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LEARNING TO LEAD: LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF ST. LUCIAN YOUTH

Abstract

An exploratory, qualitative multiple case study approach was used to investigate perceptions of leadership through the voice of young (ages 18-24) citizens of St. Lucia, West Indies. Specifically, investigators were interested in better understanding the young peoples' leadership beliefs, experiences, and people of influence. Participants perceived leadership to be about helping other people, communication, teamwork, and morality. The most valuable leader development experiences were experiences that the young people perceived were connected to leadership. Participants viewed familiar adults, rather than famous foreigners or youth peers as the most important people to aid in youth leader development.

Introduction

Leader development begins well before adulthood (Mack et al., 2011); it is a complex, iterative process that takes place throughout an individual's life (Day & Sin, 2011). A person's leader development can be affected by a number of factors, including the individual's perception of leadership (Avolio & Vogelgesang, 2011). Perceptions of leadership are an important element in the process of leader learning because perceptions of leadership will greatly influence leadership attitudes and actions (Dempster, Lizzio, Keefe, Skinner, & Andrews, 2010). These perceptions of leadership can be formed early in life (Murphy, 2011). Therefore, researchers have encouraged youth development practitioners to use youth perceptions of leadership as a starting point for organized youth leader development programs; however, youth perceptions are not always obtained or used in this manner (Archard, 2013; Caza & Rosch, 2013). The voice of the youth is, therefore, an

important, but often ignored element in their leader learning (Roach et al., 1999; Dempster et al., 2010). The general problem is that, internationally, the voice of youth is mostly absent in leader development efforts (Dempster et al., 2011).

Caribbean youth leader development is also an emerging, yet seemingly understudied subject (McBride, Johnson, Olate, & O'Hara, 2011). International organizations, Caribbean researchers, and regional governments have advocated the need for more youth leader development in the Caribbean and specifically, in the island nation of St. Lucia (Webster, Ganpat, & Chester, 2013; Zimmerman, Lawes, & Svenson, 2012). Young St. Lucian leaders are needed because migration has depleted the leadership base in St. Lucia and the Caribbean (Beine, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2008). However, because of the absence of the voice of the young people, youth leader training in the Caribbean may be derived from a predominately adult, Western cultural worldview

(Hall, 2012; Owen, 2012). The specific problem is that non-contextualized training efforts may not provide the most appropriate and effective foundation for the leader development of St. Lucian youth (Caza & Rosch, 2013; McBride et al., 2011).

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore perceptions of leadership through the voice of diverse St. Lucian youth. Using the following four research questions, we investigated what beliefs, experiences, and people of influence diverse St. Lucian youth perceived are important to leadership and leader learning. First, what factors or characteristics do St. Lucian youth believe define leadership? Second, what do St. Lucian youth perceive as leader learning experiences? Third, who do St. Lucian youth perceive has been instrumental in teaching them about leadership? And fourth, what are the similarities and differences of the perceptions of leadership of diverse St. Lucian youth?

Literature Review

Youth Perceptions of Leadership. Perceptions of leadership are important factors in leader development for both youth and adults (Avolio & Hannah, 2009; Mack et al., 2011). Some authors believe that youth perceptions of leadership are the starting point for leader development efforts (Haber, 2012). According to Caza and Rosch (2013), perceptions drive leadership behavior. In particular, self-perceptions of leadership may dictate the kind of leadership actions young people attempt (Rehm, 2014; Wagner, 2011). Knowledge of the perceptions of leadership may enable youth leader development practitioners to motivate more students to develop as leaders and to design learning environments and activities that can best serve the learners (Eva & Sendjaya, 2012).

Researchers who studied youth perceptions of leadership discovered several differences and several similarities in how university students and high school students perceive leadership. Researchers who have studied the perceptions of leadership of high school students stated that youth perceived leadership as relational, team-based, shared, and service oriented (Archard, 2013; Lizzio, Andrews, & Skinner, 2011). Researchers who have investigated university students stated that young people perceived leadership as hierarchical, task-oriented, and position-based (Shehane, Sturtevant, Moore, & Dooley, 2012). These seemingly contradicting results could be attributed to the different methods of investigation or the different participants in the studies (Fischer, Overland, & Adams, 2010; Mortensen et al., 2014). The researchers were united in asserting that youth perceptions of leadership were built through experiences at home, at school, and in the community (Amit et al., 2009; Carter, Swedeen, Walter, Moss, & Hsin, 2011). The voice of White US students is the most prominent in the literature; however, the voice of diverse populations from the rest of the globe is small (Haber, 2012). The perceptions of leadership of Caribbean youth, and specifically St. Lucian youth, were not represented in the available literature.

