intended to assist the reader is making meaning of the shared narrative of participant and researcher presented in this study.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study followed a narrative research design to collect the personal experience stories of the participants. The standards of research developed for this study have been influenced by elements of collaborative research practices, social constructivism, a critical paradigm, and a feminist ideology. The data has been collected into personal narratives and analyzed using a content analysis, examining themes as they relate to the seven guiding questions.

Theoretical Perspectives

In this section I have explored the theoretical underpinnings of narrative inquiry, collaborative research, social constructivism, critical paradigm, and feminist ideology. I have provided a description and explanation of each theory and how it has influenced this study.

Narrative Inquiry

As narrative is "the study of how humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2), this study looked at how the participants experience and perceive leadership. Narrative research, similar to leadership, is a term with multiple definitions. The specific form of narrative research used in this study is the personal experience story (Creswell, 2008). This form of narrative inquiry allows for the use of a person's stories of life experience in contrast to collecting a person's comprehensive and chronological life story.

The original conception of a narrative comes from Aristotle who spoke of a story that has a beginning, middle, and end (Riessman, 1993). In the past few decades, narrative research has become a "significant part of the repertoire of social sciences" (Lieblich, Tuval-

Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 1) under an umbrella definition that covers "any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials" (p. 2). The popularity of narrative research has grown because the method has been recognized as a natural way to collect data from people (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Herman & Vervaek, 2001; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993). People live "storied lives" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 78; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) and narrative inquiry provides a way to make sense of our lives using story. Discussing our storied lives, Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) asserted, "people are storytellers by nature. Stories provide coherence and continuity to one's experience and have a central role in our communication with others" (p. 7).

The use of narrative inquiry results in large amounts of unique and rich data from a small sample (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). With a small sample size and rich data, the findings are not intended to be generalized, they are instead, relevant. The focus of narrative inquiry is on listening to the voices of the participants and allowing them to share their stories, ideas, and recommendations. Riessman (1993) explained;

> Narrative analysis is not useful for studies of large numbers of nameless, faceless subjects. The methods are slow and painstaking. They require attention to subtlety: nuances of speech, organization of a response, local contexts of production, social discourses that shape what is said, and what cannot be spoken (p. 69).

The characteristics of narrative inquiry make it an appropriate and preferred method for identity research (Georgakopoulou, 2006; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993). Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) discussed the connection between narrative and identity.

> One of the clearest channels for learning about the inner world is through verbal accounts and stories presented by individual narrators about their lives and their

> experiences of reality. In other words, narratives provide us with access to people's identity and personality (p. 7).

Considering the close connection between my personal narrative and the research question, and the established history of narrative as an appropriate method for identity research, I believed narrative inquiry to be a perfect fit for this study.

Collaborative Research

Participatory research is unique because of its inclusion of "research, education, and action" (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid 2006, p. 20). Collaborative research shares these criteria, with an emphasis on shared ownership of the research project (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Participatory and collaborative research also share the goal of redefining what constitutes meaningful knowledge and empowering people by "redressing power imbalances whereby those previously marginalized achieve a voice" (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, p. 31). Although this study does not explicitly include education and social action components, my research design incorporates the underlying emphasis on voice found in participatory and collaborative research.

Kirby, Greaves, and Reid (2006) outlined the key components of a collaborative research design as inclusion, participation, individual and collective action, social change, and empowerment. As this study aims to create space for the voices of people from a marginalized group, the basic design of the project coincides with many of these standards. The research sample has been carefully chosen to be *inclusive* by bringing forward the stories of women whose perspectives on the topic of leadership are traditionally overlooked. Inviting these women to speak is a form of *individual action*. Narrative inquiry brings participants' voices to the forefront by empowering them to talk about their experiences

(Creswell, 2008). A collaborative research relationship, one where "both the researcher and participant have voice" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4) can also become a source of *empowerment*; empowering relationships involve feelings of connectedness, "equality, caring, and mutual purpose and intention" (p. 4). In narrative inquiry, the researcher's personal experience story is one of the starting points. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) referred to this expression of the researcher's voice as "composing narrative beginnings" (p. 70). This narrative study does not follow all of the criteria of collaborative research but is influenced by its underlying principles and incorporates several of the key components as outlined above.

Social Constructivism

The search for a better understanding of the concept of leadership comes from an interactive paradigm, that may be described as social contructivist (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006). Underlying social constructivism is the assertion that behaviors, events, and entities are not objectively observed or given facts of nature; meaning is actively created by people and influenced by culture, history, and social context. Furthermore, social constructivism recognizes that the understandings that prevail over time are not chosen for their empirical validity but for their ability to survive social processes (Gergen, 2006). Narrative, as an entity, is also given meaning through this process of social construction. Narratives are "interpretative and, in turn, require interpretation: They do not 'speak for themselves,' or provide direct access to other times, places, or cultures" (Stivers, 1993, p. 264 as quoted in Riessman, 1993, p. 23). Meaning is interpreted and created each time a story is told or

created. This process of interpretation takes places at a minimum of three points – the narrator, the listener or analyst, and the reader (Herman & Vervaek, 2001; Riessman, 1993

Critical Paradigm and Feminist Ideology

I have approached the link between the participants' understandings of leadership, their level of identity development, and sense of empowerment from a critical paradigm. The critical paradigm (Kirby, Greaves, & Reid, 2006) looks at "societal structures and power relations and how they play a role in promoting inequalities and disenabling people" (p.14). In examining these structures and power relations I have focused on ageism as it affects youth, marginalization as it applies to youth in alternative education, and gender. Barata, Hunjan, and Leggatt (2005) described research that follows a feminist ideology as research that puts women at the centre of inquiry and analysis, reflects women's experiences, and benefits or empowers women in some way. I have made a conscious choice to work with young women as the participants of this study. Although I have not set out to advance women's issues through this study, I hold hope that the research participants were able to draw some level of empowerment from their participation, as discussed in connection with collaborative research. Kezar (2003, as quoted in in Guennette, 2006, pp. 47-48) outlined criteria for a feminist approach to interviewing as "(a) an inherently relational climate of mutual trust, (b) reflexivity in terms of having to think through one's own assumptions, (c) an egalitarian mindset, (d) empathy and the ethic of care." I believe that the standards of research I outlined for myself in this study and my interviewing practices embraced these four values.

Standards of Research

Standards of research are important to "separate good research from poor research" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 276). However, what standards should be used to deem research *valid* is under debate. Validity has its roots in a positivist tradition (Winter, 2000) that calls for internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Qualitative research is "not, and never will be, second rate conventional scientific inquiry" (Lincoln, 1995, pp. 277). However, qualitative research embraces different goals than quantitative research, for example, a commitment to building and recognizing relationships between researcher and participant (Lincoln, 1995). This goal is in contrast to the objectivity desired in quantitative work. Trochim (2006) stated, "no one has done a thorough job of translating how the quantitative criteria might apply to qualitative" (p. 3), while Riessman (1993) demanded that traditional validity criteria as applied to narrative research be "radically reconceptualized" (p. 65).

The Five "R's" of Research

Using existing standards of good qualitative or narrative research (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Lincoln, 1995; Morrow, 2005; Riessman, 1993; L. Smith, 2006; Trochim, 2006), I have created five standards of rigor by which to measure my research: readability, responsibility, representation, respectfulness, and recognition. I present these five criteria as being applicable to narrative researchers in general but speak specifically of myself and leave it to other researchers to judge the applicability of these standards to their own endeavors. "There is no canonical approach in interpretive work, no recipes and

formulas, and different validation procedures may be better suited to some research problems than to others" (Riessman, 1993, p. 69).

Readability. This standard deals with producing a research text that is of high quality and is clearly and descriptively written. Built on a long list of criteria set out by Lincoln (1995), Morrow (2005), Riessman (1993), and Trochim (2006), readability is essential in creating a text that is believable for both the participant and the reader. A readable narrative text has been judged as credible by the participant[s] (Trochim, 2006). The research must also be coherent and the process fully disclosed, including a rationale for the choice of methods and explanation of the processes followed (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993). In explaining the underlying assumptions of the research and researcher, and providing accurate and rich details about how the research was conducted and interpretations were made, the reader is better able to judge the integrity of the research and its usefulness for his or her own means (Lincoln, 1995; Morrow, 2005; Trochim, 2006), for example, policy making or further research.

I worked with the participants to ensure they approved of both the data that I collected and how I presented it at a number of check points. In my second interview with each student, substantial time was spent clarifying information from the first interview using partial transcript notes and additional questions. This process of "member-checking" (Creswell, 2008, p.267) allowed the participants to see and change, if they desired, my initial interpretations of their stories. I also provided each student and teacher participant with a copy of the full interview transcripts and obtained each person's approval of these documents before commencing my analysis. I have presented my research using "thick descriptions,"

(Morrow, 2005, p. 252) providing a full account of both the participants' experiences and the context in which they occurred. I have further contributed to this thick description by openly including information about myself, my connection with the research topic, and the details of how the study was developed. Using data collected from students and teachers, as well as my field notes, I have also used triangulation (Creswell, 2008) to increase the depth of my research. Triangulation "ensures that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes" (Creswell, 2008, p. 266).

Responsibility. This standard calls for "a text that 'comes clean' about its stance and about the position of the author" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 280). Responsible narrative inquirers must recognize and disclose their role in creating the narrative; therefore displaying honesty and authenticity (Lincoln, 1995; Riessman, 1993). Narrative research does not subscribe to the notion of an objective truth (Cottle, 2002; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Riessman, 1993). Narratives are "interpretative and, in turn, require interpretation" (Riessman, 1993, p. 23). This process of interpretation takes place at multiple levels including the initial teller, the analyst, and all subsequent readers (Guennette, 2006; Herman & Vervaek, 2001; Riessman, 1993). Responsible narrative researchers recognize and disclose their role in this process of interpretation. "We tend to hear another's story with our own stories, our lenses, as it were, shaping and refining the content and tone of what we are encountering" (Cottle, 2002, p. 535). Narrative researchers have to balance the multiple storylines of their own narrative, that of the participants, and the resulting restorying (L. Smith, 2006) of the participant's words.

In the first chapter of this study, I acknowledged that narrative research is interpretative and that as the researcher, my voice is woven through the various aspects of my research. I have actively engaged in the process of reflexivity (Creswell, 2008; S. Smith, 2006) throughout my research to acknowledge and document my participation in this study. To help with this process I kept a detailed reflexive research journal, starting from when I entered the research site to ask Northdale's principal for permission to conduct my study at that school. This journal has served as a constant reminder of my role as researcher, provided me with a venue to reflect and process information continually through my research, and has also been a source of information for writing this report.

Representation. This standard combines the idea of voice as outlined by Lincoln (1995) with those of representation and reframing as discussed by L. Smith (2006). The first consideration is in choosing a research question and participants. Under the title of voice Lincoln (1995) calls for researchers to "seek out the silenced" and provide a "voice as resistance against silence, as resistance to disengagement, as resistance to marginalization" (p. 282). This idea is repeated by L. Smith (2006) in her indigenous projects of representation where she calls for the representation of peoples previously excluded from the decision making and research processes and the reframing of whose perspectives and what pieces of information are worthy of consideration.

As discussed earlier in relation to the influence of collaborative research practices, I have designed this study with the notion of inclusivity in mind. In working with students commonly not perceived as leaders by their communities or by themselves, I have endeavored to bring forth the voices of people who have been silenced on the topic of

leadership. This study also begins to reframe ideas of whose voice is valuable in discussing and defining leadership. An outcome of this study is a reframing of the concept of leadership as understood by the participants.

Respectfulness. This standard deals with the ideas of reciprocity, sacredness, the sharing of privilege (Lincoln, 1995), and of connecting (L. Smith, 2006). Respectful narrative researchers work to build relationships with their participants based on "mutual respect, granting of dignity, and deep appreciation for the human condition" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 284). This act of connecting (L. Smith, 2006) is about giving control to the participants by treating them with respect. "The relationship between the researcher and the researched is not devoid of power differences" (Manning, 1997 as quoted in S. Smith, 2006, p. 213). A respectful researcher recognizes this power dynamic and approaches the relationship honestly and respectfully.

As a person who believes deeply in fostering mutual respect and valuing all life, I spent much time contemplating ways that I could ensure respectfulness in my study. I showed respect towards my participants by trying to make the research process as accessible and comfortable as possible. I wrote several drafts of my consent form to ensure that the information was clearly presented and I supplemented the written information with multiple verbal explanations, to appeal to different learning style preferences. I further addressed accessibility by repeatedly checking in with the participants and encouraging their thoughts, questions, or concerns. I offered each participant several ways to contact me, giving each person my email address and personal cell phone number. Most students chose to communicate through text message. I started interviews by asking the interviewees how they

were doing and engaging them in friendly casual conversation. Physical comfort was also a concern. I offered each participant a drink, a pen and paper, and when possible controlled lighting and offered choice in seating. The students' showed personal preferences in each of these areas.

I worked to develop a reciprocal relationship, described by Lincoln (1995) as "the kind of intense sharing that opens all lives party to the inquiry of examination" (pp. 283-284). I freely offered personal information about my life during the interviews and offered the students opportunities to ask me any questions they wanted. I believe that I was able to give the students' stories priority while still engaging in active dialogue and sharing my story when the opportunity presented itself. I fostered sacredness through my genuine interest in and appreciation for each participant's story; letting the participants guide the conversations, actively listening, and providing personal responses. Although I expressed genuine emotions and concern for the participants, I was aware of my reactions and kept an open mind, being careful not to pass judgment.

Recognition. This last standard requires the narrative researcher to recognize "that research takes place in, and is addressed to a community" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 280). It is important for researchers to take their work back to the communities in which they work (Riessman, 1993). Returning the findings to the community is one way for the researcher to help "serve the purposes of the community in which it was carried out, rather than simply serving the community of knowledge producers and policymakers" (Lincoln, 1995, p. 280). The concept of sharing emphasizes not only returning the research to the community but doing so in an accessible manner (L. Smith, 2006). Researchers may need to employ

creativity to provide accessible opportunities for the audience to grasp and connect with the material. This may include oral, visual, or collaborative presentations.

Throughout the study, I aimed to learn as much as possible about Northdale, the alternate education program, and any other aspects of the students' lives. For example, I met one of the parents and engaged in casual conversation outside of the classroom. I was fortunate to be able to spend time at Northdale observing and speaking with staff and students, both in the alternate program and otherwise, while exploring the school grounds and then during my formal periods of classroom observation. I found myself on a steep learning curve once I entered the research site. Terminology was one of the most important contextual pieces of information I had to gather so that I could properly communicate with my participants and interpret their stories. As a person who has not worked in a secondary school setting and with my student experience from Ontario, I had to learn everything about British Columbia's secondary school system; starting with the basic knowledge that secondary school starts at grade eight in this province in contrast to grade nine in Ontario.

To share my findings with the community in which I conducted my research, I have aimed to provide a number of options to increase accessibility. For the participants, I have created a newsletter style summary of the findings (see Appendix B) to distribute to the students and I have provided the teachers with a complete copy of my findings in addition to a copy of the newsletters. I have also extended an offer to each of the participants to meet with me in person to discuss any points of interest or to ask any outstanding questions. Full copies of my research report have been made available to the School District, Northdale's principal, and offered to any interested participants.

Process of Inquiry

To describe my process of inquiry, I have outlined the steps taken to find and enter my research site. I have also discussed how my research participants were selected and what criteria were considered.

Research Site

I worked at Northdale Secondary School (name changed) located in a medium sized city in Northern British Columbia, herein referred to as Northdale. Northdale has a relatively diverse and large student population of approximately 1400 students. I worked closely with two grades 10 to 12 alternate education classes at this school. Initial interviews and classroom observation took place on site. The two teacher interviews also took place at Northdale in available classrooms. The research interviews with the students from classroom one took place in a private conference room at Northdale during school hours and the interviews with the students from classroom two took place at nearby coffee shops after school.

Participants

The primary participants for my research were five young women: Abana, Autumn, Bridget, Jordan, and Navaeh. All names have been changed to protect the students' privacy. These women ranged in age from 16 to 18 years and were all students at Northdale in the alternate education program. The students were enrolled in either grade 11 or 12 but most were completing work from previous grade levels.

Two additional participants were the teachers of both classrooms from which these young women were selected. Mr. Scott was the instructor of classroom one and Ms. Hartwell

from classroom two (names changed). Both instructors met with me to discuss my research project, welcomed me into their classrooms for observation, and participated in an informal interview. During the observation periods I interacted with the classmates of these five women, whose participation I acknowledge and appreciate.

At the time of my research, Northdale offered four sections of alternative education consisting of two class periods each and taught by three different instructors. The two teachers that I approached were suggested to me by the school principal and the specific alternate education sections that I worked with were chosen by the instructors. Within these two classes, there were six young women who met my participant criteria of being a female grade 11 or 12 alternate education student. On the day that I had individual meetings with the potential participants from classroom two, one of these students was absent. Therefore, I invited five students to participate and all five agreed to help me with my research. This sampling process can be described as *homogenous sampling*, where the researcher selects "certain sites or people because they possess a similar trait or characteristic" (Creswell, 2008, p. 216).

Procedures

In this section I have outlined the research procedures used in this study in detail. Following the standards of research set out for this study, I have used thick description and reflexivity in my description.

Negotiating Entry to the Field Site

Prior to approaching Northdale Secondary School I completed a research proposal that was reviewed by my supervisory committee, the school district (see Appendix C for

approval letter), and the University of Northern British Columbia's research ethics board (see Appendix D for approval letter). I also completed criminal record checks at the local and provincial levels.

While meeting with a representative from the school district I suggested that the grade 10 to 12 alternate education program at Northdale Secondary School was of personal interest as I had learned about it from colleagues. The representative agreed that this school was appropriate for my proposal and informed the school principal of my intentions. Upon meeting with the school principal I was given the names of two alternate education instructors, Mr. Scott and Ms. Hartwell, whom I contacted to request a meeting. I met with both teachers individually and formed separate research schedules with each.

Classroom Observation

To gather a better understanding of the context of the participants' stories, I spent two days in each classroom conducting field observations. During this period I was able to become part of the school environment both in and out of the classroom, watching and interacting with students and teachers. The observation period was not only a learning period for myself but also played a role in developing a collaborative and trusting researcher-participant relationship.

In classroom one I was invited to introduce myself to the class after Mr. Scott had made his daily announcements. I explained that I was a student at the university doing research about students in alternative education and leadership, and that I hoped to be able to do interviews with some members of the class. I sat at the back of the classroom and watched the activities of the room. The students were instructed by Mr. Scott not to approach me

unless spoken to, as a means of clarifying that I was not there to help them with their work, in contrast to the student teacher who would be starting the following week. The students ignored my presence for the most part except for one young woman who occasionally glanced back in my direction and smiled. This student later became one of my five participants, identified as Abana.

In classroom two I was introduced to the class by the teacher and then sat at the side of the room to observe. In this classroom there was some casual student chatter and later in the day, a class discussion. The students saw me listening to their conversations and likely read whatever facial expressions I made as I listened. Eventually they asked me questions about why I was there and what my paper was about. On the second day of observation Ms. Hartwell invited me to join the classroom activity and insisted I need not sit off to the side. I therefore chose a seat in the centre of the room near the students who had been holding a conversation the previous day. Since I was already in the conversation by mere proximity, I joined in. I was drawn into the activity of the room and I felt like I had actually become a high school student for the day (Reflexive Journal, Feb. 10, 2009).

Nearing the end of day two in both classrooms, I invited the students who met my participant criteria out of the classroom individually for a short meeting of approximately 15 minutes. We met privately in either the hallway or the school library. Although I gave each student the same information, I held individual meetings so that I could establish a connection with each person. I reviewed the information and consent forms (see Appendix E) with each student and invited them to participate. As all of the students involved were under

the age of 19, I explained that parental consent would be required. None of the students felt that this would be a barrier and they all showed an initial interest in participating.

Pilot Study

Prior to meeting with the students, I conducted an informal pilot study consisting of interviews with friends and colleagues. The interviews were held in public coffee shops. I interviewed three women between the ages of 23 to 25, providing me with an opportunity to practice interview techniques and to test the clarity of the interview questions. Each interview produced invaluable feedback in this regard.

After each pilot interview I revamped my questions and techniques. Following my third interview I was confident that the questions would be effective. One pilot participant suggested the use of cue cards for a question that asked the participant to consider several concepts. I used this idea and expanded on it to create a comprehensive resource including definitions and examples. A concern that I had following the completion of the pilot interviews was that I had been able to move through the questions from both interviews with my pilot participants within one to two hours. However, when working with my research participants each interview comfortably flowed for a minimum of one hour and some had to be terminated at the hour and a half maximum, although there was still more to share. My research participants spent time on each question negotiating an answer. The time that the participants spent formulating their stories is part of narrative inquiry as "personal narratives are produced in conversation" (Riessman, 1993, p. 31). "Narrative provides a means for participants to critically reflect on earlier or current perspectives in order to construct or reconstruct meaning" (Guennette, 2006, p. 40). The reconstructed story is what emerges

from the interview dialogue with the participant internally and between researcher and participant.

When arranging my pilot interviews I had hoped to speak with two teenagers close to the age of my actual participants. Of these two young women, one was involved with student council and generally active in the school community. The second had struggled with some of her academic courses and was not as active in the student life area. I had hoped to speak with the second woman as her profile is closer to that of my actual participants. When both were invited to participate in a pilot interview the second woman did not feel that she had anything to say about leadership and declined. The first woman was willing to speak with me but due to time constraints the pilot interview never took place. This scenario made me fear that I would not be able to convince any students to participate in my study. From my reflexive journal notes dated January 3, 2009, I wrote:

> I have set up my research in a way that I want to talk to people that probably believe they have nothing to do with leadership, about leadership. I thought that was adding new literature and being inclusive, but perhaps I have only dug myself into a hopeless hole.

I shared my concern regarding the interest of potential participants with both teachers when discussing my research with them and asked for their suggestions. In response, the teacher of classroom one offered me class time to conduct the interviews. The teacher of classroom two shared stories of her own interactions with the students and felt that they would be happy to have someone listen to them. I cannot speak on whether the students in classroom one would have participated without the extra incentive of missing class but overall the students were very happy to speak with me and wanted to help me to write my paper and subsequently earn my degree. During my observation period in classroom two,

some of the male students expressed their interest in participating and wanted to know why they had not been chosen. Bridget shared her insight, "I think they were on their best behavior because somebody from the outside was in. Umm, I think they were all trying to get the interview. I think that's what they wanted."

Although the scenario with the two young women did raise concerns, it also reinforced the premise of this study. Throughout my research, colleagues, some of the participants, and a teacher have questioned why I would want to discuss leadership with students who are not leaders. These interactions only supported my observation that my research participants have been categorized, either by society or by themselves, as non-leaders. I recognized the challenge I had set for myself in overcoming this barrier of the leader/non-leader label as well as the value of my task. I believe that every person has something to say about leadership and that often people lead without naming their actions as such.

The Interview Process

Each student participated in two semi-structured, in-depth interviews that lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Those interviews that were still in progress at the scheduled time limit of 90 minutes were stopped regardless of how many questions had been asked. The interview questions were mostly open-ended to encourage the participants' stories (Riessman, 1993) and followed the guidelines of the research and guiding questions.

The students from classroom two contacted me within a week of my invitation to participate. Over email I arranged with the students directly to conduct the first interview the following week. I met with one of the students at this scheduled time. Due to several

cancellations, the interviews with the second student from classroom two took place at a later date and coincidentally the same weeks as the students from classroom one. The first round of student interviews with these four students took place two weeks after beginning with the first student. The interviews with the students from classroom one were arranged through Mr. Scott. The signed consent forms were also collected from these students by Mr. Scott and then returned to me.

I hoped to create a comfortable environment for the interviews, both in the physical arrangement and in my approach. At the beginning of each interview I turned on the digital recorder and provided the student with some paper, a pen, and a drink or bottle of water. Where possible I provided options for the student's seating choice and paid attention to lighting and temperature. The paper and pen, as I explained to the participants, was meant as a resource, if needed, or as a potential means of easing anxiety. These instruments were used to jot notes, draw diagrams, to doodle pictures or to simply fidget with the pen. Abana preferred to draw while talking and was not comfortable maintaining constant eye contact. For Jordan, just having something in her hands seemed to help put her at ease; "Yeah, that's me; I fidget a lot. Normally I'll sit there and I'll be like this **stares blankly** but if I have something to fidget with then I'm all good." Working with my participants, I aimed to use an epistolary voice, "one that does not assert or announce but explores and engages" (Clinchy, 2003 as quoted in Guennette, 2006, p. 49) and did not force the tempo of the interview even when I was concerned about running out of time. I engaged in active listening techniques such as paraphrasing and summarizing, using open body language, and making eye contact

(Utah State University, n.d.) to encourage the students' stories and to demonstrate my interest.

In the first round of interviews I collected the signed consent forms from the classroom two students. I asked students if they or their parents had any remaining questions about the information or consent forms. The majority of the students relayed that their parents supported their involvement in this study and felt it would be of some benefit to their daughter. One student indicated that her parents had disagreed as to whether she should participate but that the one supporting parent had signed the form. I ensured that each student had a copy of the information form for her personal records.

I reminded the students that the interviews were semi-structured and although I had prewritten questions, I wanted them to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and engaging in dialogue. Each interview started with a request for the student to share her story, with the simple prompt, "tell me about yourself." I used a combination of my prewritten questions and probes to further develop each student's story as necessary. This process was different with each person. This initial interview question resulted in an interesting dialogue that lasted half or more of the first interview with two of the participants, whereas further questions were required to encourage the remaining students to share their stories. Although I encouraged the participants to embrace dialogue as part of interview process, I was hesitant to share my stories. Like Guennette (2006) I wondered "if my sharing hindered or facilitated the telling of a story that related to my research question" (p. 55). With the understanding that it is a natural response for a person to tell a story, I was also concerned with taking up too much time or prohibiting the flow of the participant's narrative. Although my interviews

with each participant were different I believe that I was able to achieve the desired effect of a "conversation" (Riessman, 1993, p. 56) in the majority of the interviews. I found Riessman's advice to be true: "Provided investigators can give up control over the research process and approach interviews as conversations, almost any question can generate a narrative" (p. 56).

The first interview had two sections. The first set of questions asked the students about themselves and their school experience, particularly with the alternate education program. When I invited the students to participate I asked them to think about a pseudonym. Near the beginning of the first interview I again asked the student to choose a name. Two of the students had chosen their name in advance while the remaining participants selected a pseudonym during the interview. The second set of questions focused on the concept of leadership and encouraged the students to think about its meaning and how they experience leadership in their lives.

The second round of interviews took place one week (seven to eight days) after the first. This break allowed time for all parties involved to reflect on the first interview. Between interviews I listened to each interview recording and created partial transcript notes. These notes consisted of three parts: a) follow-up questions based on interview quotes and personal observations, b) a summary sheet of participant references to leadership, and c) important events in the student's life organized in a time line. At the beginning of the second interview I invited the students to ask any questions or share any insights that may have occurred to them since the first interview. I then asked each student to review the time line and make any necessary corrections. Next, I asked the students to read through the page of leadership quotes and give me their thoughts. Autumn was the only student who did not

agree with her conception of leadership from the first interview. After researching the concept and discussing it with family members she changed her idea of leadership as related to authority and distant from herself to an image of the everyday person as a leader, including herself; "I take that back for sure!" (Autumn). The first half of the second interview was spent discussing these quotes, getting the student to expand on her idea of leadership, and also entertaining some of my follow-up questions as time permitted. I was grateful for this time to ask the participants for the meaning behind their previous statements. This ability to "unpack" (Riessman, 1993, p. 32) language working in conjunction with the participant is an advantage of using narrative inquiry.

The last half of the second interview consisted of questions dealing with the students' relationships, level of identity development, and the idea of empowerment. To facilitate these questions, I made use of visual aids. I placed cue cards (see Appendix F) with the word or statement being discussed in front of the students to help with memory and clarification. On the back of each card I included a dictionary definition of the term, a list of synonyms, and an example of the word in a sentence. These examples were taken from various articles in the local newspaper. These cue cards were extremely useful in organizing the question and providing the necessary knowledge for the students regarding the meanings.

At the end of the second interview I invited the students to share any remaining thoughts or ideas and I asked for their feedback on the experience of being a research participant. I then invited them to ask any questions about the process, my research, or even about myself. Although I was prepared to share as openly as these students spoke with me, the only questions I received were about my research and my studies at the university. Once

dialogue was exhausted I presented each student with two resource lists that I had compiled (see Appendixes G and H). The first list consisted of leadership development opportunities available to local students. This list provided the students with an example of what a leadership development program may look like and also an avenue for any potentially interested students to seek further information. The second list outlined a number of community resources dealing with such issues as drugs, alcohol, suicide, and sexual and mental health. I created these lists in anticipation of potentially sensitive subjects that may arise during the interviews and also to be able to give the students something in return for their time. After I gave the students these lists we discussed the importance of the member-checking process and the best means for me to give them a copy of the transcripts. The students chose a combination of email, postal mail, and delivery to the school.

The two teacher interviews took place at different points in the research process for convenience purposes. The interview with Ms. Hartwell took place in an available classroom directly following the alternate class period on my second day of observation in that room. My interview with Mr. Scott took place in his classroom after school hours during my last week of student interviews. I found that the timing of these two interviews was beneficial for my research as it allowed me to ask questions and clarify things that I had learned from both my field observations and interviews. Mr. Scott was very helpful in clarifying questions I had about school terminology and processes from my conversations with the students. Both teacher interviews were informal, allowing for personal conversation and genuine dialogue. Before commencing each interview, I collected a signed copy of the consent form (see Appendix I) that had been distributed earlier for review and provided an opportunity for the

teachers to ask any questions. Although I did not have a formal list of questions, I asked the instructors to speak about the alternate program at Northdale, their classroom, and to add any comments they may have about the wider school culture. I also asked questions about specific things I had observed in each classroom to gather a better understanding of what I had witnessed.

Data Compilation

Using the interview recordings I compiled verbatim transcripts. To ensure accuracy of the transcripts, I reviewed each interview recording at least three times. The first time that I listened to the recording I focused on typing as much of the dialogue as possible. During the second review of each recording I corrected mistakes and added descriptive notes to mark pauses and tone changes using the following legend:

...	Pause or break in conversation
[-]	Missing word or phrase added by Nicole
iii	Action, emotion, or sound effect
(*iii*)	Descriptive or explanatory phrase added by Nicole
iii	Emphasis or notable tone change added by speaker

I also took this opportunity to begin my analysis and record insights in my reflexive research journal. In my third review of the recording I listened to the interview while reading the transcript to ensure that I had not missed anything. I reviewed the written transcript without listening to the recording a fourth time to catch spelling and typographical errors. Prior to commencing this thorough transcription process, I had listened to the recordings of each first round interview in preparation for the second interview to develop questions for clarification and partial transcript notes on the topic of leadership. This cumulative process allowed me to become familiar with the interview transcripts.

The completed transcripts were returned to each participant (students and teachers) once I had prepared them. I returned the transcripts using each participant's preferred method, resulting in a combination of electronic mail, postal mail, and hand delivery. I included a letter (see Appendix J) with each transcript containing a personalized greeting and instructions to facilitate the member-check process. In this letter I offered to meet with the participants in person if they wished to address any questions or concerns. I asked the participants to respond to me within a week of receiving their transcripts with either their approval or any questions. None of the participants responded within this time period and I had to follow up with each person to obtain approval of the documents. Many of the students chose to communicate with me during this process through text messaging.

In addition to collecting field texts from the interviews, I recorded field notes during the period of participant observation (Creswell, 2008). I also maintained a reflexive research journal to record my thoughts and insights throughout the research process (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Creswell, 2008). These notes, in combination with the interview transcripts, make up the data set for this study. Once I received approval of the interview transcripts from all of the participants, I delivered hand written and personal thank you cards to Northdale for the students and teachers involved in the study as well as for the school principal.

Analysis

I have presented the collected data first as whole narratives and then through themes that emerged from my content analysis. I was able to begin my content analysis following the successful approval of the interview transcripts by the participants using the qualitative

computer program NVivo 8. I first attempted to create a code book through the software as I reviewed each interview. Frustrated with my progress, I left the software aside and developed a code book externally, which I later entered back into NVivo to continue coding the interviews. While creating my code book I reevaluated and changed my research questions (see Figure 1) to better reflect my interview questions and the purpose of the study. I created two overarching questions to summarize the purpose of the study and seven guiding questions that allowed for a detailed exploration of the many topics raised in this study. Riessman (1993) wrote in support of this process; "I discourage students from tightly specifying a question that they will answer from narrative accounts because analytic induction, by definition, causes questions to change and new ones to emerge" (p. 60).

With revamped research questions and an established code book I returned to using NVivo 8. Using this software, I examined the interview transcripts for themes and placed relevant excerpts from the transcripts in the appropriate categories as outlined by my code book. This process reflects a categorical-content approach otherwise known as *content analysis*. Using this approach "categories of the studied topic are defined, and separate utterances of the text are extracted, classified, and gathered into these categories/groups" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 13). Once all of the data was sorted I looked at the frequency of responses to reveal trends. In conducting my analysis I used a critical lens, in recognition that "individual's narratives are situated in particular interactions but also in social, cultural, and institutional discourses, which must be brought to bear to interpret them" (Riessman, 1993, p. 61).

Proposal Stage	Revised Post Field Research
Purpose Statement The purpose of this study is to explore how female youth in alternative education experience leadership in their lives and the role this plays in their identity development.	***Purpose Statement*** The purpose of this study is look at how female students in alternative education perceive and experience leadership and how this connects with the students' development of a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self.
Overarching Research Questions None	***Overarching Research Questions*** 1 How do female students in alternative education perceive and experience leadership? 2 How do the students' perceptions of and experiences with leadership affect the students' development of a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self?
Research Questions	***Guiding Questions***
1 How do marginalized female adolescents define leadership?	1 What is the experience of students in alternative education?
2 Who or what has informed this definition?	2 How do these students define leadership?
3 Does leadership carry a positive or negative connotation for marginalized youth?	3 What have been the contributing factors to the definition of leadership formed by these students?
4 Do youth in alternative education see themselves as leaders?	4 Are these students seen as leaders by either themselves or others?
5 Have female adolescents reached a stable sense of identity?	5 What motivates these students' participation or non-participation in extra-curricular activities and/or leadership programs?
6 Do female adolescents feel empowered?	6 Have these students reached a stable sense of identity development?
7 If no, what do they need in order to become empowered and from where?	7 Do these students feel empowered?

Figure 1. Depiction of changes in research questions before and after conducting field work.

I have presented the research findings pulling from all sources of data including interview transcripts, field notes, reflexive journal notes, and personal communications with participants. I also drew upon literature to inform my analysis. Although I have attempted to be true to the participants' voices, I recognize that "in the end, the analyst creates a metastory about what happened, by telling what the interview narratives signify, editing and reshaping what was told, and turning it into a hybrid story" (Riessman, 1993, p. 13).

Sharing

The findings of this study have been presented to interested parties, starting with the participating students and teachers. Honoring L. Smith's (2006) indigenous research project of "sharing" (p. 160), I have attempted to increase the accessibility of my findings by providing options and alternative formats where possible. For the students, I created a newsletter style summary of the findings. I provided the teachers with a complete copy of my findings in addition to a copy of the newsletter, which I have asked the instructors to consider sharing with their classes. I also extended an offer to each of the participants to meet with me in person to discuss any points of interest or to ask any outstanding questions. A full copy of my thesis has also been provided to the School District. In addition to returning the findings to the community in which I conducted my research, I have also worked to disseminate my results amongst the research community by giving a conference presentation and drafting an article for submission to a peer reviewed journal.

IV. STORIES

During this study I was fortunate to learn a wealth of information about and from my participants. Their stories made me both laugh and cry and gave me a great deal to think about. In this chapter I have presented the participants stories through a combination of my voice and direct quotes. I begin with the teacher's stories, explaining how they run their perspective alternate classrooms at Northdale and their teaching philosophies. This piece of narrative from Mr. Scott and Ms. Hartwell provides a context for the students' academic experiences. I then move to the focus of this chapter; the students' stories. Here, I present pieces of each student's narrative, focusing on their experiences with alternate education, leadership, identity development, and empowerment.

Teaching Alternate Education at Northdale Secondary School

In working with and speaking to Mr. Scott and Ms. Hartwell, I discovered that the two teachers are quite similar despite their many apparent differences. I found that both teachers have many of the same teaching goals and wishes for their students. Although they both wish to build a connection with the students they teach, the type of connection they desire differentiates their teaching methods.

Both instructors want their students to have a positive academic experience and for them to develop an appreciation for the value of their education. "[If] I can give them the opportunity to be successful here they're going to feel good about being here and want to be here and want to continue on" (Scott). The teachers also believe that building academic success in the classroom can help students in other areas of their lives. Ms. Hartwell described it as "reinforcing self-esteem *through* academic achievement."

A further commonality between the two classrooms is the instructors' attempt to create a balance between a lighthearted and serious environment. They want the students to feel comfortable as they strive for academic success.

> There's a certain level of kidding around that I want both ways but there is a massive level of respect and I want to show the students that respect and I want them to show me the same respect and not more, just the same (Scott). ... Even though we joke about things we're respectful (Hartwell).

Respect is emphasized between teacher and student and also amongst students. Ms. Hartwell shared a story of one particularly quiet student who had been embraced by the rest of the class, "they are very respectful to her too, like they didn't push her, they didn't tease her, but they were you know just sort of gentle to her, just really, really nice." Over the years, Ms. Hartwell has held several dinners for her students at her house and she believes that a high level of respect was shown at these events.

> I did it, not this year, but the year before and I had over 20 kids at my house. **shared laughter** And they're so respectful. I've had adult parties and the house was a disaster and they all leave... And these kids, first of all they're helping me in the kitchen and they're helping me with the food, and then they're helping me clean up, like everything was spotless when they left.

Related to the concept of respect is the conscious effort these two teachers make to role model proper behavior. Proper behaviors discussed in our interviews included punctuality, politeness, work ethic, and respectful language. Mr. Scott shared a story of working with one of his students;

> There is a young man in here that has just a horrible attitude towards young women so they put him in here and... you model proper behavior when you're talking to the young ladies and you do that. You model proper behavior when you're talking to the other guys so he can relate to people better.

Ms. Hartwell spoke of role modeling on a more general level.

> I don't know that they have a lot of adults in their life that they feel that they can talk to and that they can look at their life and go "oh, so and so is doing that," and I want to... to give them a different picture again in their mind... of an adult, of an educator, of a woman, and of a woman who is older. Because we all have these images and often the educated part is pejoratively negative, the adult part is definitely negative, and a woman is perceived as weak, and an old woman is perceived as useless. So, I want to change all of those pictures in their mind so that they will have respect for educators, adults, women, and older women. And then ultimately, particularly for the girls, that that will pertain to them and how they view themselves.

Although the relationship each teacher has fostered in the classroom is quite different, they both expressed feeling like a parent to their students; "I really do have kind of a paternal relationship with these students" (Scott); "I feel like a mother to these kids" (Hartwell). Mr. Scott explained what this relationship looks like.

> I treat these kids pretty much the same way I treat my own son. You know you're positive when he does things well and he's proud of it and when he doesn't, 'hey, what do you need to do better?' And to a large extent the kids just need to do the best they can. If they're doing the best they can that will *always*, always be good enough for them to get through.

As part of this parental feeling, both teachers want the students to know that they are valued and that the teacher is there is to help them. Mr. Scott's "discipline with a smile approach" is designed to let students know "ok, he's trying to help."

Mr. Scott's Quiet Work Environment

In Mr. Scott's classroom the expectation is that students are in class to work. "If you're here you're working, you're not sitting there, you're not doing nothing" (Scott). During my period of classroom observation I recorded in my field notes (Feb. 5, 2009) that the classroom was arranged to facilitate the desired quiet work environment in straight rows of single desks and assigned seating. Mr. Scott, wearing a suit, made announcements at the beginning of the class and there was little conversation afterward. Any personal

conversations that were started amongst students or with the teacher were swiftly cut short by the teacher. There was a constant flow of movement around the room as students accessed resources they required such as computers, pencil crayons, text books, and hall passes for washroom breaks. Students were constantly interacting with the teacher, asking questions by approaching his desk, raising their hand, or simply speaking out loud. When there were no students seeking his help, Mr. Scott moved around the room checking on the students' progress and asking if they needed help, emphasizing "let's get down to work, let's go, what are you going to get done today?" Mr. Scott does what he can to help facilitate students' progress. If students ask for his permission to do so, he will allow them to work on other courses during the alternate class time and help with the work as much as he can. If students are disruptive they will be removed from the room: "the one thing we have to always remember is you do as much for the individual as possible but you *do not*, you don't trade off a number of students for one." Mr. Scott believes that "if it's not a quiet work environment the students will become unfocused and not get anything done."

Mr. Scott feels very strongly about keeping the students' personal lives out of the classroom.

> I can be really friendly but don't mistake that as I'm your friend... I don't want a connection that says 'well you know tell me about all of your problems at home' because if you get into that kind of relationship with a student in an academic class you're going to find yourself walking around counseling them all about their home problems and you're not going to get anywhere else. There are people in this school that do that very well, that's not my role... If I don't get into those issues with the students it makes my relationship in here much easier to get them working. They don't identify their problems with me, they start identifying work with me, and how to get there, and how to do things.

By separating whatever issues a student may be facing from their academics, he hopes to reset the student's priorities on academics and focus them on their work. "I want this to be a... rewarding experience for them outside of everything else that happens because [for] some of these students life out there isn't great." He shared the success story of one student.

> There's one young lady, she just came into the class last September and it was one thing after another, she hated school, she's having problems with her boyfriends and all of this other stuff and I guess she's used to talking to the teacher about it and my thing was 'let's get to work.' Well, all of a sudden... she decides to settles down, get the work done... Next thing you know she's taking off, she's doing so well because suddenly she is successful in school. Her mother calls up one day, 'I'm so proud, she said she loves school' and the mother breaks down and starts to cry. The daughter comes in and says 'you know my mother cried when I told her I kind of like school.' I was like 'ok good,' well that's the way it should be, you should feel comfortable here, you should feel successful, this should set you on your way.

Ms. Hartwell's Nurturing Classroom

The focus for Ms. Hartwell is delivering a nurturing, holistic education. She believes that people need to feel a sense of belonging as part of the larger population and tries to achieve bonds with her students to build that desired connection.

> I try to establish good relationships with my students, and I try first of all to connect them to me, then to the other students and then to the learning. And I usually do it in that order, but not necessarily, sometimes it works the other way. Whatever way it works I don't care but I need them to be connected. And the learning is often the last because they're turned off with school, they do not care, often, some of them do, but a large part of them don't and you've probably observed examples of that already. So I have to start from ground zero and start... putting things back in place for them so that they can connect to their learning.

Ms. Hartwell referred to Gordon Neufeld's work on attachment to explain her position. Neufeld and Mate (2004) wrote about the teachability of children as being based on four essential qualities, all of which are enhanced by healthy attachments. The four qualities are "a natural curiosity, an integrative mind, an ability to benefit from correction, and a

relationship with the teacher" (p. 166). The authors argued that when the first three learning processes are suppressed, learning becomes dependent on attachment alone. Furthermore, "children learn best when they like their teacher and they think their teacher likes them. The way to children's minds has always been through their hearts" (p. 173). Ms. Hartwell's actions are intended to embody this theory.

My field notes (Feb. 9, 2009) from observing Ms. Hartwell's classroom paint a very different picture from Mr. Scott's classroom. In this classroom the desks were tables that could seat two to three students each. Students were allowed to sit beside one of their peers and two of the students in the same math course were working together. The walls were busy with resources and pictures displayed everywhere. One wall was full of photographs of each class from years past. In my first meeting with Ms. Hartwell she explained how these pictures help establish a sense of history and belonging for the students. The decorations also provide something interesting for the students to look at as the classroom does not have windows at eye level. In my reflexive journal (Feb. 10, 2009) I noted Ms. Hartwell's appearance when we first met, "when I turned the corner I finally saw Ms. Hartwell, who was dressed casually in jeans and a t-shirt, wearing colorful and sparkly make-up matching the blue streaks in her hair."

Students were permitted to have food and drink in Ms. Hartwell's classroom. This approach is again focused on the desire to build a nurturing environment.

> For me, I prefer they are comfortable there, I really, *really* want that to be the case and that it's nurturing. And some of these guys like, they just get up and they throw their clothes on and get to school and they're hungry, of course. I understand that.

Students were also encouraged to put their head down for a few minutes if they appeared extremely tired. "There's no point in fighting it, they're just going to be cranky and I'm going to get cranky with them." There was little to no movement in this classroom but there was conversation amongst the students. Open communication was encouraged, resulting in a variety of conversation topics ranging from weekend activities and parties to deeper conversations about love. Ms. Hartwell tuned into the students' conversations even when it appeared that she was not listening; taking advantage of the "teachable moments" to jump in and facilitate a discussion.

> As you see I jump in on their discussion **shared laughter** and that'll end up being like a class discussion. And I'm actually *really* happy about that because that's obviously derived from their need to talk about something and sometimes it could be something that happened on the weekend, or something that's happening in one of their families, or a job situation, what have you, the sky's the limit.

Ms. Hartwell joined the discussion as an equal participant, sharing her personal stories. While I was there I heard an amazing story from her involving parachuting and broken bones. "And the openness, again, I just feel like it's a human thing and I want them to feel that humanness and the trust too." This open and honest communication is a key component of building connections.

> Part of the success too is that when we can achieve those bonds and often these kids don't bond well with adults. So, that's my first objective is to establish a relationship and a connection where we can talk openly, and sometimes it appears that it's *way* too open **laugh** and it is, it's over the top. However, that's part of the … establishing communication and making it so that they feel comfortable in talking about things that they need to and sometimes it's just silly stuff, but sometimes you have to go through the silly stuff to get to the bottom of whatever it is that's caused them to be in that program in the first place.

Abana

Abana is a shy 17 year old woman with a big smile and a big heart. She likes to be silly and fun and has developed an inside joke with friends where she roars like a dinosaur, which has become a defining characteristic of her personality. She chooses to be happy and is only sad when something extreme happens such as a death.

Abana was born and raised locally but has family spread throughout the province that she visits often. She is very close with her family, especially with her mother, who she calls the most honest person she has ever met. Abana goes swimming with her mother once a week and is always home for family dinners on Sundays. She spends her time outside of school with her boyfriend and his friends or at home where she often uses the treadmill and then goes to bed early to be ready for the next day. She feels that she doesn't do anything, activity or hobby wise. She is interested in pursuing a career in hair dressing and would like to live in British Columbia's sunny Okanagan Valley.

Identifying Leaders

Abana did not hesitate when I asked her to speak about leadership. Her first response was that a leader is someone "who's in charge of a group or something or someone who can just take charge..." Abana sees her mother as a leader and used her as an example. She is a leader because she is confident, respectful, and generally a good person.

> [In the summer when we were little,] my cousins, me and my sister, and then my other step-sister... my mom, my uncles, and their wives, and like my grandparents, and my great grandparents and their dog **shared laughter**. We'd all go to my grandma's cabin, well she built a house now but it was just like a little dinky cabin before and we had tents and stuff. And then we'd have like a birthday party for my sister or something and it'd be like a huge thing and we'd all go horse back riding...Our parents would just go down the street to the hotel and shower and then just cause we were kids and we were camping just for a few weeks it doesn't matter

> and so we'd like pump the water and then like boil it or put it on this huge thing over the fire and then let it cool off and then we'd bathe in there **laughs** ... For my sister's birthday one year my grandma made like a whole bunch of jello and we had to go wash our feet and then eat it with our feet **laughing**. Yeah it was weird.... Yeah and like whoever finished a certain amount of jello first won. And then we'd do like that... I don't know what it's called with the apples and the water and you have to... And we'd do like scavenger hunts and stuff and my mom would set up the whole thing. She'd plan what we were going to do, what we were going to look for, like she'd set up the apple thing and like help my grandma make jello and...

She also spoke about her mother being a Team Leader in her work place and continually returned to this example to illustrate leadership.

In addition to using her mother as an example of leadership, Abana identified a number of people in the school community that would fall into this category. She sees Mr. Scott as a leader when he is encouraging and motivating the students in the classroom. The school principal acts as a leader when he or she is the decision maker. However, Abana believes that students are the primary leaders in the school.

> The kids are kind of the ones who lead the other kids, the principals aren't like 'hey, let's all go do this' **laughs**. So it's more like who you hang out with and like who's the leader in that particular group. Or who like most of the school looks up to or thinks is cool or something like that. [...] The *whole* school [doesn't] know one cool person, like in the movies it's not like that. Me and my friends we all think we're cool and everybody else's friends like they all think each other's cool cause that's just how it goes... Like your own group thinks that whoever is the leader in that group is the leader. [...] With the people I generally hang out with it's G... maybe because he's more talkative I think... [G was going to be in a fight,] so not that that's being a *good* leader because it's not like fighting's good... but everybody went because G told them to. [...] Most people look up to him because he's really... tough... [physically and] emotionally too... he's been through a lot so he knows a lot about other stuff.

Abana also spoke about students being part of school clubs and sports teams as leaders.

Abana said that she is not a leader. She believes that she is capable of taking on a leadership role but it is something that scares her and that she does not desire. She focused on her fear of public speaking and of being singled out as weird. She could not think of any

instances where she has acted as a leader to date. Abana does not think that other people see her as a leader either. She attributes this to her silliness and shyness. Her grade seven teacher once called her a leader but she disagrees with his assessment and does not understand why he made that statement.

Abana: The Student

Abana struggles in her regular classes to keep up with lectures and does not feel that she can ask for help. "I just couldn't keep up and I didn't understand like… what they were talking about… ever. And then… because I was confused I wouldn't do my homework…"

> I did really good in grade 8 and then grade 9 was like... good I got like C's. And then in grade 10 it just got like really hard. […] And then I failed that *entire grade* and then the next year I think I started in a math class again and it was *really hard* even though it was essentials **ha** ... And then my mom went and talked to the principal and we all went and had like a little meeting. And then I was put into Mr. Daniels' (name changed), class and he was the alternate ed teacher and it was work at your own pace and stuff like that and it was easier... I did ok last year [grade 11], like I passed everything.

Abana had initial reservations about joining the alternate program. Her worries were erased once she actually started the program.

> They were like 'oh, It's like the retard class,' that's what they…. what everybody called it. So I was like I don't know, I don't want to do that, I don't want anyone to be making fun of me or something. […] And then I went in there and there were a few people I know and then I was like this is like the same as a regular class except you just get to work at your own pace and… the teacher comes around, is like 'are you guys doing ok?', and you know… it's like… more freedom almost.

After completing her grade 10 year the second time, she moved to Northdale for her grade 12 year to complete her grade 11 credits. She made several changes in her life while transitioning between schools, moving away from partying and drinking and finding inner strength. Now, in grade 12, Abana has developed a new attitude. "Even though I'm still not

going to graduate until next year, but like technically I am in grade 12 and I don't know, I just feel more mature." She started this school year in Mr. Scott's class and feels that the work is easier. When I spent time observing in Mr. Scott's classroom Abana was being congratulated on how quickly and well she was doing her work. She confided that Mr. Scott's motivation has helped her.

> He motivates us a lot... at the end of the day everyday he's like *(in an enthusiastic voice)* 'you guys did *awesome* today! Really fantastic!' [...] Everyone's like 'oh, that's lame'... and I'm like 'I don't care, it motivates me! It makes me feel good!

Building Relationships

The biggest decision Abana has faced was whether to accept her father's invitation to live with him instead of with her mother and step-father. Abana's parents separated when she was 2 or 3 and she has one biological sister who was living with her father at the time. Both parents lived in British Columbia but in different cities.

Factoring into her decision was Abana's relationship with her step-mother. She expressed concern that her step-mother had a tendency to make mean comments, using an example of a comment made about her sister's weight. Another factor was the relationship with her father, which she treasured: "my dad's really cool;" "he's fun;" "I like to spend time with him." Although she enjoyed spending time with her father she had some concerns that his behavior had changed as a result of his relationship. She discussed experiences that her sister had living in that household that she did not wish to be her own.

A further concern was the fear of hurting either of her parents' feelings with her decision. She remembered when her sister left to live with their father, "I was looking out the window and my mom was just like crying so bad and like she was really hurt that she was

going." Abana was also afraid that her mother would be lonely as she is the only child left in the house and her step-father is frequently out of town for work. In the end, Abana chose to continue living with her mother, "I chose not to [move in with my dad] because I don't want to live with my dad and stepmom because of who they are now then versus when I was younger."

Abana has had a difficult time finding close friends. She now spends most of her time with her mother or with her boyfriend.

> I don't really hang out with many people... I don't really have that many friends here.... My friend S... I've known her for like 10 years... she was the first person I met and we've been like best friends forever but we've *definitely* had our fights and she's done some things to me **ha**. My mom is like 'why do you let her do that to you?' [...] We share a locker and... I keep my lunch in my purse because S likes to steal my food. [...] Even though S has done mean things to me it's hard to just give up a big friendship like that so that's why we don't hang out all of the time.... I just stopped hanging out with her more and we're better friends now then we ever were... Like she asks me to and stuff, now I just tell her I'm busy because she'll be like 'oh I love you, you're my best friend.' And then we hang out for a while and then she'll be like 'oh, I don't want to hang out with you anymore' and then she'll go hang out with one of her friends that I don't hang out with anymore **whispering** because they're all into drugs. And then she'll go hang out with them and then they all talk about me and... they all do it to each other. [...] [And then] I have this really good friend named M and she's really nice except she's umm, **quietly** I don't know how to say this **nervous laugh** ah, get's around I guess with guys. And that's like hard to do I guess because when I first met my boyfriend he thought I was like that too because I was hanging out with her, like guilty by association kind of. And so I guess a lot of people thought that about me and so it's hard to hang out with her because I don't want people thinking of me like that because that's not who I am. [...] The people that I'm like really good friends with, well they're all boys... It's like he's not even my boyfriend he's like my best friend... I trust them more because of my experiences with like S and I don't know...

The relationships Abana forms are complicated by her hesitation to share her feelings with others.

> I'm just too scared to say what I'm thinking or how I'm feeling because I'm just scared of how the other person is going to react and what they're going to say even

> though depending on the situation it's like 'what's the worst they're going to do?' but...

Abana explained that she is not afraid of people thinking ill of her but she is afraid of expressing her feelings and thoughts in fear of the person becoming angry. "I don't really care if people think badly of me because I know that I'm a good person and if that's what they want to think, then that's what they want to think." In addition to the scenario with her father explained above, she spoke about her boyfriend breaking up with her and not being able to or wanting to express herself to him about his actions: "I didn't say anything because I didn't want him to be mad with what I was thinking or feel obligated not to break up with me."

Although Abana is not good at expressing how she feels, she has strong opinions about how people should be treated.

> I try not to think badly about other people because you don't know what kind of person they are. Like... there's this boy at our school and he runs around the school and he wears like this green hat with a clover on it because it's almost St. Patrick's Day. Umm and he has special needs and it's like 'oh my God not a big deal whatever.' ...And then I was sitting there and a whole bunch of people started making fun of him and it was just kind of like that's not fair... I've never talked to him but he could just be like a nice kid and they don't know that.

With the help of her mother, Abana has learned not to focus on what other people may think of her. Although she still feels that her confidence is lacking, especially in expressing herself, she is happy to have grown out of being an awkward grade 8 student to a mature grade 12.

Autumn

Autumn was born and raised locally. She is the youngest of four children in the family and currently lives with her mother and one sister, with whom she has close emotional ties. Her mother often drives her to school and when she is unavailable her grandmother

helps out. When she is not at school she spends time with friends, goes on the computer, or for a walk; she finds "something better to do than homework." She tried a few sports when she was younger such as basketball, volleyball, and boxing but did not stick with them for any length of time.

Autumn finds it hard to describe herself, "I'm not good like at just defining that. I don't know how to explain myself." When she chose a descriptor, her first word was unique. She explained that she is unique because she does not like being normal and likes thinking outside of the box. The need for individuality was a focus for Autumn in talking both about her own life and in describing leadership. "I don't think everyone should be alike, everyone should be their own selves. And... stand out, or fade in, or whatever. Just kind of what your personality is like that makes you that way." Autumn describes her personality as being different everyday.

> For me, umm, one day I will be... uncolourful and just sad in a way and then the next day I'll just be totally happy and like colourful and excited. And then there are some days where I'm just angry and I'm lost and confused. But like I switch everyday. I'm a totally different person everyday. I don't know how to explain it, it's kind of weird.

For Autumn, uniqueness comes from a person's life experiences. "I think that whatever happened in someone's life story kind of makes them their selves." She shared a piece of her personal story talking about her childhood:

> When I was a kid, my brother always used to get in trouble... so much trouble. He got kicked out of like every school in town. And... he would steal cars and all kinds of stuff like that. And I think if it wasn't for him I wouldn't have seen that side of like life. And then my sister... she was always like a toughie and she beat people up in school and that kind of thing. So I got to see that kind of side of life and then like I saw my dad too and he was never really there... When you look back on your childhood you remember your parents and stuff. Well... like looking back and remembering him, all I remember is him lying on the couch. That was about it. So... umm... yeah, that's pretty much my life.

There was sadness in Autumn's voice as she spoke. She told me that her father left their family when she was 10 years old. She expressed how she felt at this time, "I practically just hated myself, period. [...] My dad sort of like was abusive, emotionally and mentally. And I think that's kind of what pushed it on." In response, Autumn closed off contact with her father.