Caribbean Leadership. Effective leaders and effective modes of leadership vary across cultures (Dickson, Castano, Magomaeva, & Den Hartog, 2012; Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, & House, 2012). The unique culture, history, and geographic setting of any country or context can shape the perceptions of leadership and leadership actions of the individuals within that context (Baldacchino, 2013; Dorfman et al., 2012). The Caribbean is connected to the rest of the world; therefore, Caribbean leaders need to have an understanding of other cultures and of how to best manage, relate to, and lead people from different cultural backgrounds (Clarke & Charles, 2012; Hall, 2011). Relationships

and resiliency are also very important in Caribbean society and Caribbean leadership (Grant, 2012; Phillips, Scott, Sutherland, Gerla, & Gilzene, 2012).

Caribbean leadership researchers have determined that the study of Caribbean leadership, especially through the eyes of Caribbean people, is in its beginning stages and presents an opportunity for further inquiry (Baldacchino, 2013; Corbin, Punnet, & Onifa, 2012). International researchers have acknowledged a North American bias in the literature and have called for studies that investigate culturally contingent leader characteristics from the viewpoint of cultural insiders (Dickson et al., 2012; Dorfman et al., 2012). Caribbean leadership researchers have argued that Western styles of leadership may not fit the context of the Caribbean (Hall, 2012). Additionally, few Caribbean leadership or Caribbean leader studies are available in the extant literature (Lituchy, Ford, & Punnett, 2013). Researchers have therefore encouraged the study of leaders and leadership within the Caribbean context (Baldacchino, 2013; Lituchy et al., 2013).

St. Lucian Youth Context. Experiences and context affect the formation of a young person's perception of leadership (Dorfman et al., 2012; Owen, 2011). Context includes a young person's environment, culture, and relationships (Wagner, 2011). The context of this study was the Caribbean island of St. Lucia. The island consists of 238 square miles and has a young population, with 42% of the roughly 165,000 residents under the age of 24 (St. Lucia Central Statistics Office, 2011). The country has been independent since 1979 (Harmsen, Ellis, & Devaux, 2012).

St. Lucian governmental and community leaders have acknowledged the importance of youth development to the future of the nation (CCYD, 2010; St. Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports, 2000). Because of the economic challenges and opportunities presented by globalization and the loss of leaders through outmigration (Docquier & Rapoport, 2012), St. Lucia needs to develop more leaders (CCYD, 2010;

Wiltshire, 2010). However, a disparity may exist between the need and stated desires for St. Lucian youth leader development and the actual training youth receive (Eversley & Daniels, 2011; Parra-Torrado, Bofinger, & Placci, 2014).

Although many Caribbean youth are happy and healthy (Pilgrim & Blum, 2012), the available research has indicated that St. Lucian young people may experience a challenging context in their homes, schools, and communities (Jules, 2008; Stern & Balestino, 2008). Many St. Lucian youth grow up in unstable family environments (Cunningham & Correia, 2003) and witness community crime and violence (Zimmerman et al., 2012). Caribbean youth researchers have discovered that youth in the Caribbean are both resilient and despondent (Brathwaite, 2009; Parra-Torrado et al., 2014). The situations and inadequacies that they face in their homes, schools, and communities can bring frustration, disillusionment, apathy, and a feeling of hopelessness (Stern & Balestino, 2008; Parra-Torrado et al., 2014). Youth view problems within their country's political systems and with their leaders (Stern & Balestino, 2008; Wiltshire, 2010). They want to participate in their democracies (CCYD, 2010), but they feel that they do not have a voice (Zimmerman et al., 2012).

Schools can have a positive effect on the leader learning of young people (Archard, 2013). St. Lucian youth consider academic achievements to be very important and credit their schools with teaching them communication and other soft skills (Stern & Balestino, 2008). However, St. Lucian youth may not be receiving adequate instruction and support in their schools to develop as leaders and workers in the global economy (Blom & Hobbs, 2008; Eversley & Daniels, 2011). Mismanaged schools, the number of teachers that have migrated out of the region (Jules, 2008), and teachers that lack training or skills have all hampered the learning and development of students (World Bank & Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009). Both Caribbean and foreign experts have encouraged Caribbean nations to reform the education system so that students will receive training in the necessary

skills to flourish in a global, knowledge-based economy (George & Lewis, 2011; Jules, 2008).