After years of putting herself down, she has found strength. "You know when, you're just sick of like looking at yourself and bringing yourself down... I just kind of got sick of that." In explaining her journey she has come to the following conclusion, "I think my whole life, like if it wasn't for all of the things that happened, because everything happens for a reason, so if it wasn't for those things, I wouldn't be who I am."

Learning About Leadership

Although she found it difficult to describe herself, Autumn found it even harder to explain leadership. Talking about her participation in the study, she explained, "I figured like you wanted somebody who was doing leadership in the school kind of thing [...] I was like, that was *not me at all*." Once a dialogue on leadership was started Autumn spoke about planning, organizing, and being in control. She described a leader as "bossy almost, kind of like telling someone what to do or something like that." Autumn spoke about how everybody should be their own person and did not want to be the person (the leader) to take that away from others. When the interview finished Autumn was not happy with her answers and told me, "I'm definitely gonna go home and look up what leadership means because I have no really like clue what it means."

When we met again she had looked up the meaning of leadership on the internet and had asked her mother, sister, and boyfriend. Autumn gathered new insight from her mother's stories and then applied them to her own experiences with leadership.

> My mom gave me the definition of her being a work leader kind of thing... [At work] you don't have to be a boss ... you could have worked there for like six years or something and know a lot more than somebody who started two years ago... If you didn't know something when you were the two year person you could walk up to the guy who was there for six years and he would probably know what to do, that kind of thing. ... And then she also gave me [the example of] how she was a parent and raised me and my sister and my brother and stuff... I'd call my mom a leader just because she's done so much for me... After my dad left us we didn't have much. And then my mom worked her butt off and.... she [got] us everything that we didn't have before... [Leadership is] just like day to day life, like you lead yourself to do stuff. So like everyone is kind of a leader...

She explained that being a leader is about taking control of your life; making daily decisions about your actions and priorities to lead yourself to a better life.

Autumn: The Student

Autumn has always had a difficult time with school and describes it as boring and not fun. In elementary school she was placed in a program where students would get extra help.

> It was pretty much like a reading program where they were trying to improve someone's reading and they'd like make you read out loud... And it was supposed to help you but it really never did, at all... It was kind of just the way that they taught you... it wasn't like grade four level; it was like grade one... So, it was really stupid. It made you feel dumb... I hated it.

Autumn still struggles with reading as a secondary school student.

> Most people, they can get it done really fast whereas I work slower... I think it was mostly because in elementary school... I wouldn't read and so I'm like *really, really* slow at reading. And I never really practiced or anything like that where most kids would sit there and read like three or four books in a month where as I would take two months to read a book... that kind of deal... I just hate reading.

Autumn entered secondary school following the regular curriculum but struggled through grade eight.

> I couldn't keep up, mostly... It probably didn't help that I didn't do much homework either... I guess it was just really hard for me to concentrate on the teacher and stuff. Like I could always feel myself fade out and not listen or... just get distracted and... you're trying to keep up with all of the work and it's just so stressful.

For grade nine, the school wanted to place her in a program where she would earn a Leaving Certificate at the end of her studies. However, her mother did not agree and Autumn was instead placed in alternate education.

> My sister, she was in the program and then later on my mom found out that you couldn't properly graduate, that you get the [Leaving Certificate]. My mom got really mad because the teacher kind of lied to her, so she wouldn't let me take that program and that's when they suggested the alt program.

Autumn's struggles were multiplied by her involvement with drugs, partying, and skipping school.

> Grade 8, grade 9 and grade 10, I just didn't care, *at all.* I didn't realize that it was *so* important to graduate. I knew it was important, but I just acted like I didn't care *at all*... Grade 10 I kind of slid away and I quit going. And I kind of got into the drug scene, and I was partying too much, and just didn't care. [...] The first time I ever tried drugs I wasn't thinking *at all.* Somebody walked up to me and they're like 'want to try this?' and I was like 'sure.' And... I did it and I thought it was the best thing in my life so I just kept doing it and doing it and doing it. [When I stopped using drugs...] I lost my friend, he died. And I also lost another friend and she went to rehab. So, I figured it wasn't the best thing for me to be doing...

Now Autumn is 18 years old and in grade 12 but has not completed enough credits to graduate. "Oh, I am *so* falling behind. I am supposed to be graduating this year and I still have to do like two years." She has just recently realized the importance of her secondary school education. Autumn reflected, "I didn't realize that it was *so* important to graduate... And now I regret looking back and wasting all that time because now I'm *so* far behind and

I'd do anything to graduate." Autumn's experience in the classroom has also improved in recent years. In contrast to the teachers who made her feel dumb in elementary school, she now has instructors who encourage her progress and urge her to think positively of herself. She emphasized the importance of teachers in making school interesting, focusing on a past science teacher who did experiments for the class and Ms. Hartwell, who she describes as free-spirited.

Although Autumn now really wants to finish her degree, the day of our second interview she had just found out that she may not be able to return to Northdale for a fifth year of studies, known as a Super 12 year, to finish her Dogwood Diploma. At Northdale, senior students who require extra time to complete their studies must get permission from the principal to return. The school counselor first discusses the student's progress with the principal. If the student is not granted permission to return at that point then the student can speak with the principal or a teacher can speak on the student's behalf. The student is asked to explain her behavior and what she can do to move forward. This system is in place to prevent students who are not serious about their work from disrupting their classmates. Autumn admitted that she had been skipping school often but was "going to make the decision now to change and not miss any more school, whether sick or not."

Bridget

Bridget is a talkative and bubbly 17 year old grade 11 student who loves riding horses, snowboarding, and writing poetry. She describes herself as stubborn, not very well organized, silly, weird, and different. Bridget greatly values her uniqueness: "well, everyone is different; there's something different about them right? Can't all be the same that would be

really boring... I want to be different from everybody else. I'm glad I'm different from everybody else." She believes that a person's uniqueness comes from how and where they are raised.

> Everywhere I've lived there's always the city slickers and the country kids... where the country kid loves to get dirty, knows how to be independent... I've been raised to be independent and I've been raised to know how to fix things like a fence, like the important things, I think.... When the city kids know somehow how to be independent I think, but have too many material things around them... A really good example is my brother and I. We grew up in the exact same, similar lifestyle, like the farm, but he was raised from when he was seven in a city and I was raised on a farm since I was like a baby. And the difference is, we have pretty much the exact same personality and our styles are different, like he's more materialistic and I'm more whatever I feel is comfortable. The last time I talked to him he's actually afraid to walk in mud and I believe he has molded himself to the new people in his life where I don't try. [...] I remember going to this basketball game and all of the girls had these fake nails and all these kind of... they just didn't look right to me, like they shouldn't be playing basketball. But I remember walking in looking like I'd just fallen off the turnip truck pretty much and... I think that was my huge impression of how being different is.

The image that stood out to me the most in Bridget's description of herself was the statement, "I see myself as the kid wearing a velvet dress sitting on a pig playing in the mud when I was six." She has a picture of this image and it is a memory that she cherishes. She has lived on farms her entire life and has been riding horses as far back as she can remember. Riding is her passion and she hopes to build a career in the "horsey world" and have a large impact in that arena.

> Since I was three I've had this dream to ride for Canada or do something for Canada with horses. Like ride in the Olympics for show jumping or become the queen, Ms. Rodeo, something like that. I've always wanted to influence the horsey world and I want to be in that, like I can't live without it, it's a drug... It could be minus 40 and I'll have this sudden urge to go ride my horse and I'll be out there. [...] But it's like something that is literally embedded in your soul. You *have* to have it and you can't live without it and you have to keep moving towards what you believe you need. And I believe I need to do something major in the horsey world even if it means being like a top Olympic coach or something I'll get there.

Bridget's Bullies

Bridget has memories of being bullied at school starting in kindergarten. Her bullies attacked her physically and verbally and put her down.

> They make sure you bleed. I have a scar on my eyebrow on this side **points at scar**. Just a little one, it kind of follows [my eyebrow]. Somebody had a ring on and it kind of cut. That was probably the most painful thing… I just remember being pushed into lockers a lot. One time I was walking in flip flops and I'm not the best walking in flip flips and one kid pushed me and I smacked my head on the side, right on the edge of the locker and that, that hurt. […] I remember being chased in grade eight and I jumped over a fence and they kept on going. I don't think they stopped until they caught me. […] He will like throw pennies down my shirt all those things like that. And he'll laugh at me, make fun of me… He used to pull on my hair when it was long and when I cut it all off he's like 'oh you're such a boy, you're such a tomboy, I think you're gay' and stuff like that. […] I remember grade six my best friend who helped, kind of wouldn't let anyone touch me when he was around. But the one day that he was sick there were these kids who kind of ganged up on me, pushed me around, punched me a few times and then took this bucket, I don't know what it was and just poured it on me, and it was like slop. That was… yeah, the smell didn't come out of my hair for like two weeks, it was all rotten food and stuff and that was probably the worst. […] I used to hate myself.

The only escape Bridget found from bullying was through sport; "I never got picked on during the sports though because I think everyone was scared of me when I got my game face on."

> [In elementary school] I was co-captain of the basketball team for a year, captain of the basketball team for a year, umm... co-captain of the soccer team. When I played football I [led] a lot of the workouts… I was like 'ok, pushups'. And, umm… I did a few lessons, teaching people how to ride… And then there was the volleyball team I was captain for three years on that, grades ah, six to eight, that was awesome… I used to be quite the jock.

Although Bridget no longer plays on any school teams, she is still very involved with riding and snowboarding.

The bullying reached a point that provoked Bridget to engage in self-harm. She confessed,

> If it wasn't for my gelding I probably wouldn't be here because of the bullying. If I hadn't had him [my horse] I would probably of like ended up committing suicide or something like that because that's how bad it got. [...] The suicide, umm I had tried a few times, it was cutting. [...] It's been three years since I started getting out of the depression. And then after that it was just, everything was better. I had more self-confidence, I knew what to do, how to handle things better and I believe I'm wholly out of the depression now.

Bridget turned to her love of riding to help her through her depression. "You kind of feel like you have wings and you're invincible and that's what my horses do to me. So that's another great escape. And I always feel better after I visit them." She also found release in crying and turned to her mother for support. She spoke to her parents about being bullied but did not talk to them about her cutting until this school year.

Bridget's family moved just before she started grade eight and she attended high school locally. She was at that school for a year and a half before she was pulled out by her mother.

> When we moved up here in grade eight and... this is where my stupidity kicked in I think... I was at a popular school, where everyone's... rich and stuff. I was like 'well, I'll try to fit in.' I stopped caring about my courses and just cared about people and my status at school. That didn't really work out too well, failed all of my classes, and then started kind of going down the bad road and drugs and alcohol, yeah. And, in grade nine, then I was skipping school one day and the principal found me. That was horrible. And they called my mum. My mum and the principal had a very long conversation about me, three hours in fact, that was insane. She decided to pull me out of the school.

After leaving her first high school, Bridget started home schooling, which she described as lazy and boring. During this time she started dating a guy who asked her to attend his school. When she discussed the possibility with her parents they encouraged her to re-enter the public school system and soon thereafter, Bridget was enrolled in classes at Northdale. She completed several credits through home school but not enough to keep her

advancing a grade level each year. "I got so far behind, I was supposed to be in grade 11 and I was still in grade 9... so that was horrible, and... that is the reason I'm in alt ed." Now, in grade 11, she is still taking home school courses while studying at Northdale in hopes of earning enough credits to graduate next year.

Shortly after Bridget started at Northdale her relationship with her boyfriend ended and later in that semester she started dating a new person. This second relationship has now also come to an end and Bridget has had a difficult time dealing with the break-up.

> I think that was my biggest challenge because we had a really intense relationship where it was like we'd look at each other and could pretty much read each other's mind and the whole parts, we're in sync thing like that, all that first love type of stuff, you know. And... you'll technically never fully get over your first love.

Her relationship was further complicated by what she called her boyfriend's "association with the gangs." She spoke about him dealing drugs and stealing. This side of her boyfriend's life is what eventually pushed her to "make the choice to get him out of [her] life."

Despite dealing with her emotional break-up and continued bullying this school year, Bridget has found happiness. She feels that she is more popular at school and is happy that she is passing courses and getting mostly good grades. Bridget has accepted bullying as part of life: "I don't think bullying stops throughout your life. I think you walk in when you're 80 and it'll be like 'oh, look at you and your crutch' or something like that **laughs**." She explained her recent shift in attitude,

> Last year... I started realizing that I am who I am I can't change anything about myself so let's just make yourself happy. And I started doing that and I started saying 'hey! I'm not that bad I like myself' and I started saying that everyday and it... kind of turned into that... I like myself for who I am and it's what *I* think matters, not

> anybody else or not anybody else's thoughts. Then when I turned 17 I think everything changed I was like 'hey! I'm amazing!' **laughing** I don't know why.

Identifying True Leadership

Leadership is something that Bridget sees and experiences all around her at school, at home, and in magazines. Bridget summarized her vision of leadership by describing a personality. For Bridget, a leader is a particular type of person who is able to step-up and get things done. This person is strong willed, stubborn, determined, and well organized. Bridget feels that she meets this description, although she needs to work on her organizational skills.

> When it comes to certain things, I will take charge. Like, let's say… something to do with horses. I will take charge of that **laughs**. I will be the one to say no, you're doing that wrong, do it this way, this is the proper way, it's safer that way.

Bridget believes the alternate education program creates an opportunity for students to become leaders of their own lives. "Leadership just sounds to me… where you're taking charge of something and… you're showing… or doing stuff and the alt ed program is kind of like you either take charge of your school work or you don't."

Bridget's examples of leadership focused on the actions of her peers, in particular coping with peer pressure to make negative choices. Identifying leaders at school, Bridget spoke about several students.

> One girl who does the leadership [class]… she'd help with the dances and all that stuff, like she'd be in charge of all the… fun stuff? I guess you'd say. […] S, she's the type of girl who will get anything done. You give her a project and it will be done like the next day, she's incredible for that. And there's another girl, she's also in leadership and is the kind of girl that will take charge of anything. […] My best friend C, she's taking peer tutoring and… I guess you can say that's a form of leadership. And she's also the kind of girl that you give her a project or something and she'd be able to fix it, or do it… have it done. And… there's a few other people...

For Bridget, leadership is about choices and role modeling. Using the example of being offered drugs, Bridget believes,

> A true leader would be like, 'well, this is stupid, I don't want to do this anymore, let's go, you know... go for a run as an example.' That's healthy, you're not... making your brain waves go... wack... I think that if you demonstrate being a leader, others will follow that and become their own leader.

She applied this same philosophy to dealing with bullies and school fights.

> I remember my friends laughing at this kid that was getting beat up and I couldn't take it because it hit close to home so I broke it up... [Another time] I had like this intuition that something bad was going to happen... and I kind of knew, and I... got the kid away from this guy who was 'I'm going to hurt you' and all that type of stuff. [...] This kid was very grateful and that made my day and it made me feel good that I pretty much saved somebody from getting humiliated and beat up. [...] I stood up to somebody when they were... bullying somebody and I stopped it so that person wouldn't get hurt anymore and I think that's a form of... being a leader... I think you're showing people what to do for the right thing not to stand there and laugh, because that's what everyone was doing. There were probably 20 kids around just laughing at this kid who's going to get beat up and it was really sad.

Bridget used the same example to describe how leadership can be negative.

> Let's say... you were the leader and you needed to find people who would help you do something bad, like... steal a car. [...] It could be... 'do you want to buy some pot?' [...] You have that gang of people who decide 'hey, this is fun; this is cool, because this person is doing it'. They're being... you're being a leader in a negative way.

Outside of school, Bridget sees her mother as the best example of leadership. She has a close relationship with her mother and they share daily talks over the long commute into town for school and work.

> My dad got very sick when I was quite young... He pretty much just laid in bed. It was like something in his mind snapped and he kind of just went downhill and he got really ill. [...] She took care of three kids and worked three jobs... and was there by his side through like everything and they are still married. [...] To take charge of her life, and help somebody, and prove everybody else wrong... when everyone said 'oh you're never going to get through this' and everyone else just kind of turned their backs on them. I think that's a true leader. [...] I think when I use the word true

> leader it means how my mum took care of everybody and put everybody else in front of her and tried to make them better and raised three kids when she was having a tough time and no one else would back her up.

Bridget found further examples of people taking leadership roles by overcoming obstacles and role modeling success in magazines and in the news.

> If you've ever... read any magazines or articles about someone who has taken leadership... they say like they can take charge of pretty much anything and say they have this good sense of security and... of themselves and they can just be like 'I can do this,' 'we can get this done' type of thing. [...] Some of the horsey magazines [talk about] people who have really proven themselves and taken charge of their own life and some of them were sports magazines and Oprah... There was a girl in the Oprah magazine... she was 8 and she started doing meth... she was drinking and everything. And when she got to 13 she decided 'what was she doing with her life?' and she turned her whole life around and now she's like this top college student and it's like how she changed and everything. [...] She shows other people that you can change.

Bridget did not have a hard time giving examples of when she acted as a leader but she was not very confident that other people would see her as such. She believes that her mother and close friend would say that she is a leader and that her peers do not know her well enough to make the same claim. Bridget has an interest in leadership development programming but it is not something that she considered a possibility prior to participating in this study. She has big aspirations for the future and has already created a "bucket list" that includes challenges such as climbing Mount Everest. She plans to start her adventures by attending college to become a farrier and trainer for horses. She spoke passionately about wanting to ride her horse across Canada to raise money in support of breast cancer, in honor of a close family friend. I was inspired by her ideas and look forward to one day hearing about her cross-country ride on the news.

Jordan

Jordan is a 16 year old woman born and raised locally. Her life experiences are closely tied to her family. Jordan is an only child but has lots of family locally that she interacts with. Jordan's mother left her family home in a small community in Northern British Columbia when she was only 13 years old. She did not finish secondary school and gave birth to her daughter at age 21. In response to her past, she has acted as what Jordan describes as an overprotective parent and the relationship between mother and daughter has suffered as a result.

> My mom, I *used* to have a good relationship with. [...] My mum's just... paranoid. My mum moved out when she was 13 and she lived with friends... [...] My mom turned out to be like kind of an alcoholic type person... I wouldn't want to grow up [where she did] because her family's mostly heavy drinkers and stuff. [...] So she just doesn't want me growing up like she did and I'm *nothing* like my mom, *nothing*. And she thinks I'm everything like her, but really I'm not. [...] In grade seven my mom still walked me to school and my school, you could see it from my backyard and my mom literally walked me to school... [At] our family reunion, my older cousin decided to tell my mom that she's being childish by walking me to school and that's when my mum started letting me go. Now she's ok but I have to sometimes you know, nudge her a bit to actually get the hint that I need to be let go. Cause I'm almost 17, I'm almost graduated, I'm not going to be at home my whole life. [...] My mom doesn't believe the facts that I'm *right* sometimes and so she's always trying to blame things on me that shouldn't be blamed on me... Hate is a strong word but dislike involves me and my mom *a lot*... When I'm around her I choke like I get scared to say stuff to her...

Jordan sees herself as self-conscious and not social, both qualities she attributes to being made fun of a lot since elementary school. She remembers her mother walking her to school when her peers were allowed to go on their own as an initial source of being teased and bullied at school. She does not enjoy group work and has a fear of public speaking. She spoke about being beat up on several occasions and her frustration in dealing with people talking behind her back and name calling.

> If somebody says something bad about me I'm obviously going to stick up for myself which means I'm going to have *a lot* to say. Because when I get called a slut, that word... they do not know what that word actually means. People call you a slut for the way you dress, for the way you talk, for that stuff. That's not what 'slut' is. A slut is for people who are sleeping around with other people. They don't know who I sleep with and who I don't sleep with. Like that word is overused in high school, it's... derogatory.

Jordan's relationship with her father is very different. Her father works in the forestry industry as a buckerman.

> He works on a processor... it takes off all of the limbs and [makes them a certain length] so they can log them out... He goes in the bush at like three in the morning and comes home at like seven at night. So, he's got some pretty long hours.

Jordan shares a love of sport with her father; she especially loves ice sports such as hockey and ringette. She is a self described dare devil using the example of trying stunts with her father while snowmobiling.

> We like to try stunts that we know we can't do. Like we built this jump that was 15 feet high and 20 feet long. We tried to jump it; it didn't work very well though. [...] [One day about four years ago] my dad went out snowmobiling and flew off a 150 foot cliff and broke a T5 in his back and then ended up in the hospital for a week... [now] he's got plates in his arms. [...] I cried like a baby when I found out he was in the hospital. Cause if I was to lose my dad I don't know what I'd do... I don't know if I could live without my dad.

Although Jordan enjoys being active she is somewhat limited by physical conditions such as asthma, bad knees, and a back injury. She also deals with hearing loss in one ear:

> When I was about between the ages 5 to 8 I got really sick and it ended up infecting my ear drums so now I have hearing loss in my left ear. So I cannot hear at all in that ear. I was supposed to get a hearing aid when I was... 9 or 10 but throughout those years that I didn't take antibiotics or anything it messed up my ear drums so bad that even if I was to get a hearing aid it wouldn't... it would just give me 15% of my hearing back and that won't even make me hear anything.

Jordan's father is still a protective parent. "He doesn't even like me driving around with friends yet. And I'm almost 17. I'm like, come on, I'm going to be driving soon!" However, he has given Jordan the freedom she did not find with her mother.

> At the age of 5 my dad took me camping just me and him and that's when I decided that I needed my dad more than I needed my mum cause my mum was too protective and too... keeping me in a bubble more than letting me roam around. [...] I decided that I was going to be a big daddy's girl...

She looks up to him as an example of leadership. "My dad's my leader... he helps me out in life and he leads me in the right direction..."

The relationship between Jordan's parents is full of tension and it is a constant source of stress and worry for Jordan.

> They fight a lot, like *a lot*, they don't get along very well... When I played baseball my dad decided that he was going to leave my baseball game early and we went home and found a note on our table saying that he was leaving my mom. And then it just, I didn't know what to do because losing my dad is like losing everything because them being together is pretty much what's holding the family together type thing. If my dad was to leave I don't know what I'd do cause I couldn't live with my dad and I couldn't live with my mom cause my dad would fight about it and my mom would fight about it, who lives with who and who gets who on the weekend and stuff. I just wouldn't be able to do it so I told them if they got divorced that I'd live with my grandparents and that's what pretty much made my dad come home. My dad came home and he pretty much said that umm... the only reason he is staying is because of me.

Jordan's grandparents have also played a large role in her life. "I was mostly with my grandparents for some time [as a child] because I liked spending more time with them than I did my parents." Jordan had a recent fight with her grandfather where she stopped speaking with him.

> This year my grandpa decided that he was going to lose his trust with me. Well, *I* decided I guess that he was going to lose his trust with me because he said something to me and that really, really upset me. And if I get really upset by something or something really makes me mad, it takes a while to get [my] trust back, especially my

> grandpa because he's been there my whole life. He shouldn't say things like that just because he's stubborn like that doesn't mean he can say things like that. I asked him to go to the rodeo with me and that was in October and he said yeah that he'd go and I was like 'ok, well it comes to town on this day' and he's like 'oh, I won't go to that.' I was like 'why?' He's like 'well why don't you just put up a sign that says grandpa's wrong and everybody's right and that everyone just hates grandpa and everybody loves everybody else except for grandpa and grandpa should just die'. I'm like 'you know what? You're taking things way too far.' And he's like 'yeah, well you're just a stubborn c-u-n-t.' I'm like are you kidding me!? You actually just said that to your granddaughter? I was like, yeah no peace. So I went home and I didn't talk to my grandpa for four months and then he decided he was going to call me and I ignored his call and ignored his call... now I talk to my grandpa but I don't talk to my grandpa at the same time.

Jordan generally describes herself as someone who is very outgoing, open, and loud. Despite this, she tends to keep her emotions to herself and admits that she has a hard time reaching out for help and being open with people.

> I beat myself up a lot for things that I do. I stay, I keep myself in a bubble if I do something wrong, I keep my emotions in and I don't talk to people very well. I am more of the... keeping things really, really, really, deep down inside until something actually breaks it and then that's when I explode. And when I explode it's not very pretty cause I get very mad, very mad.

Jordan recognizes that hiding her feelings and not reaching out for help affects her ability to deal with problems and decisions that she faces.

> I don't have confidence very much in myself at all because when it comes to problem solving or decision making I suck. I just go to the... like I do think about what could happen and what couldn't happen but I still just jump into it and just do it, I don't... I'm bad when it comes to problem solving and decision making because I don't really think of the consequences until after it's done and over with.... Cause when I get stressed or when I get in a situation I don't talk to anybody about it, I like keeping my feelings in but then when something really bad happens I just lose it... so it's probably not the best thing to do.

When she does reach out to someone for help, her grandmother is one of the people she is willing to talk to.

> I've always been close to my grandma cause my grandma understands me more than anything. I don't know why but I can go to her about more things than I can go to my own mum about. I think it's cause she has more experience with everything and she understands…

Jordan shared a difficult situation she had dealt with the year prior. She had chosen to have sex with a guy while drunk and afterwards was scared that she was pregnant. She was 16 at the time and had several concerns. She wanted to take the morning after pill but was not sure how to get it; she needed to know if she was actually pregnant and did not have the money to buy a pregnancy test; and finally, she needed to choose someone to confide in to help her deal with the situation. She first went to a teacher whom she trusted but needed a family member to take her to the doctor so that she could get the pill and a pregnancy test. Approaching her family was her biggest concern and she regrets going to her grandmother for help but was relieved to learn that she was not pregnant and happy that the whole thing had ended.

> I didn't know what to do cause I thought about telling my mom and I tried telling my dad but every time I tried to tell them I choked. I literally, I just couldn't get it out… I ended up having to tell my grandma and… pretty much she crapped her pants when I told her, she looked so scared she didn't know what to do. She just like looked at me… She thought I was calling her to come home sick **laughs** so when she came and picked me up there was a different story there. Yeah, me and my grandma are still tight but she still thinks I made the worst decision of my life… So… if I could go back in time I wouldn't tell her, I really wouldn't. I would have just kept with what I was doing. […] Not telling anybody, just figuring out if I am or if I'm not… Saving up for my own pregnancy test. Pretty much that, it was a dumb mistake but life goes on. Let's just not let that happen again.

Faced with the death of her uncle approximately four years ago, Jordan found additional ways to express her emotions using creative writing. "I've done it ever since probably since my uncle passed away… I write poetry, I write songs…" She saw this uncle as a further example of leadership. "[He was a leader] because he was my dad's best friend…

he was always with him and he would know everything [going on in my life] because my dad would tell him. So he'd have an opinion about it..." Jordan also took up smoking at this time.

> When I first tried it that was when my uncle passed away. [...] Both my parents smoke too... growing up around it, being around it all of the time. [...] I tried it the first time and it was like 'ok, well this relieves stress; I go through a lot of that.' [...] I'm quitting smoking [now]... It makes your teeth go yellow and it rots your teeth and I just learned about that in Planning class. Like I knew about it but I didn't actually realize that it did it that bad. We seen pictures, it was horrible, it's so gross. [...] My cousin has been smoking for probably a year longer than I have and both of his front teeth are like almost gone. I'm like... 'ok.

Jordan has struggled through school but has learned the importance of finishing secondary school watching her cousins getting kicked out of school and turning to drugs.

> Most of my family didn't graduate... out of all of our grandchildren there's... three girls and three boys on of my dad's side....The only one who graduated is the 18 year old who graduated last year, I'm graduating next year, and the 7 year old will graduate when she graduates, which is... years. But all three of us girls are going to be graduating, the guys didn't graduate. I'm like are you kidding me? My cousin D got kicked out of school in grade 7, [he went back in grade 10] and he got expelled within the first two weeks. L dropped out of school because he thought he had a rugby career. [...] My cousin K just got expelled from this school because he was selling weed at school. I'm like are you dumb? Like you're obviously going to get caught, like why do it in the first place. It's pretty stupid, I don't know. [...] But since he grew up [with his parents] always fighting and stuff and then drinking and doing drugs and stuff so he grew up that way and now he's like that. He likes to smoke pot, he likes to drink all the time, he likes to do stupid stuff and he just, he didn't care about school. He thought he could have a career after. But really he can't. [...] If you want to work full time now you have to have a grade 12 education to work at *McDonalds*! I was like, that's insane! [...] Us girls grew up wanting to do something in our life so we had to graduate and we knew we did.

Jordan finds school boring, particularly anything related to history; "why do you need to learn about stuff that happened in the past when it's not really going to happen now?" As for other subjects such as science, she thinks she would enjoy them if she could find a way to deal with the large amount of information that she is required to learn.

> I like learning about it but I don't because it's too much information to take in at one time. Like you have to learn all of this stuff in the matter of like a week and then you have to do the unit test and then you have to remember all of the stuff that you learned. I'm like ok, this isn't working.

Jordan spent her first year of secondary school in a program leading towards a Leaving Certificate. Once her parents realized that she could not properly graduate through this program they demanded a change. She was then placed in regular classes the following year to repeat grade eight. She struggled to keep up with the school work and it was at this point she joined the alternate education program; "Grade 8 I was in Skills, grade 9 I had to redo those courses and I failed them and then grade 10 is when they put me in the alt."

> Alternate, it helps me a lot because you work at your own pace and you don't have to listen to the teacher speak about the lesson. So me reading the questions and doing the lessons on my own pretty much helps me more than actually being in a real classroom.

She expressed concern about her current level of reading and writing and a desire to go back in time and change her education.

> Because now I'm not as smart as I really should be I guess you could say. Cause I went to elementary schools that didn't teach me anything, I don't know how to hand write. I barely know how to read like big, big words; I have to actually stop and sound them out and put them in like little tiny sections. And then… I don't know, I'd just like to change my education.

Jordan admitted that she had found one author that she enjoyed reading who writes romance novels. Although she would like to improve in these areas, it is not something that she is currently actively working on.

Leading in the Right Direction

In addition to her father and uncle, Jordan identified one of her teachers as a leader. "She's the most beautifullest teacher, most outgoing, always has a smile on her face, always

is happy… I *just* met her in September too but we connected pretty fast." Jordan also spoke passionately about a guest speaker who had presented at Northdale. Jackson Katz is an anti-sexist male activist who works to prevent gender violence through the education of men and boys (Katz, 2009). When asked if Mr. Katz is a leader Jordan responded, "yes, ah, yeah, very, very much so because he's trying to lead people in the right direction instead of leading them into abuse." When asked to further explain the right direction Jordan talked about staying away from drugs, gaining life experience, having a plan, and making decisions that will not be regretted later.

> If somebody's trying to peer pressure you, you should be the bigger person and walk away because maybe you can be the leader and other people would follow *you* to stay out of that situation, out of the bad situation. So somebody who can lead people away from harm or something and not be the follower. […] [Or] say I was to go to a counselor and talk about my feelings or something that I did wrong or that I did right and they would explain their opinion and could possibly help *you* think what you did wrong or… tell you a kind of direction or to do better in the next decision that you make or something… They're helping you so they're being the bigger person instead of just telling you 'you can't do that, you did that wrong, you shouldn't have done that.' […] So, that's pretty much what a leader is to me…

Jordan participated in the YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada program two years in a row. She was invited to participate by a family friend, who she referred to as a cousin. She did not consider her involvement as being associated with leadership prior to the interview but through our discussion decided that it would count as a leadership development program. This program partners groups of 10 to 30 participants between the ages 12 and 17 at YMCA locations in two different Canadian cities. The two groups are connected in advance and the students get a pen/email pal to speak to before the exchange. Planning meetings are also held to organize activities for the hosting period. Each group spends approximately one week in their host city. Program objectives as outlined by the YMCA include education, community

building, strengthening Canadian identity, and the development of leadership skills (YMCA of Greater Toronto, n.d.). Jordan's first exchange brought her to a reserve in Ontario (she could not remember the exact location) and the second to downtown Toronto. Jordan thought the program was a "very fun experience," jokingly teasing me, "hint why I went twice."

Jordan describes herself as a leader when she acting as a peer tutor, an assistant baseball coach, and a skating instructor. When asked if her work in all of these areas makes her a leader in general she responded, "no, only when I'm doing that thing." When asked about her desire to be called a leader by others she was torn. She wanted to say yes, as she would like to lead herself and others successfully in the right direction. However, she did not want to take on the responsibility that comes with being a leader.

> If people think of you as a leader [it] gives you pressure. Just makes me feel pressured if that was actually to happen with me and I don't like being under pressure at all. So I guess I don't know, possibly but probably not.

Jordan does not think that other people see her as a leader, a response she gave with a laugh. She explained that at Northdale people would not call her a leader because she is not social; "I just, ever since elementary school I've been made fun of too much to actually be able to be social." Jordan enjoys working with young children and helping with teaching but does not like being the main person in charge. She is currently interested in pursuing a career in hair dressing once she finishes school but is still learning about the different opportunities available to her.

Navaeh

Navaeh describes herself as a smiley chatterbox. She grew up in a small community in Northern British Columbia with her parents and younger sister. In elementary school she

was a "preppy." "I wore pink all the time and I was good in school, I had a boyfriend **ha**." She was involved with the Friendship Centre's youth programming at that time and played on the school's volleyball team.

> I used to be part of the kids group... we'd do crafts and stuff... then when I was old enough I worked with the teen group. [...] We'd have movie nights and stuff like that and it was on *all* weekend... it kept the kids out of trouble... We'd go there after school and they provided snacks and stuff for free, like subs. And umm it was basically a whole community thing... it was volunteer. [...] [The Friendship Centre] had their own building in town and if there were any kids who lived out on the reserve... if they needed a ride out or if we needed anything then we could call [the volunteers] and they'd help us out... They had two vehicles... and cell phones and stuff like that. [...] I was one of the four leaders... We'd meet up every... Thursday I think it was and she'd take us out wherever we wanted to go eat and we'd discuss activities and we'd find a way to raise money... Like one time we had a *big* barbeque and baking sale... we made *a lot* of money and we decided to go skiing and snowboarding so it was good, it was fun.

Just before Navaeh started high school, her parents decided to move the family to a larger city so that they could have a better life. Navaeh explained that where she was living is, "such a small town that they don't really have anything going on except for the movies or the pool so now all [my friends there] do is drink and all that stuff. And it's pretty bad." She admitted to first trying marijuana in her hometown and that being part of her parents' reason for the move. "I tried it once so I thought that was unfair because every kid was going to try it... so I thought it shouldn't be a big deal if I wasn't going to do it."

Navaeh was upset about leaving her friends, boyfriend, and activities behind. At her new school she acted like a "gangster" by the way she dressed and the tough attitude she assumed. "[I] put off an image... don't want to be your friend, I don't want nothing. [...] I thought if I acted bad that [my parents would] think it was a bad choice and we would move back." Naveah described her routine in grade eight and nine as "smoke up in the morning

and I'd be stoned all day till lunch and then I'd go eat in my Foods class. And then it was pretty much just like… just kicking back pretty much." Navaeh felt that she could get away with skipping school, being late, and not doing her work and took advantage of that leniency. "It's not that I couldn't do the work it's just that I didn't want to do it and I could get away with it. So I just didn't do it." Struggling in math, Navaeh was put into a special program that consisted of booklets and easier work. "And umm I went through that and I was getting bored with the work because I could do it so I got put into alternate [in grade 9]." The alternate education teacher, Mr. Daniels approached her personally and made her want to try the program. In the following year he became a source of support for Navaeh. "He helped me *a lot* and we worked through and did tests and he wanted me in his class and he just made everything make sense and just like helped me through it."

Navaeh's marijuana use continued for approximately four years. She admitted to becoming dependent on it to help deal with the move between cities and life's problems in general.

> I smoked weed because I wanted to because the way it made me feel and when it came down to it I had to choose a life over weed cause the way weed makes you feel when you're high everything's easy, everything comes easy to you. […] I noticed that when I was high and when I did smoke lots of weed I couldn't get over [the move] like that was my… depression or something I guess is what they called it. And I never could get over it, like the only thing that could take it away at the same time was smoking weed so that was my biggest problem and I had a hard time quitting.

Navaeh spoke about two main influences that helped her eventually quit. The first was the tragic loss of two grade eight classmates and friends.

> We went out by the field with my friend that I told you about and ah we smoked weed and I was supposed to hang out with him later that day but I couldn't. And then it was the weekend and he wanted me to hang out with him because his birthday was on Monday so he wanted me to go out with him but I didn't. And I just gave him a

> hug and I left. And then come Monday umm the teacher came in and she said that he passed away and then I thought about it and I was like… he's so young, I mean grade eight, I was like that's sad. […] They were drinking and driving. And I also had two other friends in there and his girlfriend died with him. And my other friend she was really badly hurt but she survived.[…] Umm… actually that day I'm not going to lie, I did go smoke weed and I was really upset and I didn't know what to do. And I kind of like from then I kind of quit caring. And then one day I just like randomly thought about this. I was like he wouldn't want me to be doing this if he just like passed away he'd be like wanting me to change...

Navaeh's parents were also a key influence in her struggle with marijuana. Both of her parents have struggled with substances and were able to help her understand the consequences of her choices and to help her recognize the great person that she is.

> There was always someone who showed me different ways that I could go. Like my mom and my dad they both had different stories to go along with their backgrounds so it was kind of like if I *did* go into drugs and stuff I saw how that worked out and if I do like see places where I could go to. […] My mom wasn't, she pretty much like ran away all of the time and drank and all of that stuff, she used to be a bully **ha**. And my dad was stealing cars when he was 12 and my dad pretty much spent his life in jail and… they just told me a bunch of stories and how it's not a good life style and how they're lucky to be where they are cause we have a really nice house and stuff and they don't have their education. And if it wasn't pretty much for my dad getting an auto body job that we wouldn't have nothing like that so… yeah. I've got lots of people to look up to.

Navaeh realized that she could still have fun without marijuana and made the decision to quit. "I thought about it and I was like 'I like it but it's not helping it's making everything worse.' So I pretty much had to choose my family and friends over it and I chose my family and friends."

Navaeh gained confidence to help her quit using marijuana from her mother's story. "I looked at my mom because she quit smoking weed for us. And I knew if she could do it, I could do it so that gave me the confidence to actually like want to do it and so I did." Navaeh finds further confidence to deal with her problems by reminding herself that other people

have larger struggles. "I thought about like other people who don't have as much as I do, people who have situations way worse than I do and then it just like makes me want to try for them I guess kind of." Her mother also gave her the freedom to make her choice by providing information but not demanding Navaeh to quit.

> My mom gave me the choice of if I'm going to smoke weed or not… She sat me down and she said 'are you going to keep on smoking weed?... If I said 'yeah' I [didn't] know what she'd say, if she'd freak out or if I said 'no.' So I just said 'I don't know' and she explained it to me and that kind of made things easier cause I got to hear a bunch of different stories of if I did smoke weed of if I didn't how my life [would] change.

Navaeh felt that her parents and their stories also served as the resources that she needed to deal with her situation. Naveh expressed a confidence in her ability to face this or any other decisions or problems that came her way.

> Whichever problem that comes it can be solved because problems just don't come out of mid air they have to be formed. So it would be my fault and it's my decision if I want to change it or not. And with the freedom it's my choice so it's either I fix it or I let it evolve to something bigger and bigger so if that happened I'd try to fix it and I'd just work through it. I don't know I'd just get through it cause I know I can if I just keep on going, so yeah.

Navaeh is now a 16 year old grade 11 student and has accepted her parent's decision to move between cities, admitting "they quit everything for us to move up here to have a better life and it *has* been better… so yeah, I think it was the right choice." Navaeh has abandoned her "gangster" image and sees herself as belonging to all of the student groups and none at the same time. "I am who I am, I'm not who everyone else thinks I am. Like they don't categorize me I'm just all over the place." She admits that her peers may see her differently, "everyone thinks of me as a prep because I'm always smiling and stuff." She

feels good about her current image, "it's good just to walk down the hallway and have someone 'Hi Navaeh!' and 'Hi Navaeh!' So yeah, I like who I am."

At school, she appreciates that she is able to work at her own pace in the alternate program but is still having a hard time keeping up with her work, "sometimes that's kind of a setback cause you can be like ok I don't feel like doing nothing." Despite her struggles, she is determined to finish school. When asked about the possibility of not completing secondary school, she exclaimed, "Oh, no, I have to finish high school!"

Outside of school hours Navaeh leads an active social life with family and friends, helps out at home, and watches over her younger sister. She takes advantage of school and community events such as attending Northdale's spring fling dance and local hockey tournaments. She is interested in getting involved with more organized groups or activities but does not feel that she has time to do so until after she finishes secondary school. She believes that she would prioritize those activities ahead of school and fall farther behind with her school work. She explained that she was able to balance multiple activities in elementary school because she was caught up with her course work, whereas she is currently making up credits from previous grade levels. She also placed blame on her extended marijuana use for her current inactivity; "I'm still like getting active again cause when you smoke lots of weed you kind of get in this depression [...] You feel so blah and it's like you get lazy and that's like how I got. I quit everything."

She is anxious to finish school and start working so that she can start helping in the community. She hopes to work with teenagers but has not yet decided in what capacity.

> I *really* want to be a career worker umm for teen and youth. [...] I looked into it and there's a bunch of different things I could work in. [...]. I think I'd just like get used

> to working and then I don't know, talk about [college then]... but umm I think right now I should try and work with the Friendship Centre again and see where that goes. [...] With my friends, some of their families aren't really there for them like they've chosen drugs over them. And it's like really hard because they're stuck living with people who party a lot and stuff like that. And it's just kind of sad and most of them just want to give up in school and I'm like 'no.' I was like 'you have to keep trying.' So I don't know, I don't know, it's hard. [...] I don't know exactly what I *want* to do. I think being a counselor it'd be kind of hard because you can't let your emotions get involved with your counseling. And it'd be kind of hard to hear everyone else's stories and still not be able to talk about it later... I just know that I want to work with teenagers and... helping out.

Leading by Helping

For Navaeh, a leader is someone "that you want to look up to and who you trust and who you feel comfortable around and talking to and someone who's really out there and like always smiling, and happy." Furthermore, a leader wants to be a part of whatever is going on and generally willing to help. Identifying leaders at school, Navaeh spoke about different teachers who she has felt comfortable confiding in and who have helped her to reach her goals.

> Ms. Sabina is a really good person... I feel comfortable being around her and talking with her and stuff like that. Umm same with Mr. Scott, I think... he *is* hard but like he really cares. And I've talked to him a couple of times and he is a really good teacher.... And Mr. Daniels of course, he just really cares and he is a fun person too. [...] Ms. Louis... she is a *really* good teacher... in grade eight she's the only one that I pretty much opened up to.... she told the whole class how like, how much we've changed and that she really appreciates us and knows where we're going... And that like *really* felt good to see that she cared about us.

Outside of school, Navaeh sees her mother as a good example of leadership. She spoke about her mother's strength in quitting marijuana, cleaning up her life, and helping her family get to where they are today. She also focused on her mother's caring personality.

> My mom is just like a *really* caring person... There was this girl who, passed away and her family was raising money to put... a bench or something... up in the parks with her name on it so her family could go up there and visit her or something. And

> my mom got into that and really emotionally attached and it was really good, they ended up getting it and they still keep in touch, so… I don't know she just looks for any way to help.

When initially asked whether she was a leader, Navaeh explained how her sister's friends look up to her and go to her for help. She implied that she was a leader by describing the qualities of a leader and then agreeing the description fit her as well. Navaeh told me that she wants to be a leader. The attraction for her is about helping; "It feels good helping someone else cause at the same time it's also helping you." Navaeh feels that students from different categories or social cliques, for example the drug clique (stoners) the athletes (jocks), the studious (preps), all feel comfortable confiding in her: "I've been through that side and that side and that side and I've just got a bunch of different backgrounds." Navaeh enjoys helping other people and is happy that her peers think to go to her for advice and support. She does not actively seek out opportunities to lead or to help, but is happy when someone invites her to take on a leadership role; "it's just more experience like in situations I could learn more and then I could offer more to those I help."

V. ANALYSIS

To answer the two main research questions asked in this study, I have first explored the seven guiding questions that I identified in Chapter I. The information revealed by the guiding questions offers both insight and context for the research questions. For each question, I have used a combination of the participants' own words, my interpretations and thoughts, and research from relevant fields to present the major themes that emerged from the participants' experiences as a group in my content analysis.

Student Experience in Alternate Education at Northdale Secondary School

My first guiding question looked at the experiences of students in alternate education. In this section, I present the major themes that emerged revealing why the students entered the alternate education program, what that transition looked like, and their current experiences with the program.

Why Alternate Education?

Northdale's alternate education program "allows the student who may have had problems in grade eight or grade nine for whatever reason, attendance, anything, to get back on track" (Scott). A combination of risk factors, risky behaviors, and struggles with academics have brought the participants into Northdale's alternate program.

At-risk. The students in the program are what Ms. Hartwell described as "disenfranchised, marginalized, at risk, or fully immersed in a plethora of risky endeavors" (Hartwell, 2007). When asked to expand on her conception of marginalized youth, Ms. Hartwell described them as "on the fringes" and "not taken seriously (except when something goes wrong)." However they are also the youth that define cool because of their

existence on the margins, as outlined in Klein's (2000) description of ghetto cool influencing brand marketing. These are youth that struggle with "not really buying into the status quo" while simultaneously yearning to "belong and have the *normal* high school experience" (Hartwell, personal communication, March 23, 2009).

Reflecting on where the students go when they leave Northdale's alternate education program, some with a secondary school diploma and others without, Ms. Hartwell shared,

> They end up going to community programs - community alternative programs, or they can finish up at the college or get a GED, General Education Degree, umm... various other outlets. And for some of them this is it, they just stop and end up slinging hamburgers, and getting pregnant, and/or selling drugs... I have seen some incredible things. Some have gotten their Master's degree, travel the world, do fabulous things, and be empathetic, and compassionate citizens.

Engaging in risky behavior. During my period of classroom observation I heard the students discuss some of these risky behaviors. One student spoke to a friend about solving a problem at his workplace by bullying his coworker in an attempt to make him quit. Another student spoke to me directly about a weekend of heavy drinking, crashing vehicles, body piercing, and stunts such as jumping from roofs. Ms. Hartwell explained,

> Often in alternate ed we have students who have drug related issues, alcoholism issues, addiction issues of all sorts. Uh, we have issues of violence, we have issues with bullying, all of those things which again come back to a person's view of themselves and self-esteem... and sometimes it's just the way that life has gone.

The interviews revealed a number of additional issues the participants were involved in or had dealt with, including substance abuse and addition, depression and suicide, loss and grief, sex and pregnancy, emotionally abusive relationships, and financial difficulties. All of the participants spoke about using either drugs or alcohol. Some have used these substances for an extended period of time and others more as experimentation. Navaeh admitted to using

marijuana for approximately four years and being stoned most of the time, even when in class. Autumn said that she "kind of got into the drug scene" and Abana spoke about consuming alcohol everyday with her friends over one summer. Jordan spoke about it in passing, "drug use… I've been there done that but people in the future don't need to do it." Bridget explained how she "started kind of going down the bad road and drugs and alcohol…" The students also spoke about frequent partying and skipping school. For most of the participants, these actions were part of a "bad road" from their past and not a focus of their current lives. The students discussed engaging in these risky behaviors as contributing to falling behind with their academics and the subsequent transition to the alternate program.

Struggling in the regular classroom. "Often some of the students that have gotten into our program, they have not had much success with school, and school is an abysmal place for them, and alternate is kind of like the last chance hotel" (Hartwell). The students discussed a number of challenges they have faced as learners in the regular secondary classroom. They shared their negative experiences with school including difficulties with following lectures, finding motivation, meeting deadlines, reading, and learning style.

Difficulty following lectures. The students' largest collective concern was keeping up with classroom lectures and the amount of information delivered in them. Abana expressed her frustration with not understanding parts of the lecture and then not being able to properly address her concerns, "they'd be giving a lecture so I'd have to wait and then… I don't know… and then if I didn't get it then I wouldn't do my homework…" She faced further obstacles when she did speak up and asked for help, "if you don't understand what happened and you ask her what you're supposed to do, she'll be like *(in a harsh tone)* 'well, you should

have been paying attention.' It's like, 'well... I was." Jordan, Autumn, and Navaeh also spoke about not being able to digest all of the information asked of them. For Jordan dealing with the sheer amount of information was a struggle. Autumn and Navaeh both found it hard to concentrate. "I'm having a hard time with decimals... [They] used to be so easy but I just forget it... Everyone says that I can do it... I just have to keep my mind focused and not get distracted so easy" (Navaeh). Autumn felt defeated, expressing "all the teachers that I ever had kind of make you feel like you're almost retarded or something." Bridget was the only student not to share similar concerns about the regular classroom. This may be partially contributed to the limited amount of time she has spent in the regular secondary classroom environment, as most of her secondary schooling has been at home.

School is not enjoyable. The second most common complaint was that school was not enjoyable or that it was "boring." Autumn focused on teachers; "I hate boring teachers that wear suits everyday and talk about boring stuff." Jordan spoke about the course material; "It's boring. And I think Social Studies is pointless. I don't think that you need to learn about the history." During Bridget's first semester at Northdale she was put into another program, which she did not enjoy at all and thought "it was kind of stupid." Autumn did not hold any hope for her school experience improving, "I think school's boring. There's not much you can do to make it fun. I guess..."

The stress of deadlines. Autumn and Abana both spoke about the stress and frustration they experienced from being timed and pushed to meet deadlines.

> Once you get into your regular electives it's fun but at the same time it's like here's 'oh, here's your due date, you have to get it done' kind of deal. So, it's... more stressful (Autumn). It's frustrating when I'm being timed on stuff. And... like my Art

> teacher is like 'you have to have this done by Monday' but in alternate ed it's like... I can just have it done whenever I want as long as I'm [working] (Abana).

Difficulty with reading. Jordan and Autumn spoke about having low levels of reading, blaming their elementary school educations. Now they struggle with reading and do not enjoy it. Jordan admitted that she had found one author that she enjoyed reading who wrote about "love, romance, and broken hearts." If she is not interested in the book she will not read it. When asked if there was anything she enjoyed reading, Autumn responded, "*Not at all*, I just hate reading."

Desire for active learning strategies. Abana thought her struggles in the regular classroom were rooted in differences in learning style. "My Spanish teacher will write stuff on the board, sing us songs, like kindergarten and I think I learn better that way." Jordan expressed similar feelings, "I learn by doodling, coloring, pictures, and oral speaking." They felt that these active learning strategies were not ones offered to them in the regular classroom. Active learning encompasses "anything that students do in a classroom other than merely passively listening to an instructor's lecture" (Paulson & Faust, 2008). Gardner and Hatch (1989) offered insight into the students' complaints. The authors argued that humans have at least seven intelligences and that school curriculum and testing favor only two: logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences. The remaining five intelligences include musical, spatial, body-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. The preferred learning styles outlined by Abana and Jordan make use of intelligences such as musical and kinesthetic.

Falling behind in course work. Each of the participants spoke about entering the alternate program with credits to make up from previous grade levels. Abana had to repeat

her grade 10 year and Bridget fell behind while being home schooled. Jordan had to repeat her grade eight year to transition from the Leaving Certificate program into alternate education. Autumn and Navaeh let their course work slip during their first years of secondary school, focused on other things than school.

School Completion Certificate program. Both Autumn and Jordan's schools first tried to place them in programs that culminate in the awarding of a Leaving Certificate or School Completion Certificate as opposed to the standard secondary Dogwood Diploma. Students in the School Completion Certificate program have been assessed as unable to meet the graduation requirements for the Dogwood Diploma and are put on an Individual Educational Program (IEP) outlining what the individual student is expected to complete to finish secondary school (Scott).

Jordan spent her grade eight year in this program before her parents realized that she could not properly graduate and demanded a change. Autumn's mother faced that same scenario with her elder daughter and therefore understood the situation and refused to have Autumn placed in that program when it was suggested by the school. After their parents insisted the Leaving Certificate was not an appropriate fit for their daughters, both students were placed in the alternate education program to continue their studies.

Benefits of Alternate Education

The participants expressed having an overall positive experience in the alternate education program. Collectively, they appreciated the ability obtain a Dogwood Diploma through alternate means, the opportunity to catch up on their work, the ability to work at their own pace, and the individualized support and help offered by their teachers.

Alternate opportunity to obtain a Dogwood Diploma. The alternate education program at Northdale is a self-directed, self-paced program that provides students in grades 10, 11, and 12, who have not been successful in the regular system but have the academic ability to finish secondary school, with an alternative route to academic success (Scott). At the time of this study there were three alternate education instructors at Northdale, each providing a unique learning environment. For the purposes of this study I was able to observe in two of these classrooms. Ms. Hartwell explained a strength of the program,

> In alternate, this is the beauty of the program again, so, our students go between the three alternate ed classrooms. Say they haven't finished a subject with one of the other teachers, they just come down to me and carry on *right* from where they left off, that's the beauty of it, it just goes on, and they don't loose anything, they just gain.

Once students join the alternate education program they are assigned a double block of time in the alternate classroom out of a day with four class blocks, a session for daily physical activity (DPA), and a lunch period (Field Notes, Feb. 5, 2009). Therefore students in this program spend their two morning or two afternoon classes in alternate education. Although students work at their own pace, the general goal is to complete four courses over the two semesters to correspond with the four periods of alternate education they would have in the two semesters of one school year (Scott). There are 12 courses offered through the alternate program at Northdale, ranging from Math to First Nations Studies, all of which may be taught simultaneously depending on the students in the room (Hartwell, 2007). With this selection, students have the ability to complete all of their core courses and a few electives through the alternate program (Scott).

All of the participants demonstrated a desire to finish secondary school with a Dogwood Diploma. Bridget spoke about wanting to go to college to become a farrier and

Abana and Jordan for hairdressing. Navaeh exclaimed, "oh, no I have to finish high school!" when asked about the possibility of dropping out. Autumn expressed her desire to graduate while explaining the problem she faced of convincing Northdale's principal that she deserves to return to the school for an additional year of study. The participants spoke about the benefits of the alternate program and were thankful for the opportunity to pursue their studies in a different academic setting.

A second chance. The alternate program was designed to "help students who were falling through the cracks" by working to "fit the students' needs" (Hartwell). Navaeh described the program as a "second chance" where "if you mess up before you *can* get yourself caught up and they [the teachers] want to help you."

Northdale's counseling office plays a key role in bringing students into the alternate program. Ms. Hartwell described the process:

> Generally they go through the fail list and they see what's happening with the student and they try to determine *not always*, but as best as possible, if alternate ed would be a good setting for that student to bring their grades up, to bring their courses up to speed, to gain the credits that they need to achieve... grade 12 Dogwood certification. [...] *So*, in order for that to all happen, generally a counselor phones the parents and tells the parents that their child will be considered for alternate ed. And sometimes parents are not open to having their kids in alternate ed and reasons are totally understandable.

Work at your own pace. The participants appreciated the ability to work at their own pace and the freedom from the stress of deadlines. "Umm... I like it cause... you work at like your own pace. Like sometimes, I don't know... you're still doing the same work and you're still, it's just like *you* finish it working at your own time" (Navaeh). Autumn also valued the opportunity to relax when she needed it; "like say there's a day that you just don't feel like working and you're upset or something." In her current alternate class she is able to

do little work on those days but she would not have that choice in other classes. Although not doing any course work is not an option for all of the students, they still appreciated being able to control the amount of work they need to finish in a day. This freedom and relaxed pace is both the highlight and lowlight of Autumn's experience with the program. She admitted that her regular courses sometimes take priority over her alternate ones because of the deadlines she faces in the regular courses. She says that she thinks she may need the deadlines sometimes and has asked Ms. Hartwell for help in that regard, "Yeah, I told her to push me more. I'm hoping she does." Navaeh shared this concern, "sometimes that's kind of a setback cause you can be like ok I don't feel like doing nothing."

Individualized help and support. Class size is reduced in the alternate program to 16 students (Scott) to help facilitate the wide variety of courses being taught and the individual help needed by the students. An average classroom at Northdale has 25 students and may hold up to 30. Alternate education courses are taught using workbooks that address course modules (Scott). These workbooks have been developed from a number of sources, including distance education and material developed by local teachers.

Both of the teachers who participated in this study use goal setting as a means of helping the students through each module; "you have to set a goal to get to that point - otherwise those courses can be long endless pits of work - so you break them up" (Scott). Goals are set on a short-term, daily and weekly goals, and long-term, or post-secondary, basis. Ms. Hartwell holds individual weekly meetings with each student on Monday mornings to discuss what they accomplished the week prior and what they hope to finish during the current week (Field Notes, Feb. 9, 2009). Mr. Scott has a print out posted at the

back of the classroom outlining course progress and updated marks to give the students constant feedback. He also distributes Recognition Certificates to students at the successful completion of each module (Scott). He adapted the Recognition Certificate, a personal initiative to increase student motivation, from a similar system used when he taught at a Youth Custody Service Centre.

Most of the participants found their alternate instructors to be great motivators. Abana appreciated the constant encouragement given by Mr. Scott, who takes every opportunity to praise the class and individual students for a job well done. Autumn, who generally finds school boring, spoke about her instructor, "whereas like you look at Ms. Hartwell and she's free-spirited and she could talk about her whole life right in front of you. Like it... she makes things interesting."

Summary

The students and teachers that I worked with at Northdale emphasized the importance of the alternate education program. The program provides students who are struggling in the regular classroom an opportunity to achieve their degree through alternate means. "Certain students get behind and this is their only way to catch up" (Scott). Autumn is one of these students. She feels that the program "helps kids" who are behind "because there's a teacher there to help you and you can work on whatever you need to." For some students this program is their last hope for completing secondary school. Mr. Scott shared,

> So for these kids this is what keeps them in school because the regular system wouldn't. And if our mandate is to educate as many people as we possibly can then we need to have different delivery systems and this is a good step along that way.

Ms. Hartwell made a plea, "I just feel that it's a remarkable opportunity for our students and that I hope and I wish that they will always be funded properly because it's a way to empower our students." Students who do not flourish in the regular school system should have access to different means of delivering the curriculum; "they're just really, really special kids and they deserve that" (Hartwell).

Students Define Leadership

My second guiding question explored how the participants define leadership. The young women in this study described a leader in 34 different ways (see Figure 2) during the interviews. One of these descriptions being a simple "I don't know." Although 4 out of the 5 participants made this claim, they all had valuable insights to share on the topic. I have grouped these 34 descriptors in three ways to present the participants' understanding of what a leader does (see Figure 3a), what a leader is like (see Figure 3b), and who can be called a leader (see Figure 3c). Finally, I have created a leader profile based on the five most popular participant responses (see Figure 4). I have first presented each characteristic of a leader as defined by the participants. I have then explored these ideas in relation to literature on leadership style including the notions of feminine and masculine leadership characteristics as outlined by Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) and the four quadrants of leadership style as presented by Howard (2005).

Participant Defined Leader Profile

Based on the leadership characteristics outlined by the participants, I have created a leader profile using the five most popular participant responses, as depicted in Figure 4. The participants described a leader as someone who is helpful, takes charge, leads people in the

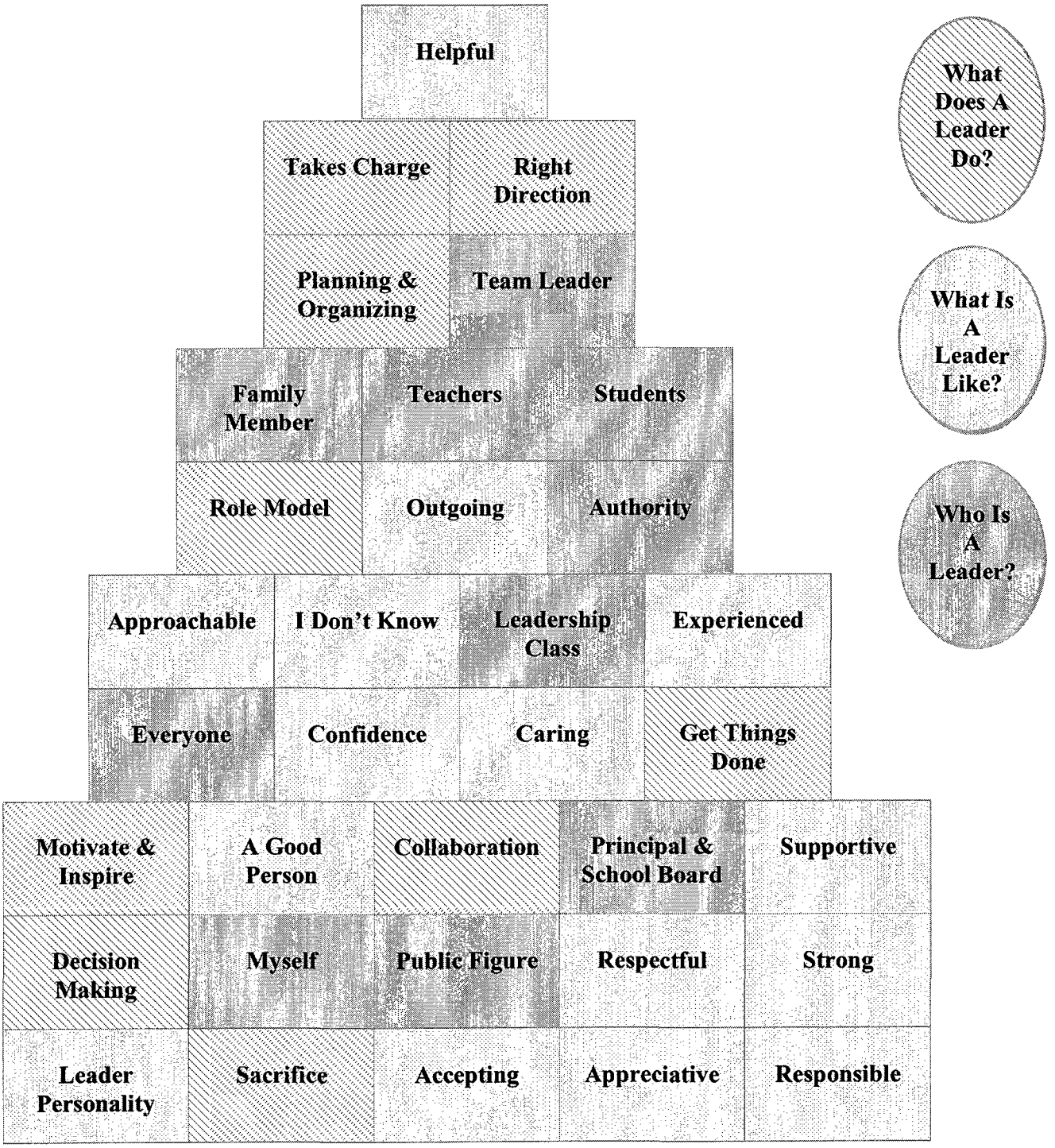

Figure 2. Participant responses to interview question #7: What does leadership mean to you? The characteristics of leadership are presented in order with the most popular response amongst the participants at the top to the least cited at the bottom, reading left to right.

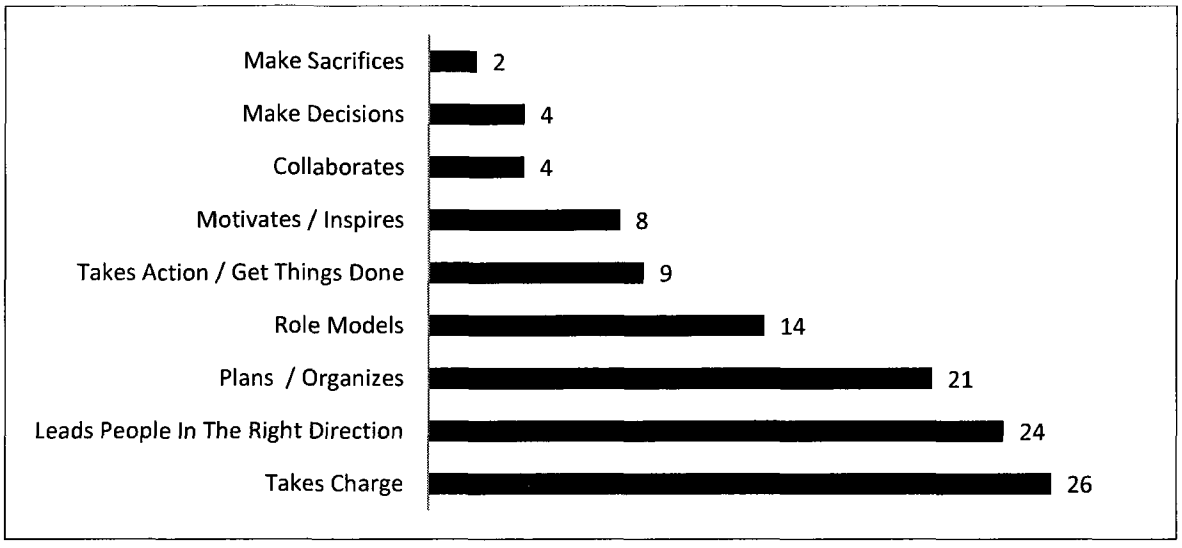

Figure 3a. Leader profile of what a leader does as defined by the participants. Labels indicate the number of times each descriptor was used throughout the ten student interviews.

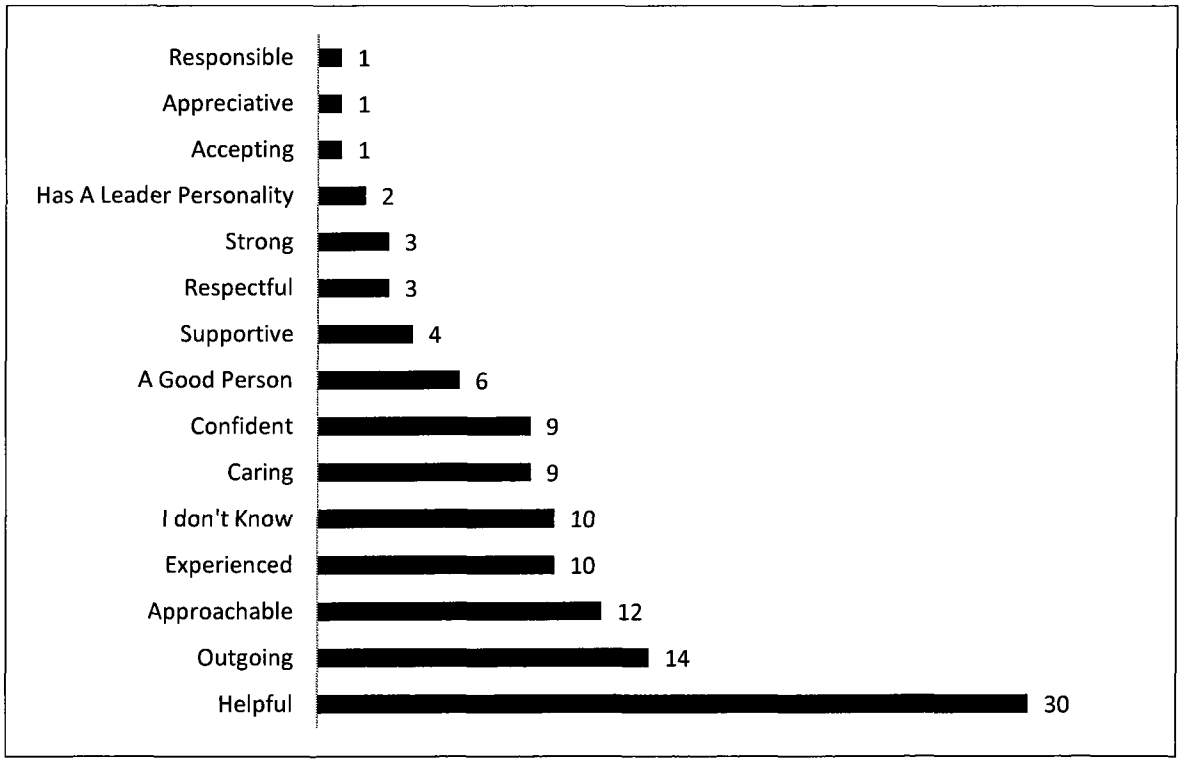

Figure 3b. Leader profile of what a leader is like as defined by the participants. Labels indicate the number of times each descriptor was used throughout the ten student interviews.

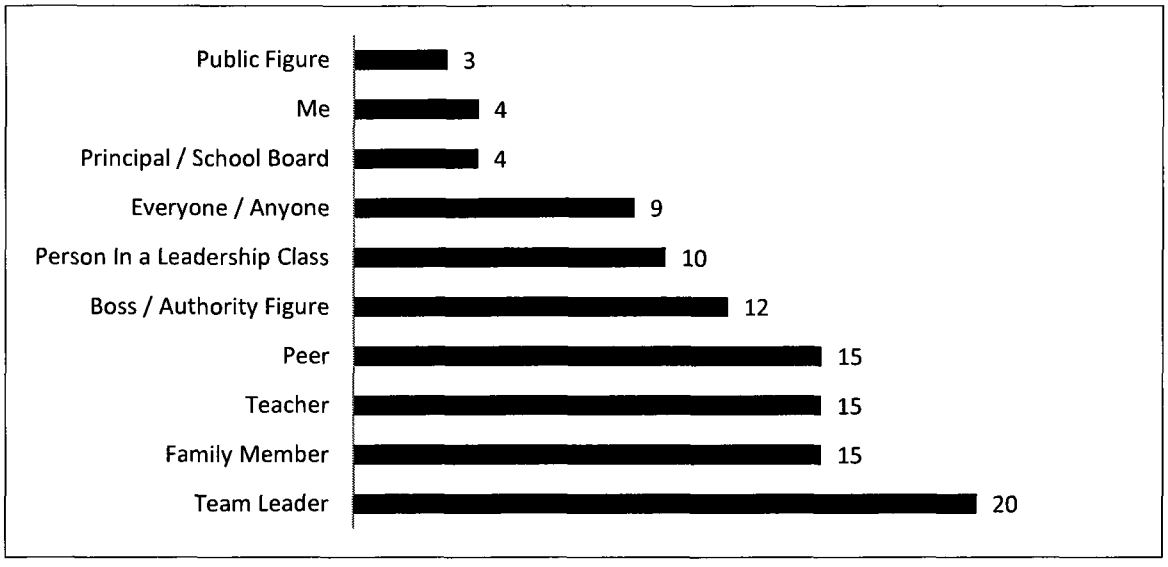

Figure 3c. Leader profile of who constitutes a leader as defined by the participants. Labels indicate the number of times each descriptor was used throughout the ten student interviews.

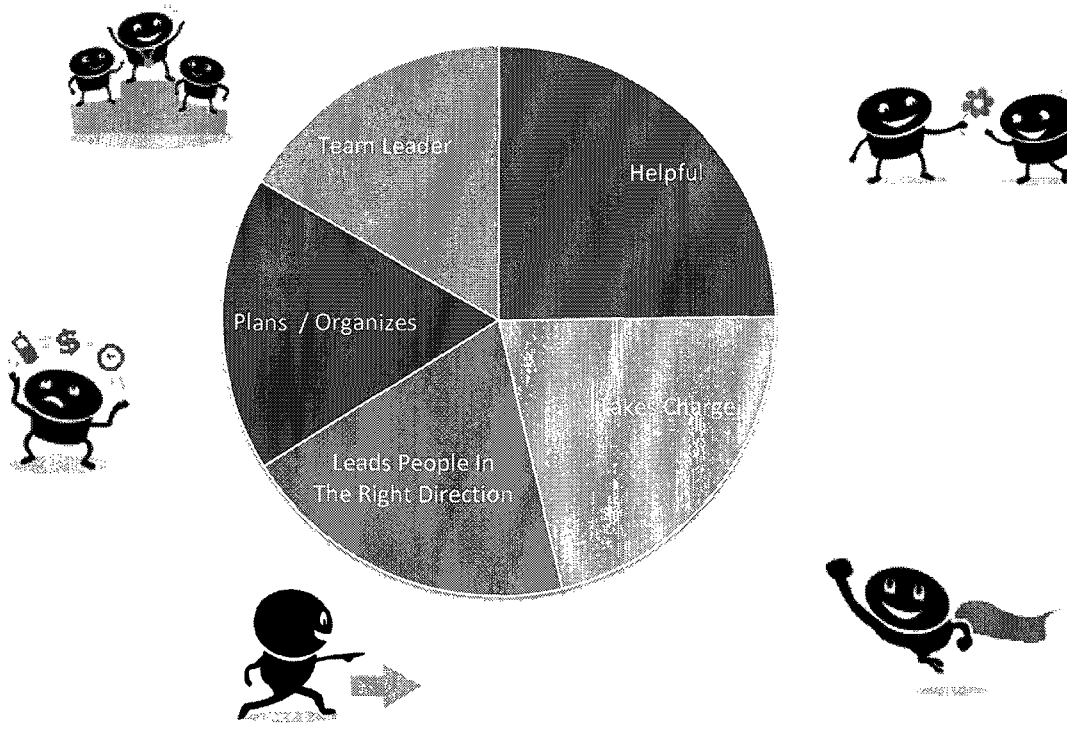

Figure 4. Leader profile based on the top five characteristics of a leader as defined by the participants. (Images from Microsoft Clip Art)

right direction, plans and organizes, and leads a team. These characteristics are further explored in this section.

The Helper: "If like you need help with something like, I'll help you" (Navaeh). The number one descriptor of leadership uncovered in this study is that of a leader as someone who helps other people. The participants described specific examples of when they have had someone personally help them (Autumn: "I'd call my mom a leader just because she's done so much for me"), ways they have helped other people (Jordan: "Probably because I'm helping out with the people"), or actions of helping they have observed (Bridget: "I think she helped him through something"). The participants also described a leader as someone who has a general desire and willingness to help.

Several authors have written about the need for a leader to show empathy and respect (Fullan, 2007), respond to emotions (Golman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002), and help others to understand and complete tasks (Shaw, 2005). Leaders focused on helping have been labeled as supportive leaders (Reynolds & Rogers, 2003), transformational leaders (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Van Eeden, Cilliers, & Van Deventer, 2008), and leaders with an interpersonally oriented or consideration style (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). A supportive leader is someone who is a good listener, open with praise and feedback, and is generally available to help, particularly with problem solving (Reynolds & Rogers, 2003). Individual consideration is one of the aspects of transformational leadership (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Van Eeden, Cilliers, & Van Deventer, 2008). A leader who gives individual consideration acts as a mentor, offering personal attention, advice, and encouragement. A leader who adopts an interpersonally oriented style shows "concern with

maintaining interpersonal relationships by tending to others' morale and welfare" (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 786). The interpersonally oriented style corresponds with the participants' examples of caring for sick persons and offering encouragement as acts of leadership.

Taking Charge: "Someone who's just not afraid to take charge" (Abana*).* The second most popular vision of a leader outlined by the participants focused on the leader's ability and willingness to take charge. "They can take charge of pretty much anything" (Bridget). In my discussions with the participants, "anything" included a group, a problem, an event, a situation, another person, and one's own life.

Traditional leadership styles emphasized hierarchy, a person's charisma, and power over followers (Manolis et al., 2009; Senge, 1990). The idea of the leader who takes charge fits with this conception of leadership where the person is forceful, determined, and action oriented. In contrast to this traditional style stands more recent conceptions of leadership that value collaboration and a multiplicity of leadership styles. The focus on emotions (Golman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002) and helping (Shaw, 2005) as discussed previously also falls into this later category.

The Right Direction: "Trying to stand up for something you believe in and push them in the right direction" (Jordan). The third most popular response portrayed a leader as someone who leads themselves and others in the "right direction" and stands up for what is right. Autumn spoke about taking a leadership role in her life by prioritizing school; "Instead of skipping school you decide to go because you're getting more benefits than skipping, so you're like leading yourself to a better life." Bridget shared a story of when she

acted as a leader to help lead others in the right direction by interrupting a scenario where one student was being bullied and a group of students had gathered to watch and laugh. By stepping in to stop the fight and standing up to the bully, Bridget felt that she had demonstrated a better direction for her peers to follow. Jordan believed the anti-violence speaker, Jackson Katz, was a leader because "he's trying to lead people in the right direction instead of leading them into abuse."

When asked to further explain what the "right direction" is the participants spoke about staying away from drugs, violence and harm; treating people well; building confidence; exposing people to options and consequences; gaining life experience including education; and generally getting what you want out of life. "They're all leading for better, like hoping for these people to feel better about themselves, to make their lives better" (Navaeh).

Fullan (2007) and Gardner (1995) both wrote about the need for a leader to embody their message. An effective leader, from this perspective, is someone who helps lead others in the right direction through both talk and role modeling appropriate action. Leading others in the right direction is also linked to transformational leadership. A transformational leader provides idealized influence, where people idealize the leader's values and vision. They also offer inspirational motivation where the leader expresses confidence in the followers' abilities to achieve their goals (Van Eeden, Cilliers, & Van Deventer, 2008). This characteristic also fits with the interpersonally oriented style discussed in relation to helping.

The Planner / Organizer: "Umm… planning things and organizing them" (Autumn). All of the participants shared examples of leaders as planners and organizers. The

most common example was that of student programming; students or other program facilitators planning dances, selling Valentine's Day roses, and organizing field trips. Abana had a similar experience within her family where her mother and grandmother organized activities for the children at family gatherings over the summer. Autumn added an extra dimension to the planner portfolio by discussing planning one's own day and "taking like pieces and putting everything together."

Planning and organizing is closely related to the idea of taking charge but with the added components of providing a service, such as an event, for others and the creativity or idea generation required of the planner. Transactional leaders clarify to followers what they must do to successfully complete their task (Van Eeden, Cilliers, & Van Deventer, 2008). This transactional leadership style is a part of planning and organizing with volunteer or staff management, as one example.

The Team Leader: "Someone that could be able to lead a big group of people without... losing them" (Jordan). In this category, the participants spoke about leading a sports team, a work team, a group of friends, or a class. There was an emphasis on the idea of a leader being someone who works with and in front of a group of people. Abana discussed not wanting to be a leader because of her fear of public speaking. Although all of the participants spoke about leading a team, there was not much discussion about working in collaboration with a team. The students provided examples of a basketball team captain giving instructions (Bridget), a teacher leading a class from room to room (Jordan), and a leader "of the pack" (Abana). Autumn described what she meant by offering the popular slogan "follow the leader" in a sing-song voice. Abana touched on the idea of collaboration

while discussing her mother's role at work as a Team Leader and needing to engage the entire work team to solve a recent issue involving work vehicles. Fullan (2007) wrote about the importance of engaging team members in the task at hand to build collaboration and trust, as demonstrated in this last example provided by Abana.

Leadership and Gender Roles

"There is general agreement that women face more barriers than men to becoming leaders" (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 781). These barriers stem from the perceived inconsistency between the characteristics ascribed to a leader and those described as feminine. This gap is created by gendered expectancies perceived by others, such as peers and colleagues. These expectations have also been internalized to some degree and therefore become part of one's personal expectations of themselves. Gender roles are "shared beliefs that apply to individuals based on their socially identifiable sex" (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 783). Eagly and Johannesen-Shmidt described leadership traits based on these gender roles as lived in Western society. They listed masculine leadership traits as agentic, task-oriented, autocratic, directive, and transactional. These may include aggressive, dominant, and competitive behaviours. Feminine leadership traits in contrast are presented as communal, interpersonal, considerate, democratic, and transformational. This list encompasses behaviours such as helpfulness, sympathy, and gentleness.

The world of management is strongly dominated by men (Billing & Alvesson, 2000) and many women in senior leadership positions "have to 'be more like men than the men,' in order to prove that they are 'real leaders' by the masculine criteria that are still dominant" (Senge, 1990, p. 368). With masculine leadership traits as the traditional standard in

leadership, some women in leadership roles may be seen as inadequately conforming to their gender role if they meet these masculine standards (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). I agree with Billing and Alvesson (2000) when they proposed that discussing leadership traits as feminine and masculine could be potentially misleading "in terms of gender equality and social development" (p. 144). However, the language of gender roles provides an opportunity for further insight into the participants understanding of leadership that would not be accessible otherwise.

Analysis of the five leadership characteristics outlined by the participants reflects a mix of gendered traits. Interestingly, the top two descriptors identified by the participants fall strongly on either side. The notion of helpfulness is a feminine trait associated with the nurturing and caring image of a woman. The need for a leader to take charge is a masculine trait as it is task oriented, directive, and dominant. However, the remaining three characteristics outlined by the participants are less clearly defined as to gender and incorporate behaviours from both gender roles. Leading others in the right direction could be considered feminine in that it deals with personal care and concern but masculine in its forcefulness in standing up for principles. Both planning and organizing and leading a team are task focused behaviours with space for more communal actions while completing the task. The participants have therefore presented a balanced notion of leadership, not completely favouring the leadership traits of either gender role. In terms of frequency, looking at planning and organizing and team leading as predominantly masculine, the students presented a masculine image of a leader. However, with the number one

characteristic of leadership being helpful, a feminine trait, the participants strongly presented the feminine characteristics in their choices.

Four Leadership Styles

Howard (2005) asserted that leadership is a long debated concept. He identified four leadership styles that coordinate with the four quadrants of the human brain as a way of furthering our understanding of leadership. The Type A leader is fact based, the Type B leader is creativity based, the Type C leader is feelings based, and the Type D leader is control/power based (see Figure 5a). Using the language of Howard's four quadrants I perceived the participants' five top characteristics of a leader as belonging primarily to the Type D or control/power based leader (see Figure 5b). I categorized *planning and organizing* as demanding a combination of quadrants A, B, and D. Planning and organizing can be a highly task-oriented and structured activity but it also requires some of the creativity located in quadrant B to generate ideas. As with the ideas of masculine and feminine traits, I placed the *taking charge* behaviour strongly in quadrant D, *being helpful* entirely in quadrant C, and *leading others in the right direction* as straddling these two categories. The *team leader* I felt belonged mostly in quadrant D with the potential to delve into quadrants A or C. Using this categorizing scheme, the image of a leader as presented by the participants is predominantly control or power based, sometimes requiring the use of feelings, facts, and/or creativity.

Factors Contributing to Leadership Definition

My third guiding question explored the factors that contributed to the students' definition of leadership. The participants spoke about the influence of school curriculum, popular media, and personal experiences in forming their ideas on leadership.

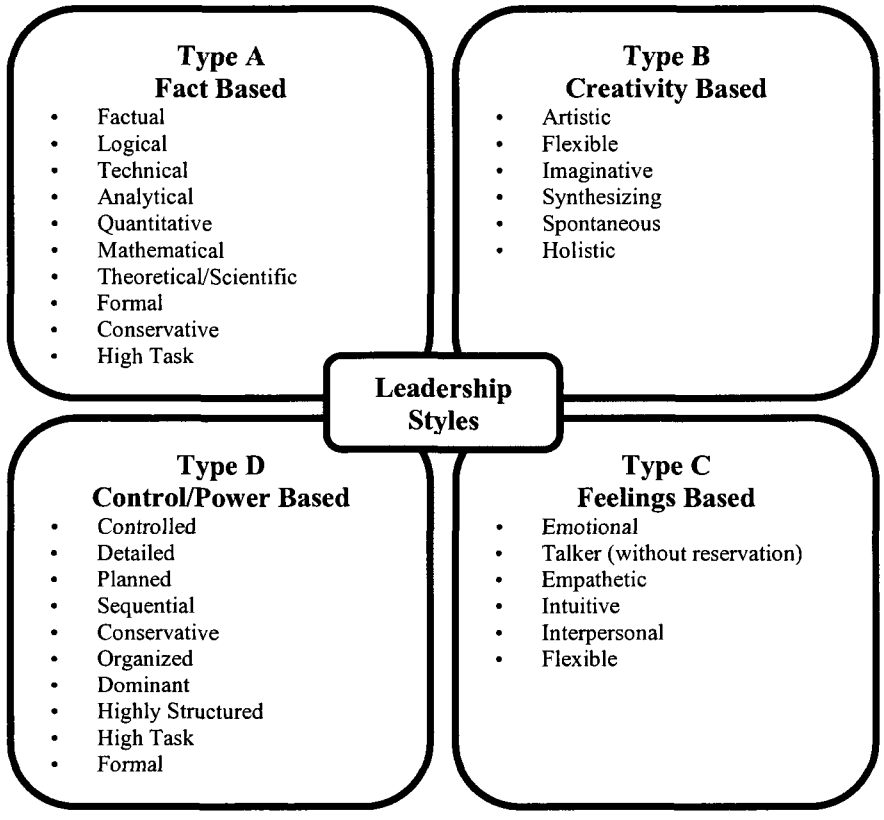

Figure 5a. Four leadership styles adapted from Howard (2005, p. 386).

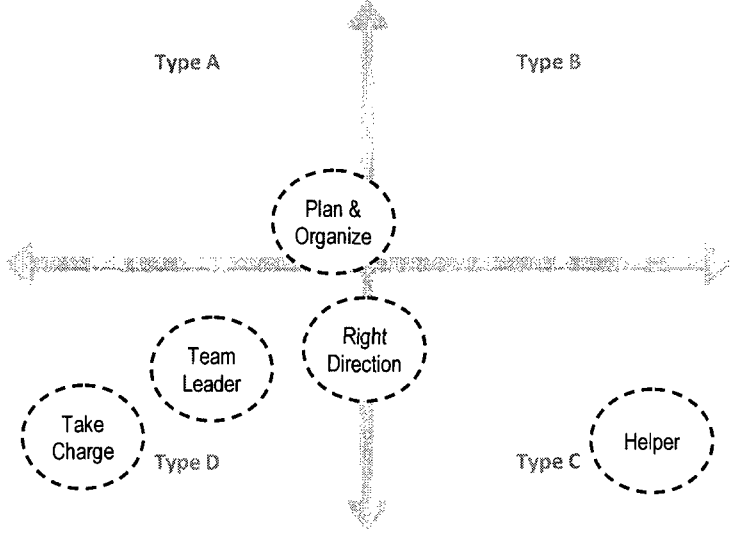

Figure 5b. Locating the top five characteristics of a leader as defined by the participants in Howard's (2005) four leadership styles quadrant.

School curriculum. One of the recurring themes in the participants' explanation of leadership was the reference to the school's leadership course. This class is offered at Northdale in grades 11 and 12 and its students are known to the wider student population for organizing school activities. None of the participants had taken this course and were not certain what it entailed, however, they were quick to refer to it as they discussed leadership in their school community. Leadership is a School Board Authority Authorized (BAA) course designed to "allow the student to experience and learn the skills and knowledge needed to be healthy, productive, and satisfied participants as adults while helping to work with their school and community to improve school and community spirit" (British Columbia School Trustees Association, n.d.). Two of the participants spoke about being put in a leadership class in grade eight at a different secondary school but they did not understand what the course was about and they did not attend the classes. When asked about where they have learned about leadership one of the participants cited her Family Studies coursework. In my interview with Mr. Scott he found leadership taught in Social Studies with coverage of the suffrage movement and First Nations issues as examples. However, none of the students made this connection.

Popular media. Bridget's conception of leadership has been influenced by print media. She spoke about magazines in her household that related to horse riding, sports, and then O, The Oprah Magazine. She talked about an article featured in O, The Oprah Magazine that highlighted the story of a young woman who had used drugs since the age of 8 and then overcame her struggles to become drug free and a top college student.

Navaeh found inspiration in the music and story of Tupac as saw him as en example of leadership. She felt that he offered the positive message that "we don't have to live that life and we can be better people and treat everyone good instead of always like having wars and fighting." Abana referred to different movies to help explain her ideas. She discussed a movie about a hunter who became the leader of his tribe, outlining his journey. Abana also made reference to the film, Mean Girls, to explain leadership in the school setting.

Personal experiences. The school curricula and popular media have influenced the students' ideas of leadership; however, they seem to have been secondary influences. The primary influence was personal experiences, connections, and beliefs. A survey conducted by The Pew Research Centre in 2006 surveyed American youth between the ages of 18 to 25, named Generation Next by the researchers. One section of the survey asked youth about their heroes and role models. The results showed that participants most admired people they knew such as teachers and family members, indicating a change from older generations who pointed to public figures as their heroes. In this study the students also turned to people they knew to identify leaders (see Figure 3c). In identifying who constitutes a leader the most popular response given by the participants was someone leading a team or group of people. Following the discussion of a team leader, the students identified teachers, family members, and peers equally for the second most popular response. Because the helper or leader in many of the participants' examples was also a teacher or family member, this idea of leaders as personal acquaintances connects with the idea of a leader as a helper.

Identifying Leaders

For my fourth guiding question, I asked the students to discuss whether they personally perceived themselves as a leaders or whether other people may see them as such. The participants also discussed whether being a leader or being perceived as a leader is something they desire.

Are you a leader? Abana believes that she is capable of taking on a leadership role but it is something that scares her and that she does not desire. She focused on the fear of public speaking and of being singled out as "weird." She could not think of any instances where she has acted as a leader to date. In the first interview Autumn described a leader as being bossy and telling someone what to do. She did not like the idea of trying to undermine someone's individuality and did not want to be a leader for that reason.

Bridget and Jordan spoke about being a leader some of the time. Bridget described her leadership skills in two arenas. The first is regarding her passion for horses and riding. She is not afraid to "take charge" when working on anything horse related and used the example of teaching safety to a young rider. The second scenario she discussed was connected with bullying. As someone who has been a victim of much bullying at school, Bridget took on a leadership role several times in secondary school to stop other students from being bullied. Bridget also feels that she has the specific personality required to succeed as a leader as a strong willed, stubborn, and determined person.

Jordan describes herself as a leader when she acting as a peer tutor, an assistant baseball coach, and a skating instructor. She feels that is she is only a leader when in one of these roles, and that her participation does not make her a leader in general. Jordan

participated in an exchange program where she helped organize activities for the visiting group. She did not feel that she was acting as a leader at the time but decided during our interview that, yes, she was a leader then as well.

In the second interview, Autumn changed her answer to say that "everyone is their own leader," herself included. She explained that she is a leader because she leads her own life my making decisions about what is important and planning out how she will spend her days. Navaeh's answers implied that she was a leader. She spoke about how her peers and her sister's friends go to her for help, as an example of leadership.

Do other people see you as a leader? Although 4 out of the 5 student indentified themselves as leaders at least some of time, they were less sure that other people would perceive them as such. Abana felt other people may not see her as a leader because of her silliness and shyness. Jordan laughed at the idea of other people calling her a leader. She explained that people at Northdale would not call her a leader because she is not social and is often "made fun of" at school. Bridget thought her peers would see her as "that girl who dances randomly in the hall" and probably not as a leader. Autumn does not feel that others see her as a leader, although anyone who subscribes to her vision of every person as their own leader would recognize this quality in her. Bridget believes that the people who know her best would call her a leader, including her mother and close friends. Navaeh feels that her peers feel comfortable confiding in her because of her varied experiences and that she is a leader for those people who go to her for help.

Do you want to be a leader? Abana and Autumn were not interested in being called a leader and Bridget was undecided; "uh, definitely because, well maybe not definitely, but

yes to a degree." Jordan was torn in two directions. She wanted to say yes, as she would like to lead people in the "right direction." However, she does not want to have the responsibility or "pressure" that comes with being seen as a leader. Navaeh was the only participant to confidently say that yes, she wants to be a leader. The attraction for her was about helping. "It's like yeah it feels good helping someone else cause at the same time it's also helping you."

Summary

The participants created a varied and comprehensive profile of a leader through the 34 different characteristics that they identified. The primary characteristic identified was helpfulness. The participants provided examples of when they personally received help from people they saw as leaders or, less frequently, when they were the leader taking on a helping role. They also saw a leader as someone who takes charge, leads people in the right direction, is a planner and organizer, and a team leader. The participants ideas about leadership have been influenced by school curriculum, popular media, as well as their personal experiences and those of friends and family.

Collectively, 4 out of the 5 participants saw themselves as leaders at least some of the time. Bridget saw herself as a leader when working on anything related to the activity she loves the most, horse back riding. Jordan explained that she is only a leader when in a leadership position and specifically acting in that role. Only 2 of the participants thought other people would call them leaders and believed this of only a select group – for Bridget, her mother and best friends and for Navaeh, people who have personally approached her for help.

Motivation for Participation

My fifth guiding question asked, "What motivates these students' participation or non-participation in extra-curricular activities and/or leadership programs? The participants told me that they spend most of their time after school relaxing with friends, family, and significant others. When on their own they are either on the computer, doing homework, doing chores, watching television, babysitting, or exploring their artistic side by writing poetry or drawing. Abana also spends time on personal fitness using the treadmill at home and going to the YMCA with her mother to swim or do yoga. Autumn likes to relax by going for walks. Bridget rides her horse almost every day and Jordan looks forward to riding in the summers. In the winter these two young women can also be found snowboarding. Navaeh likes to attend school and community events with friends.

Past Participation in Extra-Curricular and Leadership Development Activities

The students had all participated in extra-curricular or community activities in the past. Bridget and Navaeh played on school sports teams in elementary school and Autumn played volleyball for just her grade nine year. Bridget and Navaeh enjoyed this at the time but they were not really interested in participating currently. Autumn did not have fun the first time. Again, during their elementary school and early secondary school years, the young women tried a number of community organized activities such as boxing, softball, youth groups, and singing lessons. Jordan participated in the YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada program for two years. She is glad that she participated but is not looking for any new opportunities. Navaeh was involved with the teen program at her local Friendship Centre.

Future Participation in Extra-Curricular and Leadership Development Activities

Although the participants had tried a number of activities in elementary school, they were generally not interested in getting involved with school or community activities in secondary school. Jordan was the student with the longest list of current community involvement as a skating instructor and assistant baseball coach for younger children and Bridget said that she was considering auditioning for the next school play but had not made up her mind. However, the students expressed an overall lack of interest, knowledge, and time in regards to participation.

No interest. I asked the participants whether they would want to participate in a leadership development program and the general response was that they were not interested. Abana and Autumn had no interest whatsoever. Autumn expressed that she had never given it any thought and did not think she would be "good at that." Bridget showed some interest but had not considered it a possibility prior to participating in this study. Jordan was only interested in something where she could work with younger children and did not want to participate in any programming with her peers.

No knowledge. When asked about leadership development programs, none of the participants were aware that any were available to them; "I don't hear anything about like, I don't know, how to…" (Bridget). Navaeh was aware that such programs existed but was not sure what they were or how to access them; "there's lots though I just don't know but yeah there's lots of different things, things you wouldn't even think of."

The participants had little knowledge of extra-curricular opportunities available to them at school.

Nicole: Is there a lot going on at the school outside of class? Things like clubs or sports teams or… even events?

Autumn: Umm… I think there…. I didn't even know… [I think] that they have a wrestling team?

The participants named one student club and a couple of school sports teams but had not researched their options or how to get involved.

No time. Navaeh expressed the most interest in extra-curricular and community activities but did not want to get involved with anything while still in secondary school. She felt that if she had a job or was involved in other activities that she would prioritize those activities ahead of school and fall farther behind with her school work. Autumn referred to a lack of time as one of her reasons for giving up the activities she did in elementary school. "I just had too much going on and so I had to kind of cut back on going and then I just stopped going."

Labeling activities as leadership development programs. Navaeh was also the only participant to directly name any of her past activities as a leadership development program. She was one of four leaders of the teen program at her local Friendship Centre. As a program leader she participated in weekly planning meetings, helped run fundraisers and organize activities such as movie nights and snowboarding trips. After some thought, Bridget decided that workshops she had attended about riding and one about art would count as leadership development activities and Jordan admitted her participation in the YMCA Exchange Program would count as a leadership activity.

Motivational Factors

In speaking about activities that the students had once been involved with or had considered, they shared insight into what might motivate them to join an extra-curricular or community activity. The participants revealed that they desired a promise of fun in addition to a personal recommendation and invitation to participate.

Fun. The biggest motivator for these students to join any activity whether extra-curricular, community, or leadership development, was "fun."

> When I found out some of the stuff that we were going to do is probably what changed my mind. Cause we went to Marine Land and Canada's Wonderland and stuff. I was like well, being with people and getting to know people and going to big places like that and fun experiences like that with other people, I guess it could be fun.

Personal recommendation. Not only did the activity need to be adequately fun but this recommendation held the most weight when coming from a close family member or friend; "one of my cousins is really into it and she always tells me how fun it is and I'm just like what am I missing out?" (Bridget), "I just think it'd be fun. My sister was in hip hop when she was like younger and she said it was fun" (Abana).

Personal invitation. The participants did not respond to posters or other advertisements and were not likely to get involved with an opportunity that was not offered to them personally. When asked if she would have participated in the exchange program if not invited by a close family friend Jordan responded, "Actually no, I probably wouldn't have. I even had to think twice when I got asked to do it." Autumn played basketball in grade nine because she joined with a friend. Navaeh knew about the opportunities at the Friendship

Centre because she has been put in the children's program when younger. Abana goes to yoga classes with her mother.

Summary

Overall the students had little interest in extra-curricular activities and did not want to get involved with anything at school. If they were to get involved in after school activities they were most likely to choose community organized groups. The biggest motivators included a personal invitation to participate and/or a recommendation from a close friend or family member who had tried the activity and found it enjoyable. The participants did not respond to posters or other advertisements and were not likely to get involved with an opportunity that was not offered to them personally. As Bridget and Autumn both expressed, they had never considered leadership programming as an opportunity available to them. For these students to get involved, they need convincing that someone wants them to participate, that they are capable of participating, and that the experience will be enjoyable.

Identity Development

To answer my sixth guiding question, I looked at whether the participants had achieved a stable sense of identity. To asses whether the students had reached a stable sense of identity development I asked the participants two directly related questions. At the beginning of the first interview I asked the students to tell me about themselves or to provide a self-description. In the second interview I presented the participants with a cue card with the statement "I like being who I am." The students were asked to share their initial thoughts and then to discuss their feelings towards the statement and its importance. In this section I present the students' thoughts on what it means to like being who you are, and whether they

agree with this statement. For the purposes of this study, I have considered a positive response to the question, "do you agree with the statement I like being who I am?" as indicative of having reached a stable sense of identity development, as outlined by Bromnick and Swallow (1999) in their research.

"I Used to Hate Myself"

All 5 of the participants shared stories of times that they did not like themselves very much, or for Autumn and Bridget, even hated who they were. Collectively the participants were unhappy with their appearance, skill level, relationships, and image.

> I didn't used to like being who I am... I guess when I was like in grade 8 I was all like every grade 8 all like awkward and... growing **ha** (Abana). [...] I would say probably like grade 8, grade 9. I practically just hated myself, period (Autumn) [...] Oh yeah, I used to hate myself... the suicide, umm I had tried a few times, it was cutting (Bridget). [...] Like I used to call myself ugly and all that all of the time (Jordan). [...] I was being someone else and trying to... put off an image (Navaeh). [...] When I was younger I was more like shy I guess... like pushed around easy before (Abana)

Overcoming Obstacles

Each of the participants experienced what Kelly (1993) called a "real life jolt" (p. 202) that forced them to change their outlook on life, school, and their personal sense of self-worth. Abana faced a reality check having to deal with some unhealthy friendships and recovering from a summer of drinking alcohol almost everyday. Autumn dealt with the separation of her father from her family and her life, and the loss of friends to death and rehabilitation. Bridget had to get out of a deep depression where she attempted self-harm through cutting. She also dealt with intense bullying and the heartache of losing her "first love." Jordan found a way to overcome a stressed home situation and to deal with or avoid attacks aimed at her by her peers. Navaeh lost a close friend to a drinking and driving

accident in grade eight and also faced an ultimatum that pushed her to choose between marijuana use and her family and friends. The students learned about themselves and became more comfortable with who they were as they dealt with and overcame each obstacle.

Kelly's (1993) idea of the "real life jolt" (p. 202) has parallels with Marcia's (as cited in Adams, Abraham, & Markstrom, 2000) criteria of dealing with crisis to enter the fourth identity status of identity achievement. The "real life jolt" (Kelly) can also be related to resilience models. *Resilience* (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005) is a term used to describe the process of overcoming the negative effects of risk exposure and successfully coping with traumatic experiences. Some of the situations faced by the students, such as drug use, could be considered a risk, and the death of a close friend could be called a tragedy. Overcoming moderate risks can contribute to healthy development, as it provides youth "with a chance to practice skills or employ resources" (p. 403). By successfully coping with their challenges, the participants demonstrated resilience, gaining knowledge and experience about how to use skills and resources successfully.

I Like Being Who I Am

To like being who you are, a person should be their true or authentic self; "you don't try to be like everyone else you just be who you are so it's your *own* thoughts and how you think so you're not doing stuff that other people would do" (Navaeh). For a person to agree with the statement, I like being who I am, you have to "love yourself" (Abana), feel "comfortable with everything about you" (Bridget), "think positively of yourself" (Abana), be "able to understand who you are… like what your personality is" (Jordan). All of the participants felt that agreeing with this statement would bring happiness to a person's life.

Other benefits include confidence (Abana, Autumn), the ability to accept others for who they are (Bridget), and contentment with the image you project (Navaeh).

The participants expressed that it is important to like being who you are. "I think you have to like yourself for who you are to get through life (Bridget)." "If you don't like who you are you can't change it so you're just going to be unhappy" (Abana). Someone who does not like who they are will have "low self-confidence, low self-esteem, and generally be sad about who they are."

Although some have had difficult journeys to reach this point, all of the participants were able to say "yes, I like being who I am," which is indicative of having reached a stable sense of identity development. Bridget had reached a place where can now say "I'm amazing!" Jordan has gotten over not liking who she is and shared a message for her peers, "If people don't like me for who I am then they can just... toodles!" Some of the participants spoke about liking who they are with less conviction than others, in particular Jordan, who said "I like myself but there's stuff that I'd like to change about myself," focusing on her elementary school education.

I believe that although the participants demonstrated having reached a stable sense of identity development by adopting the myself attitude, not all of the students had truly accepted their "unique individuality, value and worth" (Bromnick & Swallow, 1999, p. 117) as complete persons. For example, Abana spoke primarily about having come to terms with her outward appearance and had to be prompted to discuss her inner self. The participants still have areas of their lives and their person that they have yet to fully embrace; however, the students were sincere in their adoption of the myself attitude and their self-belief.

Empowerment

My seventh and final guiding question asked whether the participants felt empowered. I asked each student to disclose a problem they have had to deal with or a decision they had to make and the responses dealt with a variety of scenarios. Based on the definition of an empowered person as someone who has the "confidence, competence, freedom, and resources" (Ciulla, 1996, p.1) to "become independent problem solvers and decision makers" (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 46); I then asked the students to examine their decision making and problem solving abilities in relation to the four items in this definition: confidence, competence, freedom, and resources, which I refer to as the elements of empowerment. The discussion then moved into a broader look at the students' access to these four items. In this section I will discuss the collective results using examples from the students' stories.

Resources: The Best Accessed of the Elements of Empowerment

The item that the participants felt they could best access was resources. All 5 of the participants believed that they had access to the resources they needed to deal with their example problem. Abana felt that her mother and sister were able to give her the information that she needed to decided whether to live with her father. Autumn used her teacher and counselor as resources in explaining how to request a Super 12 year and supporting her appeal. For Bridget and Navaeh, their mothers acted as resources by sharing stories of dealing with problems similar to their own of getting over their "first love" and "choosing a life over weed." When Jordan was afraid that she might be pregnant she had access to resources such as the teacher she approached, her grandmother who took her to the doctor,

and the doctor who provided the pill, the test, and medical advice. Jordan was the only student to discuss additional resources that she lacked. She wished that she had access to an over the counter pregnancy test, her parents who she did not feel she could approach, and the potential father who did not know about the situation.

The students were less sure of their access to resources in dealing with problems and decisions in general. For this part of the question, Autumn and Navaeh both indicated a general yes, I have access to these four things. The remaining three students did not specifically discuss resources in this second part of the question.

Confidence: The Most Lacking of the Elements of Empowerment

In looking at the combined responses of the participant's confidence, competence, freedom, and resources in dealing both with their chosen problem or decision and in general problem solving and decision making, confidence is the piece that is most often recognized as lacking (see Figure 6a). Abana, Bridget, and Jordan all spoke about facing a lack of confidence in their problem solving abilities. Abana admitted, "It's usually my confidence that brings me down in dealing with a problem **ha**. Umm mostly because I'm just too scared to say what I'm thinking or how I'm feeling." Bridget said that she was "lacking some confidence" and spoke about exploring potential college programs and trying to write poetry. For Jordan, the fear of her potential pregnancy diminished her confidence, "I was more scared to have confidence than anything else."

Freedom: The Forgotten Element of Empowerment

Autumn focused on freedom as being what she lacked the most in dealing with her struggle to get permission to return to Northdale for an extra year of study; "there are some

days where you just don't want to go. And in that sense I won't have freedom to just not go." Jordan also felt that her freedom was limited, mostly by her inability to be open about her problems and confide in others for help. Bridget and Navaeh expressed gaining freedom from the space their parents have provided them to make their own decisions. Bridget feels that her parents will support her in anything that she wants to do "as long as it's legal;" a motto enforced by her father who is a retired police officer. Navaeh's mother gave her daughter the freedom to make her choice about marijuana use by providing information but not demanding Navaeh to quit. My conversations with the participants about the elements of empowerment focused on confidence and resources. They spoke about their access to freedom when specifically asked but did not expand on their answers or refer to the element again.

Competence: The Misunderstood Element of Empowerment

The students had a difficult time describing their experiences in relation to competence. The term was new for the majority of the participants and even once they learned its meaning they shied away from using it in their responses. Consequently the only responses that dealt with this term were overarching responses where they said yes, I generally have access to these four things. I would recommend for future consideration that an appropriate and more familiar synonym be adopted in replace of the term competence when discussing the four elements of empowerment with students.

Summary

Out of a potential 40 "yes" responses that the students could provide in answering these two questions, there were 18 positive responses (see Figure 6b). From these numbers

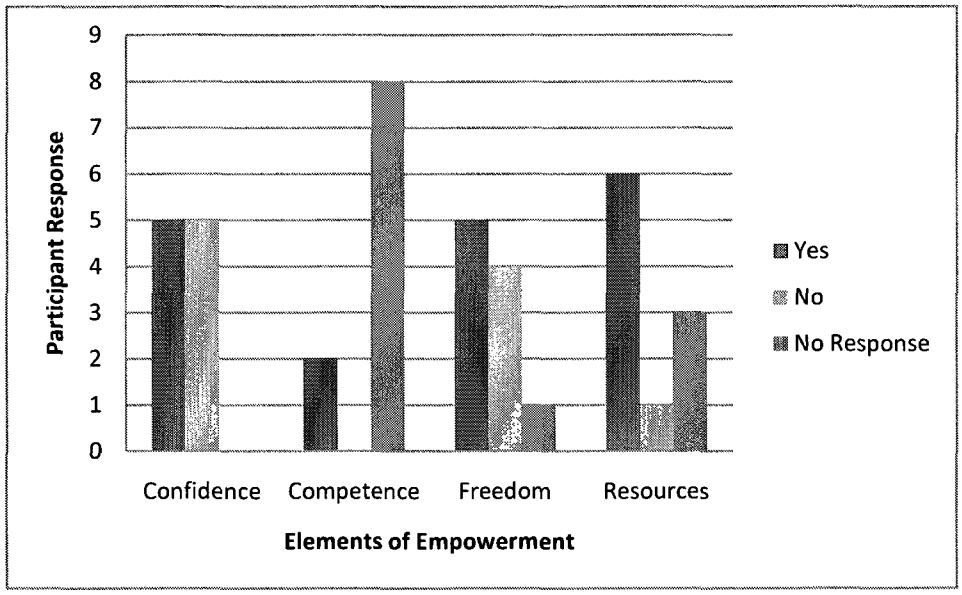

Figure 6a. Combined responses of the participants' access to the elements of empowerment in dealing both with their chosen problem or decision and in general problem solving and decision making.

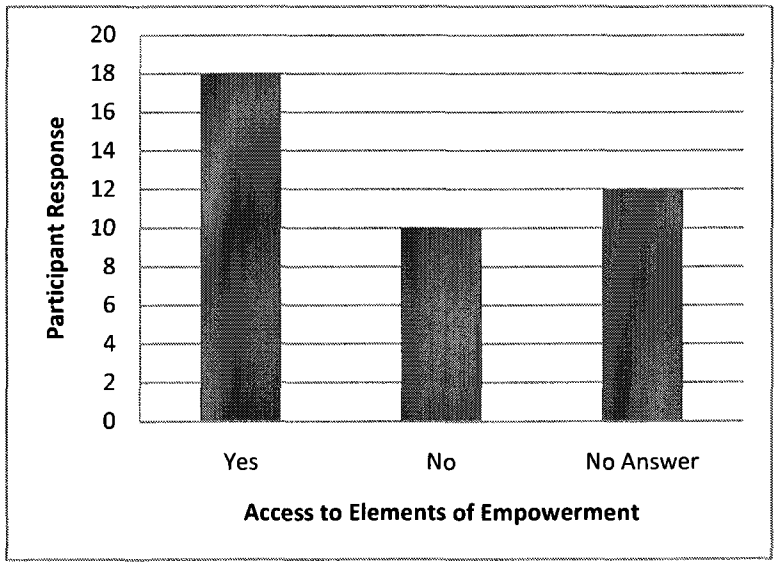

Figure 6b. Combined responses of the participants' access to the individual elements of empowerment in dealing both with their chosen problem or decision and in general problem solving and decision making.

and my conversations with the students, I do not believe that these students feel fully empowered, given the four elements of empowerment as criteria. Autumn and Navaeh were more confident in their problem solving and decision making abilities, both believing that they could succeed by weighing the potential options and working through them. Abana, Bridget, and Jordan felt less empowered and expressed that they were hindered by a lack of confidence.

I had the unique opportunity of directly asking Bridget what it means to be empowered. This opportunity arose from her mother's description of a family friend as an empowered woman. Bridget felt that an empowered woman is about:

> Being strong and having no limitations. I think because it's like you... Being empowered and being strong is like you do what you feel like doing you do what you feel is right and you try to make change I think just like a leader.

Returning to the Research Questions

Through the guiding questions I have presented the participants narratives, intertwined with my personal thoughts, and analysis, supplemented by literature. Here, I return to the study's two overarching research questions as outlined in Chapter I. These two questions explore the connections between the concepts discussed in the guiding questions and set the stage for a discussion of findings in Chapter VI.

Perceptions and Experiences of Leadership

The first research question posed in this study asked, "How do female students in alternative education perceive and experience leadership?" This study revealed the participants' perceptions of and experiences with leadership as closely intertwined. Although each of the participants *experience* leadership on a daily basis, not all of them had *perceived*

these experiences as related to leadership. For some of the students, these perceptions shifted during the study. Autumn in particular greatly struggled to articulate any thoughts or feelings about leadership when initially asked. Although we eventually engaged in a dialogue on the topic, her initial discomfort was physically evident (Reflexive Journal Notes, Feb. 17, 2009). Despite this initial struggle, Autumn had much to say about leadership as did the other four participants. An analysis of all of the participants' comments on leadership revealed a comprehensive leadership profile. The participants described a leader as someone who takes charge, leads people in the right direction, and plans and organizes. They outlined the personality of a leader as someone who is helpful, outgoing, and approachable. They also described who they perceived as leaders, focusing on people who lead a team and then discussing family members, teachers, and peers equally. Combining these three perspectives of the actions, characteristics, and identities of a leader, the participants perceived leadership as being about helping people, taking charge, leading people in the right direction, planning and organizing, and leading a team.

The participants' perceived leadership profile is based primarily on the students' personal experiences as observers of loved ones, people in the school community, and in some instances, their personal actions. To explain their ideas on leadership, the students offered numerous examples of people in their lives. School curricula and popular media have also played a role in building the students' ideas about leadership.

As "disenfranchised, marginalized, at risk" (Hartwell, 2007) youth, the participants experience leadership as persons on the fringes of society. Similarly, the students in this study largely perceived leadership as something that they were not party to, they presented

leadership in an *us* (leaders) versus *them* (non-leaders) scenario, positioning themselves as *them*. This positionality was mirrored by others in their life. Only two of the participants thought other people would call them leaders and believed this of only a select group of people with whom they had personal relationships; for Bridget her mother and best friends and for Navaeh people who have personally approached her for help.

By the end of the second interview, some of the participants elected to change their position on the *us* versus *them* polarity as being either part of or closer to the *us* or *leader* end of the spectrum. At the beginning of the first interview only one of the participants (Navaeh) felt a personal connection to leadership and was able to freely discuss the concept's meaning and her relationship to it. During the first interview Bridget and Jordan came to recognize some of their activities as acts of leadership after being prompted to consider the possibility. Autumn took a longer time period to reframe her positionality towards leadership. After taking time to personally reflect and research the concept by searching on the internet and talking with loved ones, Autumn returned to the second interview ready to discuss leadership and her role as a leader. Abana did not struggle to talk about leadership in the first interview as Jordan and Autumn had; however she described it in connection with the actions of other people in her life, particularly her mother and not as part of her own life.

From participant responses, I created a list of 34 different ways to describe leadership. Their perceptions of leadership were based on their personal experiences as both observers and participants in leadership scenarios. Three out of the five students in this study needed this opportunity to think about leadership in order to recognize their personal

experiences and actions as being connected to leadership. The remaining two students had previously committed to the idea that they were or were not a leader, respectively.

Stable Identities and Empowered Selves

My second research question asked, "How do the students' perceptions of and experiences with leadership affect the students' development of a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self?" Using the myself attitude as an indicator of having reached a stable sense of identity, all 5 of the participants have reached this point in their development. Although some of the students were more confident in their assertion than others, each of the participants said that yes, they do agree with the statement "I like being who I am." Students who have reached an achieved or stable identity as outlined by Marcia's four identity statuses "have experienced a crisis period and have established personal commitment" (Adams, Abraham, & Markstrom, 2000, p. 72). They also need "to be able to see themselves as products of their previous experiences" (Berzonsky, 2000, p. 20). All of the participants have colorful histories and have overcome personal crises. Autumn, Jordan, and Navaeh explicitly said that their current identity is a product of these past experiences, achievements, and failures. The students' experiences with leadership have played a role in these personal histories. However, as most of the participants initially perceived themselves as distant from leadership, the students did not demonstrate an awareness of the impact these experiences with leadership have had on their journey towards a stable sense of identity development.

Looking at having access to the four elements of empowerment to deal with problems and decisions, there was a high level of non-response to this question, making it difficult to draw a clear conclusion regarding the participants' level of empowerment. From speaking

with the students and analyzing their responses, I perceived the participants as not being fully empowered persons. The participants were able to discuss which of the elements they felt that they had access to but had a difficult time conceptualizing additional elements that might have helped them in their tasks. I propose that experiencing leadership on the margins has a potential negative impact on empowerment. Living on the margins impacts one's access to the elements of empowerment. Just as most of the students had not previously given thought to leadership and their connection to it, most of the participants had not thought about whether they struggled to deal with problems and decisions. The lack of thought the participants had given to the elements of empowerment could lead to a number of different inferences. Perhaps they are simply not struggling with problem solving and decision making, or alternatively they might not be aware of the elements of empowerment they should have access to and therefore are not able to articulate their needs. The high number of non-responses regarding level of access to the elements of empowerment could indicate either of these two possibilities or countless others.

I believe that a person who accepts their "unique individuality, value, and worth" (Bromnick and Swallow, 1999, p. 117), as indicative of a person who has reached a stable level of identity development, is likely to have a high level of confidence. Kernis (2003) made a similar connection between a stable sense of identity and empowerment in his discussion of the *authentic self*. Kernis argued that a person could achieve optimal self-esteem, or become fully self-confident, by honoring her authentic self. Authenticity is reached by aligning one's awareness, processing of information, behaviors, and relationships with one's true needs, values, and feelings. Harter (1997, as cited by Kernis, 2003) suggested

that for adolescents to act authentically, they must like being themselves. Confidence is the first of Ciulla's (1996) four elements of empowerment and an important factor in being able to access the remaining three. The role that competence has played in the participants' identity development and level of empowerment cannot be properly assessed due to the high non-response rate. As all of the four elements of empowerment intersect, it is difficult to decidedly choose which element, if any, is a necessary first building block.

The participants' narratives present an interesting scenario where confidence is the element they feel that they lack the most in dealing with problems and decisions. However, the participants also spoke about their journey of identity development and how they now have confidence and believe in themselves in contrast to past periods of their lives. These conflicting responses imply that although the participants' confidence levels have increased drastically over time, there is still room for continued growth to a level of confidence that allows the students to face life's problems and decisions as confident and empowered persons. Because the participants currently perceive themselves as distant and marginal from leadership, gaining an understanding of how their experiences are connected to and sometimes labeled as acts of leadership is one potential avenue for closing the participants' confidence gap.

VI. DISCUSSION

The pages of this study are filled with the stories of five young women in a secondary school alternate education program, two of their teachers, some of their classmates, and myself, the researcher. A combination of interview transcripts, field observations, casual conversations, reflexive notes, and related literature has been used to bring depth and breadth to these stories. The stories are presented by author as well as by theme, dealing with the topics outlined in seven guiding questions of leadership, alternative education, extra-curricular participation, youth leadership development, adolescent identity development, and empowerment. Each of these topics are examined as a means of providing insight into how female students in alternative education perceive and experience leadership and how their perceptions and experiences connect with the students' development of a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self.

In Chapter I, I introduced the research questions in support of the purpose statement and expressed my hope for the study to create space for the participants' voices and to influence the participants positively by providing opportunity for personal reflection. I also shared my desire to build on existing literature in the fields of leadership and adolescent identity development, in conjunction with a final wish for practitioners and policy makers to benefit and draw inspiration from the stories presented in this study. I offered my personal narrative in this chapter to establish narrative beginnings. In Chapter II, I explored literature on leadership and leadership development, alternative education, adolescence and marginalization, adolescent identity development, empowerment, and gender to provide further context and background information to the study.

In Chapter III, I presented theoretical frameworks for the study. I also introduced narrative inquiry as my research method and justified its use for this study. Five standards of research created specifically for this study are outlined here as readability, responsibility, representation, respectfulness, and recognition. These standards combine theoretical aspects from narrative inquiry, collaborative research, social constructivism, critical paradigm, feminist ideology, and my personal beliefs. The remaining pages of this chapter hold a detailed account of the research procedures.

Chapter IV is where the participants' stories are shared. In Chapter V, I presented the results of my content analysis organized by seven guiding questions; revealing the participants' primary image of leadership as helpfulness. Other common characteristics of leadership included taking charge, leading others in the right direction, planning and organizing, and leading a team. This image of leadership has been primarily influenced by the participants' personal relationships and experiences, although school curriculum and popular media have also played a role in shaping their ideas. The participants felt that they were leaders at least some of the time but that they were rarely perceived as such by others. The participants appreciated the opportunity to be in the alternate program where they could take advantage of different learning styles and catch up on missed credits. The students in this study had little interest in extra-curricular activities and leadership programs and were motivated primarily by the promise of fun by individuals they trusted. The participants demonstrated having reached a stable sense of identity development but expressed a lack of confidence as a barrier in becoming fully empowered persons. In this final chapter, I share some points for discussion including personal reflections and suggestions for future research.

Self Re-Location

At the beginning of this study, where I composed my narrative beginnings, I spoke about my desire to offer youth leadership development programming that reaches out to those youth who have not traditionally participated in such activities. After hearing the thoughts and stories of the participants, I have gathered some ideas that may help me achieve this goal.

Program Development

As each leadership program follows a leadership philosophy, after completing this study, I would like to develop a program that uses the participants' definition and understandings of leadership as the base philosophy. One possibility is to utilize the participants' description of a leader as a helper as a basis for a program that creates meaningful opportunities for youth to help others. This may include such activities as peer counseling or volunteer work. An important aspect of this type of programming would be labeling the act of helping as one of leadership.

The students in this study expressed being protective of their time and not wanting to commit their after school hours to anything extra. I believe this is related to the idea of ownership. The students cannot control that they have to be in school, if they want to graduate, but they can control what they do after school. This notion reminds me of an advertisement currently playing on television. The commercial is for a sandwich shop and follows a teenager throughout her day being told what to do by various adults. The advertisement then moves to the sandwich shop where the youth is able to ask for anything she wants to be put on her sandwich and is shown eating the creation with a huge grin. The

advertisement ends with a slogan about having things your way. There are many youth leadership development programs that are student run and for those youth who get involved at the organizing level, they really can have it "their way." However, new participants need a different avenue than being the organizer to develop a similar sense of ownership and personal connection to the program.

I believe that youth programs can benefit from a diverse group of participants. Preparing for such a group requires strategies to both accommodate and encourage different styles of learners. Using Gardner's (1989) seven intelligences for example, the program activities should engage learners at all seven levels. This may require some creativity on part of the organizers and patience from the participants as they face activities that may call on one of their less strong intelligences.

Gergen and Gergen (2006) wrote about how narrative can be used for action. They cited examples of organizations and projects that have successfully used narrative for counseling, conflict resolution, and the teaching of history. I would like to develop a youth leadership development program that also uses narrative for action. The participants of this study had a collection of experience stories regarding leadership even when they initially expressed not having an understanding or connection to leadership. Their stories dealt with a combination of instances where they acted as a leader or observed others in a leadership role. Bringing together youth to explore leadership through storytelling could provide a means for the participants to develop a better understanding of leadership and its role in their lives by sharing their personal stories and listening to others. Gergen and Gergen argued that

storytelling invokes emotion, encourages all parties to listen, highlights similarities, and helps eliminate the tendency to argue, as personal life stories cannot be challenged.

Youth Recruitment

This study showed me that youth can redefine their positionality with leadership simply by being asked questions about leadership. Jordan, for example, reframed her experience with the YMCA exchange program as being a leadership program in a matter of minutes during our interview. Drawing on Ryan's (2006) conception of inclusive leadership as a process that people contribute to at different times and in varying roles, I would ask youth to reconsider their personal experiences of leadership. This could be fostered as a recruitment strategy if given access to youth in schools or other venues through workshops, activities, or similar techniques. One possible application of this for program development would be to attempt a program that is based primarily on building a working definition of leadership. This route could lead youth through a similar process that the participants of this study undertook; designing a leadership profile and exploring how that profile connects with their lives.

Many youth leadership development programs require potential participants to submit an application and to prove prior leadership experience. Filling out an application such as this in collaboration with the student could be another avenue for getting the student to think about their personal leadership capabilities and experiences. The research interview format used in this study could be adapted as an entry interview for recruitment purposes.

A finding that came through clearly in relation to recruitment is that the participants required a personal invitation and recommendation from someone they trusted. This person

was generally a very close friend or family member who had already tried the activity and said that it was fun. One recruitment strategy that builds on these ideas is peer recruitment. Students who are already participating or had participated in the program would be aware of their areas of influence in their schools and could recruit with peers whom would trust their opinions.

An alternative strategy would focus on the program developer building a trusting relationship with the youth. I found it relatively easy to develop a relationship with the participants in a short period of time. Abana, in particular confessed that she struggled to share her emotions and was generally afraid to speak with new people, but felt comfortable talking with me. I believe that my trustworthiness came partially from my personality, and was increased by my presence in the classroom, being endorsed by the teacher, and my short one on one informational meetings. Therefore, spending time in the students' environment and meeting with them individually may help with recruitment. Bringing people who have existing relationships with the youth either as the recruiter or in partnership with the person recruiting may also be helpful. A further strategy would be to recruit youth in small groups or pairs to ease anxiety and in hopes of providing positive peer reinforcement as the program progresses.

Program Logistics

An inclusive leadership program has to be accessible. Autumn shared her difficulties attending basketball practice and then finding a ride home. Time and money are additional resources that may be strained by extra-curricular and community activities. Providing

transportation, funding, and multiple program venues are potential strategies for reducing these barriers.

An additional barrier to youth participation is the issue of perceived availability. Navaeh spoke about not having the time to balance both school and extra-curricular or community activities, even though she was excited to start volunteering in the community. She was adamant about not being able to balance these two things and yet every time I met with her she spoke about recent social events she had attended. One possible strategy to overcome Navaeh's perceived lack of availability could be to offer programming that incorporates aspects of her current activities. A second strategy could be to work with both youth and their families to help them understand the benefits of involvement. From personal experience as an involved student, I found that when I had a busy schedule I was more productive in all of my tasks. Although it may sound counter-intuitive that you can get more done be becoming busier, having multiple activities forced me to manage my time effectively. For me personally, participating in leadership programming and extra-curricular activities increased my personal happiness, helped me build friendships, and fostered pride in my accomplishments.

Program Delivery

Although my personal vision of youth leadership development is based on the leadership conference model, because that was my first experience, I recognize that there are many other programs already available. One example is exchange or travel programs. Jordan participated in the YMCA's Canada exchange and was able to explore new cities and cultures while teaching other students about where she lives. In 2006, I participated in the

March of Remembrance and Hope hosted by the Canadian Centre for Diversity. This program brought together university students from across North America with Holocaust survivors and educators on an emotional journey to Poland through concentration camps and historical sites. Both of these unique programs are labeled as student leadership development initiatives by their providers. Additional programs exist around sport, theatre and potentially any activity or topic. Drawing on the knowledge that I gained from this study about the importance and effectiveness of alternative education programs, to make leadership programming more inclusive I would look at what alternative youth leadership programs may be established to complement existing options. I believe that youth leadership development can benefit from modeling aspects of alternative education, such as the focus on choice, different delivery methods, education of the whole person, and individual support and assistance. In providing alternatives, it is important to consider the notion of inclusivity as discussed in recruitment, and how program diversity and youth inclusion can both be upheld.

Future Research

As a narrative inquiry, this study focused on bringing forth the stories of the participants. I have pulled out specific aspects of these stories to answer the guiding questions, presenting a comprehensive understanding of how the participants perceive and experience leadership; what motivates the participants' participation in extra-curricular and community activities; how the participants experience life at school in and out of the classroom; how the participants deal with problem solving and decision making; and how the participants describe themselves. Although I have conducted an analysis to make connections

between the students' experiences of leadership and their level of identity development and empowerment, I believe further research is needed to adequately explore the various connections between the key concepts explored in this study.

Additional further areas for research may involve an extension of this study or a detailed exploration of one or more of its key concepts. To build on this study, a researcher might attempt to follow up with the participants of this study to explore what impact, if any, participating in this study had on their experiences and perceptions of leadership. Alternatively, working with new participants, a longitudinal study could be conducted that checks in with the participants once a year throughout secondary school, monitoring how leadership perceptions shift, how identity develops, and how levels of empowerment change. I think it would also be useful to design a replica of this study that works with male participants instead of female participants to further explore the connections between leadership and gender.

To expand on the existing literature on leadership, research could be conducted that explores whether a wider youth population agrees with the leadership portfolio presented in this study. Focusing on the identity development aspects of this study, further researcher might examine how alternative education programs help students establish a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self. Building on the discussion of empowerment in this study, research could be conducted with marginalized youth using the four elements of empowerment, allowing for a more in depth examination of the four concepts, in particular the interplay between confidence and competence, and the students' understanding of their personal competencies.

Final Thoughts

This study has used the shared narrative of participants and researcher to build on existing literature. A new conception of leadership has been developed using the leadership profile created by the participants. This study has also built on Bromnick and Swallow's (1999) survey research where 23% of participants gave the myself response. All five of the participants in this study adopted the myself attitude and offered their explanations of what it means to like being who you are. This study has also contributed to existing literature on student participation in extra-curricular and community activities. The participants were generally not interested in participating in such activities and provided reasons for this decision ranging from a lack of interest to a lack of time. The participants' perceptions of and experiences with leadership have contributed to existing research on youth leadership development. A further contribution of this study is the compilation of five standards of rigor for narrative research: readability, responsibility, representation, respectfulness, and recognition.

This study provided an opportunity for five young women and their instructors to share their personal experience stories to an attentive and interested listener. For many people, this can be a valuable experience in itself. Jordan admitted after our first interview that she enjoyed being able to talk about her life and share her opinions because she did not think anyone else wanted to hear what she had to say. As a result of the interview questions and process, the students also had the opportunity to reflect on who they are as people and as leaders. Some of the participants uncovered new realizations during this process. For

example, Autumn drastically changed her conception of leadership between interviews from seeing herself in opposition to leadership to seeing herself as a leader of her own life.

When asked for their feelings about being a research participant, the students described the experience as "neat," "fun," "cool," "interesting," and "weird." The experience was described as weird because of the level of thought it provoked and the resulting desire to research the concept of leadership that it evoked in the participant. As the researcher, analyst, and reader I have also found the process to be both fun and interesting and even weird at times. Being welcomed into the participants' lives was an emotional and thought provoking experience as my personal narrative developed alongside and in collaboration with the participants' narratives. As you, the next reader, review this study I hope that you will hear the participants' voices, feel their emotions, and be inspired to draw further conclusions, insight, and inspiration to incorporate into your personal narrative.

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APPENDIX A
Interview Questions

Interview 1

1. What is your first name and age? What name would you like used in this study?
2. Tell me about yourself.
3. Tell me about when and how you became a student in the alternative education program.
4. Describe in detail a typical school day for you from when you get up to bed time.
5. Do you participate in anything at school outside of class? If yes, tell me about it. If no, why not? Do you participate in any community organized activities?
6. When I told you this study was about leadership, what did you start to think about?
7. What does leadership mean to you?
8. Who do you see as the leaders in your school? In your life? Explain your choice(s)
9. Are you a leader? Tell me about how you came to your answer.
10. Do you want to be considered a leader? Tell me about how you came to your answer. Is being a leader a positive thing?
11. Have you ever participated in a leadership program? If yes, tell me about it. If no, why not?

Interview 2

12. Is there anything you would like to change or add to your answers from the first interview?
13. "I like being who I am." Tell me how you feel about this statement. What does it mean? Do you agree with it?
14. Tell me about your relationships with the people around you. Give me an example of a positive relationship. Give me an example of a negative relationship. Which are more common for you?
15. Choose a problem you have had to solve or a decision you have made in your life. Tell me about it and how it was resolved.
16. Using the example from the last question or thinking about other problems/decisions in your life, do you feel like you have the confidence, competence, freedom, and resources to solve problems and make decisions in your life? If yes, how did you obtain these items? If no, what would need to change for you to have these items?
17. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me? Is there anything you would like to ask me?

APPENDIX B
Summary of Findings: Student Newsletter

ISSUE 1

Research Times

OCTOBER 2009

Photo Credit: Nicole Joron

A summary of research findings from the study:

The Role of Leadership in Negotiating Adolescent Identity: Voices of Female Secondary School Students in Alternative Education

Conducted by Nicole M. Joron

Thank You!

I would like to thank you once again for participating in this study! I truly enjoyed hearing your stories, thoughts, and ideas.

I have created this newsletter to give you a short summary of my thesis (the research paper I wrote using the information from the interviews).

If you have any questions for me, comments about anything in this newsletter, or would like more information, please contact me and let me know! I would love to hear how you are doing.

Wishing you the best,
Nicole Joron

Email: JORONN@UNBC.CA

I collected information for my study by:

- **Observing two classrooms at Northdale Secondary School.**
- **Interviewing the two teachers of the classrooms I observed: Mr. Scott and Ms. Hartwell.**
- **Interviewing five students enrolled in the alternate education program at Northdale: Abana, Autumn, Bridget, Jordan, and Navaeh. Each student had two interviews.**
- **Keeping a research journal with personal thoughts and reflections.**
- **Reading books and articles related to my study.**

(* All names changed.)

I gathered all of this information together to look at how female students in alternative education perceive and experience leadership and how this connects with the students' development of a stable sense of identity and an empowered sense of self.

To explore these topics, I answered seven guiding questions.

In This Issue...

Each page of this newsletter will provide a summary answer to the following key questions reviewed in my study:

1) **What is the experience of students in alternative education?**
2) **How do the participants define leadership?**
3) **What have been the contributing factors to the definition of leadership formed by the participants?**
4) **Are the participants seen as leaders by either themselves or others?**
5) **What motivates the participants' participation or non-participation in extra-curricular activities and/or leadership programs?**
6) **Have the participants reached a stable sense of identity development?**
7) **Do the participants feel empowered?**

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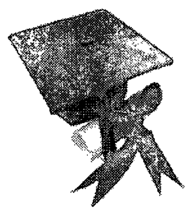
APPENDIX B
Summary of Findings: Student Newsletter

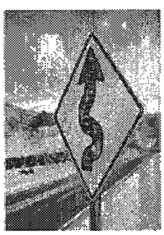
Alternate Education Program

You were asked about your experience in the alternate education program. Here is what you liked about being in the program.



The alternate program provides students with an opportunity to achieve a Dogwood Diploma through alternative means.

"It helps me get along with school faster... If I wasn't in alternate education I wouldn't be graduating on time. I have to stay another semester already..." (Jordan)

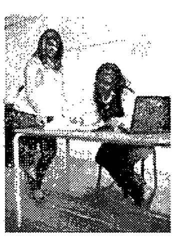


The alternate program offers students a "second chance" to succeed in high school.

"When you think of it, it's a second chance. Like if you mess up before you *can* get yourself caught up and they [the teachers] want to help you." (Navaeh)

The alternate program allows students to work at their own pace.

"You can look at the book, you don't have to listen to anybody, you have your work and then you can mark your own stuff so you can see where you went wrong." (Bridget)



Teachers in the alternate program offer motivation and individualized help.

"He motivates us a lot... at the end of the day everyday he's like *(in an enthusiastic voice)* 'you guys did *awesome* today! Really fantastic!' ... It makes me feel good!" (Abana)

You shared some of the struggles you have faced learning in the regular classroom.

* Keeping up with classroom lectures and the amount of information delivered in them.

[illegible] (Jordan)

* School is not enjoyable, it is "boring."

[illegible] (Autumn)

* The stress and frustration experienced from being timed and pushed to meet deadlines.

[illegible] (Autumn)

* Reading is difficult and not enjoyable.

[illegible] (Autumn)

* You prefer to learn by singing, drawing, or in other creative ways.

[illegible]

APPENDIX B
Summary of Findings: Student Newsletter

A Leader is Someone Who...

Listed from most to least popular idea:

1. Is helpful
2. Takes charge
3. Leads others in the right direction or stands up for what is right
4. Plans and organizes
5. Leads a team
6. Is a family member
7. Teaches
8. Is my peer (a student at this school)
9. Role models
10. Is outgoing and cheerful
11. Is a boss or authority figure
12. I feel that I can go to
13. I don't know what leadership is
14. Is taking the school's leadership class
15. Has experience
16. Everyone is a leader
17. Has confidence and purpose
18. Is caring
19. Takes action and gets things done
20. Motivates and inspires
21. Is a good person
22. Collaborates
23. I am a leader
24. Is a principal or member of the school board
25. Is supportive
26. Makes decisions
27. Is a public figure (ex. celebrity)
28. Is respectful
29. Is strong
30. Has the leader personality
31. Makes sacrifices
32. Is accepting
33. Is appreciative
34. Is responsible

Defining Leadership

You were asked what leadership means to you personally and who you see as leaders. Here is what the five student participants said as a group.

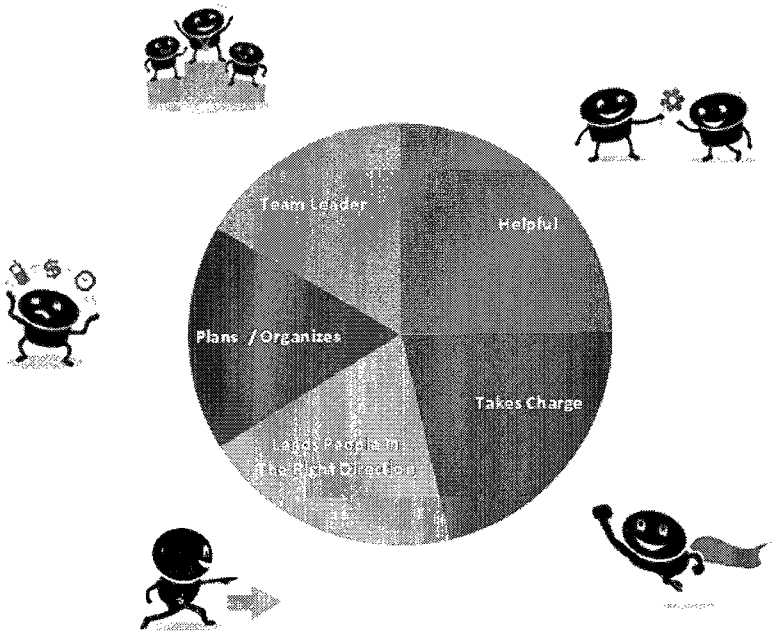
One author said there are as many definitions of leadership as there are people who write about it. By participating in this study you helped create a new defination of leadership based on your personal beliefs and experiences!

As a group, the 5 students who participated in this study said that a leader is someone who is helpful.

Examples of leaders as helpers from the interviews:

- **"She just looks for any way to help" (Navaeh)**
- **"My mum took care of everybody and put everybody else in front of her and tried to make them better" (Bridget)**
- **"Somebody who helps out with the program." (Jordan)**
- **"She's done so much for me." (Autumn)**
- **"We'd do like scavenger hunts and stuff and my mom would like set up the whole thing... she'd set up the apple thing and like help my grandma make jello and..." (Abana)**

Top 5 Characteristics of Leadership



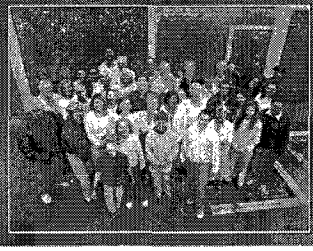
APPENDIX B
Summary of Findings: Student Newsletter

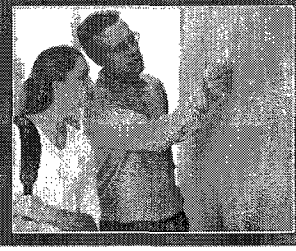
Defining Leadership

You were asked what your ideas about leadership were based on. Here is what was said in the interviews.

1. Personal Experiences and Relationships

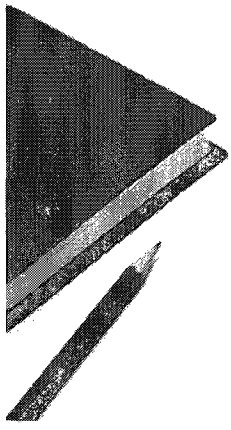
Your told me that your ideas about leadership have been influenced the greatest by your personal experiences and relationships. You described leaders as family members, peers, and teachers, and used stories about these people to explain what leadership means.





2. School Curriculum

* To describe leadership you spoke about students enrolled in the school's Leadership Course offered in grades 11 and 12. These students were identified as leaders for organizing school activities.



* Ahana spoke about Family Studies as a source of information about leadership, specifically connected to relationships in the work place.

* Mr. Scott identified the Social Studies curriculum as a source of information about leadership. Here, students learn about the suffrage movement, First Nations issues, and other great acts of leadership throughout history.

3. Media

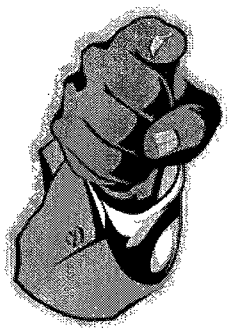
* Navaeh was inspired by the music and lyrics of Tupac Shakur. From his music she gathered messages of *hope about building a positive life* and treating people with respect.

* Bridget found stories about leadership in the pages of a variety of magazines. She remembered one article in particular from O, The Oprah Magazine that highlighted the story of a young woman who had used drugs since the age of 8. Bridget felt that the young woman's ability to overcome this situation to become a top college student demonstrated leadership.

O, THE OPRAH MAGAZINE

Photo Credits: www.tupac.com, www.oprah.com/magazine/omagazine

APPENDIX B
Summary of Findings: Student Newsletter



Are You A Leader?

You were asked whether you are seen as a leader by yourself or others. The numbers on this page represent the number of students who gave that response.

Do you see yourself as a leader?

No	1
Yes	2
Sometimes	2

"I think so. When it comes to umm... certain things, I will take charge." (Bridget)

"Well everyone is their own person and like everyone is their own leader." (Autumn)

"Nicole: Does that make you a leader in general or only when you're doing those activities (example: peer tutoring)?
Jordan: No, only when I'm doing that thing."

Do other people see you as a leader?

No	3
Yes	0
Some People	2

"Probably not *laughs*. Probably not because like I'm really silly and.... I'd rather be silly than be serious and I guess like, other people might think a leader would be serious, so..." (Abana)

"I know my mom does definitely. Umm, I know my... most of my friends do. Some of my friends don't know me well enough to see me as anything more than the random person, that girl who dances randomly in the hall." (Bridget)

"Ah, I guess so but at the same time no. Because... that to me if people think of you as a leader gives you pressure. Just makes me feel pressured if that was actually to happen with me and I don't like being under pressure at all. So I guess I don't know, possibly but probably not." (Jordan)

"It's like yeah it feels good helping someone else cause at the same time it's also helping you." (Navaeh)

Do you want other people to see you as a leader?

No	3
Yes	1
Undecided	1

APPENDIX B
Summary of Findings: Student Newsletter

Student Participation

You were asked whether you participated in extracurricular activities or leadership development programs and why or why not. Here is what you said during the interviews

Your current after-school activities include...

People
- Hanging out with:
  - Friends
  - Family
  - Boyfriend

Fitness
- Horse back riding
- Snowboarding
- Walking on a treadmill
- Skating
- Going for walks
- Taking yoga classes

Home
- On the computer
- Doing homework
- Watching television
- Writing poetry
- Drawing

Community
- Babysitting
- Partying
- Attending school dances
- Watching hockey games

Participation

In the past....
- You spoke about school and community organized activities that you participated in years past. These activities focused on sport and included school and community sports teams such as volleyball, basketball, soccer, and softball. Some of the students had participated in additional community organized activities such as youth groups and taking singing lessons.

In the present....
- Jordan shared that she still volunteers as a skating teacher and assistant coach of a baseball team for younger children.
- Abana sometimes attends yoga classes at the YMCA.
- The other students were not involved in any such activities. Navaeh and Bridget expressed some interest in possibly getting involved again.

Leadership Development Programs....
- Navaeh spoke about her role as a teen leader at her local Friendship Centre while in elementary school.
- When first asked if they had participated in any youth leadership development programs, Bridget and Jordan were unsure. During our interview they decided that their participation in workshops and an exchange program could be considered leadership development programs.

Motivation

When asked, "Would you participate in a leadership development program?"

The general response was "No."

No Interest....
- Abana and Autumn has no interest whatsoever.
- Autumn added that she did not think she would be "good at that."
- Jordan was only interested in something where she could work with younger children and did not want to participate in any programming with her peers.

No Knowledge....
- Bridget and Autumn both said that they had never considered the possibility of participating in a youth leadership development program before.
- Naveh said she knew there were lots of opportunities but did not know what they where or how to get involved: "There's lots though I just don't know but yeah there's lots of different things, things you wouldn't even think of." (Navaeh)

No Time....
- Navaeh was interested in getting involved but did not feel she could balance any extra activities with her existing school work.

APPENDIX B
Summary of Findings: Student Newsletter

Identity Development

Throughout their lives, people continue to develop - their bodies grow and change, and they mature mentally and emotionally. An important part of human development is finding your personal identity. Developing your identity is an important part of being a teenager. During adolescence is when people really start to explore questions such as:

- Who am I as a distinct person?
- Who am I in relation to others?
- Who will I be in the future?

The "Myself" Response

In 1999, two researchers named R. Bromnick and B. Swallow conducted a study to see who teenagers saw as their heroes. One of the questions on their survey asked students, "If you were able to choose to be somebody else who would you choose?" Approximately 25% of the students said that they were "happy to be themselves." This answer became known as the "myself response."

A person who gives the "myself response" is said to have "personal happiness, a stable sense of identity, and high self-esteem."

Bromnick, R. D., & Swallow, B. (1999). "I like being who I am": A study of young people's views. Educational Studies, 25(2), 117-126.

Identity Development

You were asked whether you agree with the statement "I like being who I am."

All five of the students in this study said "yes, I like being who I am," which is indicative of having a reached a stable sense of identity development.

What does it mean to say, "I like being who I am"?

- **"To like who you are you're going to have to like think positively of yourself..." (Abana)**
- **"Just confidence... happiness, feel pleased with yourself..." (Autumn)**
- **"You're comfortable with everything about you." (Bridget)**
- **You are "able to understand who you are," like your personality, and are "able to be happy and not always so depressed." (Jordan)**
- **"You're happy with who you are and how you are towards people and your image you put off and just the way you connect with other people that you get a good vibe instead of a wrong vibe where people don't really care for you." (Navaeh)**

Overcoming Obstacles

You shared stories of difficult situations and decisions you have dealt with. Your stories touched on a variety of topics including: unhealthy relationships with friends, boyfriends, and family; partying, alcohol and drugs; the loss of friends and family; depression and self-harm; heartbreak; bullying; emotional abuse; and struggles with success at school. Some of you also spoke about a time in the past where you "hated" yourself.

All five students have overcome large obstacles in their lives and have grown from their successes. Here are some thoughts shared on learning to "like being who you are."

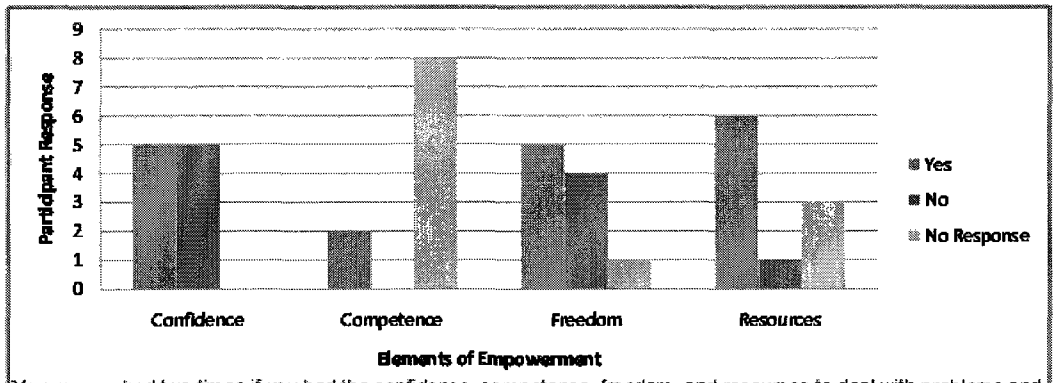
- **"I don't know it just kind of happened. You know when, you're just sick of like looking at yourself and bringing yourself down... I just kind of got sick of that." (Autumn)**
- **"I started saying 'hey! I'm not that bad, I like myself' and I started saying that everyday and it... kind of turned into that... I like myself for who I am and it's what I think that matters, not anybody else or not anybody else's thoughts. Then when I turned 17, I think everything changed I was like, hey! I'm amazing!" (Bridget)**
- **"I used to call myself ugly and all that all of the time... but I just kind of got over it. If people don't like me for who I am then they can just... toodles!" (Jordan)**

APPENDIX B
Summary of Findings: Student Newsletter

Level of Empowerment

A person who is empowered, has the confidence, competence, freedom, and resources to become an independent problem solver and decision maker.

You were asked to share a problem or decision that you have faced in your life. You were then asked to consider whether you had access to confidence, competence, freedom, and resources to deal with the problem/decision you identified or any other problems/decisions in your life.



You were asked two times if you had the confidence, competence, freedom, and resources to deal with problems and decisions – once in relation to the problem or decision you spoke about in the interview and a second time talking about general problems or decisions you face. This graph shows the combined responses of all five students to these two questions. A person who is fully empowered would have all 'yes' responses, or only blue bars.

This graph shows that in dealing with problems and decisions, the students as a group, do not feel fully empowered.

Of the four elements (confidence, competence, freedom, and resources), the students said:

- **The element they could best access was *resources*.**
- **The element they had the most difficulty accessing was *confidence*: "It's usually my confidence that brings me down in dealing with a problem." (Abana)**
- **The element that was the most misunderstood was *competence*. All of the students had a hard time discussing what role competence played in their decision making and problem solving processes. Most of the students did not talk about competence and therefore, it is unknown whether competence is a larger obstacle than confidence for the participants.**

Ciulla, J.B. (1996). Leadership and the problem of bogus empowerment. In *Ethics and Leadership Working Papers*. Maryland: Academy of Leadership Press.

Fetterman, D, Kaftarian, S. & Wandersman, A. (Eds.) (1996) *Empowerment evaluation: Knowledge and tools for self-assessment and accountability*. London: Sage Publications.

APPENDIX D
University of Northern British Columbia Research Ethics Board Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

MEMORANDUM

To: Nicole Joron
CC: Willow Brown

From: Henry Harder, Chair
Research Ethics Board

Date: December 9, 2008

Re: **E2008.1124.205**
The role of leadership in negotiating adolescent identity: Voices of female secondary school students in alternative education

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Thank you for submitting the above-noted research proposal and requested amendments to the Research Ethics Board. Your proposal has been approved.

We are pleased to issue approval for the above named study for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of REB approval. Any changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form must be approved by the Research Ethics Board.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Henry Harder

APPENDIX E
Student Information Form

Title of study: The Role of Leadership in Negotiating Adolescent Identity: Voices of Female Secondary School Students in Alternative Education

Information About the Study

- This study is being conducted by Nicole Joron, Candidate for the Master of Education degree under the supervision of Professor Dr. Willow Brown at the University of Northern British Columbia.
- The purpose of this study is to explore how female youth in alternative education define and perceive leadership and the role this plays in their identity development.
- This study has been reviewed by School District 57 and the Research Ethics Board at the University of Northern British Columbia.

Information for Participants

- This study is restricted to female students in grades 11 and 12 who are enrolled in the alternative education program at Northdale Secondary School.
- As a participant, you will be asked to participate in two interviews. Each interview will be conducted within 90 minutes and take place at a location of your convenience.
- By participating in this study you will be contributing your personal experience stories related to leadership.
- There are no risks associated with participating in this study.
- If at anytime you would like to quit this study, you may do so by advising the researcher of your decision. If you choose to quit the study any information that you have provided will be automatically withdrawn.

Confidentiality

- Names and any other self-identifying information is not required, and individual information will be removed from the interview transcript upon your request.
- You will be provided with a copy of the interview transcript for your approval before your responses are used for the study. You will be invited to discuss the transcript by phone, email, mail, or in an optional third interview.
- Interview transcripts will be kept in a secure location away from the research site.
- Data that includes identifying information will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Contact Information

- If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, or would like to be informed of the results, please contact Nicole Joron at joronn@unbc.ca
- Any complaints should be directed to the Office of Research at the University of Northern British Columbia, 250-960-5820 or by email at reb@unbc.ca

*Please keep this form for your records

APPENDIX E
Student Consent Form

Title of study: The Role of Leadership in Negotiating Adolescent Identity: Voices of Female Secondary School Students in Alternative Education

Researcher: Nicole Joron, Candidate, MEd, University of Northern British Columbia
Nicole can be contacted by email at joronn@unbc.ca

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research study.	□ Yes	□ No
I have read and understand all of the information provided to me on the information form.	□ Yes	□ No
I understand that the interviews will be recorded.	□ Yes	□ No
I understand who will have access to the information that I provide.	□ Yes	□ No
I understand the risks and benefits of participating in this study.	□ Yes	□ No
I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study with the researcher.	□ Yes	□ No
I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions asked of me or to withdraw from the study entirely at any time with no explanation necessary.	□ Yes	□ No

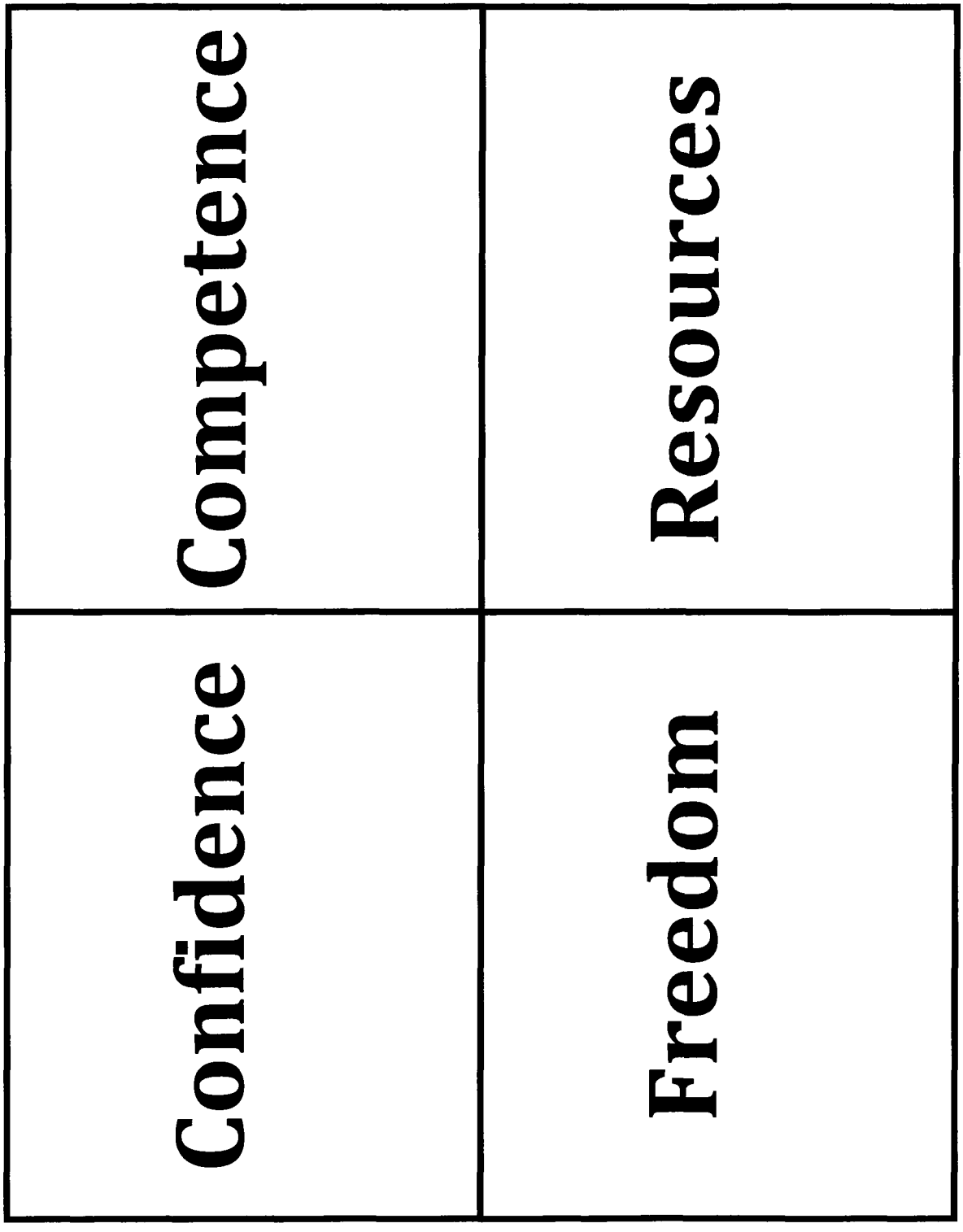
_____
Name of Research Participant (please print)

_____ _____
Signature of Research Participant *Month / Day / Year*

_____ _____
Signature of Parent/Guardian (students under 19) *Month / Day / Year*

*Please keep a copy of this form for your records

APPENDIX F
Cue Cards Front (Interview Question #16)



APPENDIX F
Cue Cards Back (Interview Question #16)

Confidence:

The mental attitude of trusting in or relying on a person or thing; firm trust, reliance, faith.

Synonyms: self-assurance, feeling of certainty, assurance

"It was a really, really hard hill and tough hill conditions but I had a lot of confidence so I knew if I just skied like I normally do in training that it would work out."
- Prince George Citizen (Feb. 15'09)

Competence:

Sufficiency of qualification; capacity to deal adequately with a subject.

Synonyms: ability, aptitude, capability, capacity

"Choosing sports for the Olympic program was outside the scope of his competence."
- Prince George Citizen (Aug. 15'08)

Freedom:

Facility or ease in action or activity; absence of encumbrance or hindrance.

Synonyms: liberty, autonomy, independence

"Successful islet cell transplants, known as the Edmonton Protocol, have been conducted on people with type 1 diabetes, allowing them freedom to stop taking insulin.
- Prince George Citizen (Feb. 15'09)

Resources:

A means of supplying some want or deficiency; a stock or reserve upon which one can draw when necessary.

Synonyms: capital, assets, means

"While we've devoted substantial resources to developing these products and learned a lot along the way, we haven't had the impact we hoped for."
- Prince George Citizen (Feb. 12'09

APPENDIX F
Cue Cards (Interview Questions #7 and #13)

Leadership

"I Like Being Who I Am."

APPENDIX G
Leadership Development Resource List

4-H www.bc4h.bc.ca

The 4-H program provides young people with an opportunity to learn how to become productive, self-assured adults who can make their community and country a good place in which to live. This is fostered through project and program work, experiences with their 4-H club members and leaders and their participation in district, regional and even provincial programs.

Altitude Youth Experience Altitude@2010LegaciesNow.com
www.spiritofbc.com/altitude.php

Spirit of BC's Altitude Youth Experience gives you a chance to get involved in your community, learn new skills and contribute to developing a community youth legacy in British Columbia. For youth aged 16-18. Youth Experience will cover all costs for successful applicants including travel, accommodation, and food. Visit the website for information about applying to the 2009 program.

British Columbia Youth Parliament Current Youth Parliament Premier: tyler.allison@bcyp.org
www.bcyp.org

The BC Youth Parliament is run by and for youth ages 16 to 21. This organization offers community services and regional youth parliaments. They also host an annual youth empowerment conference and run a summer camp for younger students.

Believe In Our Youth www.believeinouryouth.com

Our main central focus is in developing a purpose in the lives of Aboriginal youth through workshops in Creativity, Mindfulness (focus) and Entrepreneurship.

Canada World Youth (CWY) www.canadaworldyouth.org

Canada World Youth is a world leader in the development of international educational programs for youth aged 15 to 25. We work with countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe.

Cadets Canada www.cadets.ca

Cadets is a national program for youth ages 12 to 18 who want to make new friends while participating in fun and challenging activities.

Canadian Student Leadership Conference (CSLC) www.casaaleadership.ca/conferences.html

The CSLC is the national conference for student leaders and advisors. It began in 1985 in Yorkton, Saskatchewan and has made its way across the country since. These conferences have full schedules of great speakers and fun programming that you will not want to miss out on.

2009 National Canadian Student Leadership Conference www.cslc2009.ca
The 2009 National conference will be held in Alberta from Sept. 27 – Oct. 3. Registration for the event opens March 15, 2009.

2009 Provincial Student Leadership Conference http://fc2.sd23.bc.ca/BCSLC2009/Home%20Page
The 2009 provincial conference, "Find Your Inner Hero – Be A Super Leader!" will run Oct. 22-25 in Kelowna, BC. Registration opens Feb. 1, 2009.

Family YMCA of Prince George 250-562-9341
www.pgymca.bc.ca

Borealis Leadership Program www.pgymca.bc.ca/camp-kanannaq.htm
This leadership program is for the 13 to 16 year old looking for the leader within. Borealis is a one-month program that runs twice a week in which participants will develop their leadership potential along with both personal and professional skill sets. The program runs for five optional months in total with each month having two different and unique overlying leadership themes. Open to the public at no charge. Space is limited so register today and discover yourself with Borealis!

Drop-in Theatre (10+ yrs) www.pgymca.bc.ca/family-preschool.htm
An open theatre drop-in time that offers great activities and techniques to build confidence and personal expression. Classes are full of movement and parents are welcome to join in. Free for members.

Girl Guides of Canada 1-800-565-8111
www.bc-girlguides.org

Girl Guides offers girls aged 5-17 opportunities to discover new interests, learn leadership skills and tools, and make lasting friendships. The organization also offers a variety of volunteer opportunities for women of all ages.

Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society (IMSS) Youth Programs www.imss.ca

Youth for Youth: Anti-racism and Anti-Bullying Awareness
Youth facilitators between the ages of 16-25 are needed to provide education and awareness about racism and diversity to elementary school youth in Prince George and surrounding communities. Youth facilitators will be trained in the areas of racism, homophobia, diversity, hate crimes, and cross-cultural understanding with the underlying goal to prevent bullying and harassment of others.

Youth Host Buddy Program
This program aims to 'Buddy" up newly immigrated youth with already established Canadian youth. The youth are matched on similar interests, hobbies, and age. The youth then participate in a series of one on one and group activities.

Learning to Lead Leadership Development Program (The Minerva Foundation) www.theminervafoundation.com/programs

The Learning to Lead Program brings together women who are high school students, graduate students and business and community leaders from around the province for an annual conference. Participants interact and learn from each other through a series of workshops and activities that help participants gain tools to achieve their personal, educational and career goals.

Royal Canadian Legion www.bcyuk.legion.ca/main/youth-leadership-and-development

The Legion offers a number of youth leadership development opportunities, including:

- **Encounters with Canada** www.ewc-rdc.ca/en/our_youth_program/index.html
  Every week of the school year, over 100 youth ages 14-17 from across Canada head to Ottawa for a week of discovery, learning, and leadership development. Some weeks have special themes that may be of particular interest.

- **Youth Leaders Remembrance Pilgrimages**
  Every two years the Legion brings a group of youth leaders to Europe where they learn first hand about Canada's history of service.

Street Spirits Theatre Company 250-565-6332
www.streetspirits.com

Street Spirits is a youth driven social action theatre company that uses techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed along with other techniques to create audience interactive performances that raise awareness and generate solutions to problems of concern to the community and to the world.

Volunteer Prince George

250-564-0224
http://volunteerpg.com/vpg_2008_003.htm

Sign up for a mailing list that advertises a variety of volunteer opportunities in Prince George. Keep your eyes open for a volunteer opportunity that interests you!

Youth Advisory Board (YAB)
(Prince George Public Library)

250-563-9251 local 108
mchurch@lib.pg.bc.ca
www.lib.pg.bc.ca/teens/yab

The YAB meets 1-2 times per month to plan events, work on marketing, build websites/blogs, and volunteer in the library and community. Youth ages 13-18 are eligible to apply for this great opportunity. Applications are accepted year round, and are especially encouraged in May and August.

APPENDIX H
Community Resource List

Alateen 250-563-7305
www.al-anon.alateen.org

Al-Anon (which includes Alateen for younger members) offers strength and hope for friends and families of problem drinkers. It is estimated that each alcoholic affects the lives of at least four other people... alcoholism is truly a family disease. No matter what relationship you have with an alcoholic, whether they are still drinking or not, all who have been affected by someone else's drinking can find solutions that lead to serenity in the Al-Anon/Alateen fellowship.

Crisis Prevention, Intervention & Information Centre for Northern BC
24-Hour Line: 1-888-562-1214
Youth Support Line: 1-888-564-8336
www.northernbccrisissuicide.ca

You can call this line if you are feeling overwhelmed, depressed, confused, suicidal or just needing someone to listen. The Crisis Prevention, Intervention & Information Centre for Northern BC is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing emotional support, suicide intervention and referral information to the people of Northern BC. The 24-hour line operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Youth Support Line operates 4pm - 11pm, 7 days a week, after hours calls are directly forwarded to the 24-hour line. Youth line calls are answered by youth 21 and younger.

Family YMCA of Prince George 250-562-9341
www.pgymca.bc.ca

Some of the YMCA's Youth Resources:

Homework-Help (Grade 1-12) www.pgymca.bc.ca/family-preschool.htm
Need help with homework? Struggling with a class subject and need some assistance? College and university student volunteers come in and help with homework. Drop-in to the YMCA for help from a tutor. Free for members.

You Can Go Program Coordinator: Diandra Oliver (Ext. 226), diandra.oliver@pgymca.bc.ca
Support for youth and their communities in navigating Post-Secondary Education, completing high school, and developing a sense of their career-self! Weekly drop-in sessions are held at Youth Around Prince George, appointments are also available.

HealthLink BC

24-Hour Line: 8-1-1
www.healthlinkbc.ca

Speak with a nurse about your symptoms, consult with a pharmacist about your medication questions, or get healthy eating advice from a dietitian. You can also find the health services and resources you need, closest to you. Any time of the day or night, every day of the year, HealthLink BC is as close as your phone or the web 24/7.

Helpline For Children
(Ministry of Children & Family Development)

310-1234 (no area code needed)
www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/getting_help/help.htm

Phone this number to report child abuse anytime, day or night (a child is anyone under the age of 19). Abuse can be physical, emotional or sexual. Abuse can be abandonment, desertion, neglect, ill-treatment, or failure to meet the physical, emotional needs or medical needs of a child. There is always a social worker at the end of the telephone willing to listen, someone to take action, someone who cares. Just reach for the Helpline. Anyone can call. This is a toll-free service. If you are calling from a pay-phone, there is no charge to call the operator.

Intersect Youth and Family Services

250-562-6639
info@mail.intersect.bc.ca
www.intersect.bc.ca

A non-profit society that provides voluntary counselling for children and youth under the age of 19 years.

Kid's Help Phone

24-Hour Line: 1-800-668-6868
www.kidshelpphone.ca

Canada's only toll-free, 24-hour, bilingual and anonymous phone counselling, referral and Internet service for children and youth. Every day, professional counsellors provide immediate, caring support to young people in urban and rural communities across the country.

Northern Health Authority

250- 565-2649
www.northernhealth.ca

Northern Health is responsible for the delivery of health care across Northern B.C., including acute care, mental health, public health, addictions, and home and community care services.

Northern Health programs include:

- Prince George Regional Hospital - Diabetes Education Centre (250- 565-2464)
- Northern Health Unit - Healthy Eating Active Living Initiative (250- 565-7390)
- Northern Interior Health Unit - Women's Health and Wellness Program (250- 565-7350)
- Mental Health and Addictions Services (250- 565-7417)
- Tobacco Reduction Strategy (250- 565-7344)

Prideline

1-800-566-1170 (Toll Free)
www.lgtbcentrevancouver.com

(The Centre: A Community Centre Serving and Supporting Lesbian, Gay, Transgendered, Bisexual People and Their Allies)

The Prideline is The Centre's peer support/information/referral phone line. It functions 7 days per week from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. serving callers and walk-ins both locally and province wide. The Prideline provides a non-judgmental, supportive service to the LGTB communities.

Northdale Secondary School Counselling Department

The PGSS Counselling Center welcomes students to drop into the office before school, during class breaks or after school or during a study period to make appointments or browse through the information files. Pamphlets on a variety of topics, as well as post-secondary calendars, are available.

Prince George Native Friendship Centre

250- 564-3568
info@pgnfc.com
www.pgnfc.com

The Friendship Centre is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization dedicated to servicing the needs of Aboriginal people residing in the urban area and improving the quality of life in the community as a whole. Fundamental to this is recognizing the inherent worth of all peoples regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, or culture and to promote this view in the community at large.

Prince George P.A.R.T.Y. Program

www.pgpartyprogram.ca

P.A.R.T.Y. stands for "Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth." It is a program intended to educate youth, aged 16+, about the possible outcomes of engaging in risky or dangerous behavior.

Won't Get Weird

1-800-SEX-SENSE (739-7367)
http://bc.wontgetweird.com

WontGetWeird, is a network of organizations and individuals who "won't get weird' when you need to talk about your sexual health.

Prince George Resources Include:

- All Options Pregnancy Counselling Program (250-565-7458)
- OPT (Options for Sexual Health) Prince George (250-565-7477)
- Prince George Sexual Assault Centre (250-564-8303)
- Prince George Wellness Clinic (250-561-2689)

Youth Around Prince Resource Centre (YAP) http://youtharoundprince.com

YAP is dedicated to provide opportunities and services for youth in need, in a safe supportive environment based upon the principles of respect, equality, diversity, personal responsibility, acceptance, belonging and fun for the purpose of assisting and encouraging youth to enhance their lives and reach their goals.

Future Cents 250-565-6333
(A YAP Program) www.futurecents.ca

Future Cents is a pre-employment program for at risk/high risk youth who have acquired a degree of self-awareness and who are working toward leading healthy lives. Future Cents assists them in acquiring the experience, skills and information they need to prepare them for employment.

APPENDIX I
Teacher Information Form

Title of study: The Role of Leadership in Negotiating Adolescent Identity: Voices of Female Secondary School Students in Alternative Education

Information About the Study

- This study is being conducted by Nicole Joron, Candidate for the Master of Education degree under the supervision of Professor Dr. Willow Brown at the University of Northern British Columbia.
- The purpose of this study is to explore how female youth in alternative education define and perceive leadership and the role this plays in their identity development.
- This study has been reviewed by School District 57 and the Research Ethics Board at the University of Northern British Columbia.

Participant Information

- By participating in this study you are agreeing to assist in facilitating a short period of classroom observation and to participate in one interview. The interview will be conducted within 90 minutes and take place at a location of your convenience.
- The interview will be conducted informally and will focus on the alternative education program and classroom environment.
- There are no risks associated with participating in this study.
- If at anytime you would like to quit this study, you may do so by advising the researcher of your decision. If you choose to quit the study any information that you have provided will be automatically withdrawn.

Confidentiality

- Names and any other self-identifying information is not required, and individual information will be removed from the interview transcript upon your request.
- You will be provided with a copy of the interview transcript for your approval before your responses are used for the study. You will be invited to discuss the transcript by phone, email, mail, or in an optional third interview.
- Interview transcripts will be kept in a secure location away from the research site.
- Data that includes identifying information will be destroyed at the end of the study.

Contact Information

- If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, or would like to be informed of the results, please contact Nicole Joron at joronn@unbc.ca
- Any complaints should be directed to the Office of Research at the University of Northern British Columbia, 960-5820 or by email at reb@unbc.ca

*Please keep this form for your records

APPENDIX I
Teacher Consent Form

Title of study: The Role of Leadership in Negotiating Adolescent Identity: Voices of Female Secondary School Students in Alternative Education

Researcher: Nicole Joron, Candidate, MEd, University of Northern British Columbia
Nicole can be contacted by email at joronn@unbc.ca

I understand that I have been asked to participate in a research study.	□ Yes	□ No
I have read and understand all of the information provided to me on the information form.	□ Yes	□ No
I understand that the interview will be recorded.	□ Yes	□ No
I understand who will have access to the information that I provide.	□ Yes	□ No
I understand the risks and benefits of participating in this study.	□ Yes	□ No
I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study with the researcher.	□ Yes	□ No
I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions asked of me or to withdraw from the study entirely at any time with no explanation necessary.	□ Yes	□ No

_____
Name of Research Participant (please print)

_____ _____
Signature of Research Participant *Month / Day / Year*

*Please keep a copy of this form for your records

APPENDIX J
Sample Cover Letter Attached To Interview Transcripts

Tuesday, April 27, 2009

Hi Jordan!

Thank you again for agreeing to help me with my research. I really enjoyed getting to know you and I hope that you are doing well!

Attached is a copy of the transcripts (written records) of our two interviews. The only changes I have made are to remove the names of people and places to assure your privacy. As we talked about, **I need you to approve the transcripts before I can use them for my research.** I will be using the transcripts to write my thesis (research paper). My finished paper will be presented at conferences and kept in the University's library as a book.

Reading the transcripts is a chance for you to:

- See what you have said before I use our interviews for my research.
- Remove parts of the transcript if you feel that there is something you have said that you would not like to be shared.
- Change something you've said if you feel like it does not reflect what you were trying to say.
- Change or remove something that you are concerned might give away your identity.
- Have a written record of the interviews for you to keep.

If you have any questions or would like to talk about anything in the transcripts before you approve them, we can talk over email, phone, or arrange to meet again in person. That is no problem!

If you are ready to approve the transcripts, please send me an email at JORONN@unbc.ca with the following information:

I, *[First & Last Name]*, on this *[Date - example: 24th]* day of May, have read the full interview transcripts provided to me by Ms. Nicole Joron and I agree that they can be used for her Master's thesis entitled; The Role of Leadership in Negotiating Adolescent Identity: Voices of Female Secondary School Students in Alternative Education.

Please send me an email or text/call when you open this envelope to let me know that you received everything. I would greatly appreciate it if you could get back to me within one week of receiving this message about any changes you would like to make or with your approval. I know it is a lot of pages and so if you need more time or need help getting through it just let me know and we'll work something out.

Thank you SO much!

Nicole

Nicole Joron, MEd Candidate
University of Northern British Columbia
Email: joronn@unbc.ca
Cell: [redacted]

• THANK YOU! •