Employment is an avenue for young people to learn and develop leadership skills (Gehert, 2010; Turkay & Tirthali, 2010). However, St. Lucian young people may not have easy access to employment or organized leadership-building experiences (Zimmerman et al., 2012). St. Lucia's youth unemployment rate is among the highest unemployment rates in the world for youth (Parra-Torrado et al., 2014). In 2010 in St. Lucia, the unemployment rate for 15-19 year olds was 63%; the unemployment rate for 20-24 year olds was 32% (St. Lucia Central Statistics Office, 2011). Opportunities are limited (World Bank & Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009); therefore, programs that help young people develop interpersonal skills, entrepreneurial abilities, and leadership attributes are needed (Eversley & Daniels, 2011; Zimmerman et al., 2012).

The situation, however, is not all bleak (Brathwaite, 2009; CCYD, 2010). The young people have promise, but the context can be challenging for leader development (Cunningham & Correia, 2003). Because of this, government leaders and representatives of international organizations have called for policies and programs that invest in the young people (CCYD, 2010; Cunningham & Correia, 2003). Youth leader development is an important task for St. Lucian and Caribbean nations (Parra-Torrado et al., 2014). The voice of the young people and their perceptions need to be an integral part of the further development of the youth of St. Lucia and other Caribbean nations (McBride et al., 2011; Webster et al., 2013).

Methods

Participants. An exploratory, qualitative multiple case study approach was used to investigate perceptions of leadership through the voice of St. Lucian youth. Three cases of six participants consisting of an equal number of male and female participants were studied. Cases were purposefully chosen from diverse subgroups of St. Lucian youth. Case one was a group of unemployed young St. Lucians. Case two was a group of entry-level workers from an internationally affiliated local business. Case three was a cadre of youth who had received training from a St. Lucian youth organization.

The 18 participants were all St. Lucian youth between the ages of 18 and 24. All 18 of the participants had graduated from secondary school. Eleven of the participants were either attending or had graduated from tertiary learning institutions. Six of the participants were employed full-time, eight were unemployed, and four were full-time students.

Selection and Recruitment. Purposeful, maximum variation sampling, stratified purposeful sampling, criterion sampling, and snowball sampling were all used to select and recruit participants for the study. For case one, snowball sampling was used to locate six unemployed youth in a community in Castries, the capital of St. Lucia. The researcher accessed and recruited the unemployed youth through several acquaintances in the community. For case two, volunteer participants were recruited through a flyer that was handed out at a staff meeting. For case three, volunteer participants were recruited through email communication from the youth organization's secretary. The researcher spoke personally face to face or over the phone to all participants who indicated they were interested in volunteering. All participants signed consent forms before data collection started. The recruitment and data collection methods were reviewed and approved by the IRB of Northcentral University before recruitment began.

Data Collection. Three rounds of data collection were used with each case. The first round of data collection was semi-structured interviews with each participant in the case (see Appendix A for the interview protocol). The interviews focused on the perceptions of leadership of the youth and what

experiences and relationships may have led to these perceptions. Semi-structured interview questions were guided by the study research questions and were crafted through a literature review of various studies that investigated perceptions of leadership (Carter et al., 2010; Lituchy et al., 2013). The specific interview questions and focus group discussion guides were checked for clarity and dependability through the use of field testing by local experts (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

The second round of data collection was a focus group discussion to investigate participant perceptions of good and bad leaders (see Appendix B for the first focus group protocol). The first focus group discussions used "the structured person discussion" technique which had been tested and recommended by Dempster et al. (2010). Participants were asked to complete statements about good and bad leaders in writing and to post their statements on a board. The researcher then led a discussion of the participant responses.

The third round of data collection at each site was a focus group discussion to investigate themes that surfaced during the interviews and themes that were apparent in the youth leader development literature (see Appendix C for the second focus group protocol). Participants were given three sets of 10 statements. The participants were asked to rank the statements from most important to least important as they pertained to St. Lucian youth leader development. A discussion of their rankings followed.

Data collection was spread over six months and confined to one site at a time (Merriam, 2009; Shank, 2006). A digital voice recorder was used for the interviews and the focus groups. Participant responses were also written down by the researcher. At the start of each focus group discussion, rules were established to ensure considerate and secure communication within the group (Dempster et al., 2010). Both during and at the conclusion of the interviews and focus groups responses were checked for accuracy with the participants (Mertens, 1998; Schram, 2006). As soon as possible after the interview or focus group discussion, the responses were transcribed verbatim and uploaded to the NVivo software database.

Data Analysis. The literature review and study research questions were used to produce a conceptual framework that guided the data collection and analysis for this study. Inductive analysis and deductive analysis were both used to examine the data. Each case was analyzed individually (i.e., within-case analysis) and then the three cases were analyzed together (i.e., cross-case analysis) (Yin, 2009). The first step in the inductive analysis was to read through the interview transcripts and focus group discussions several times looking for major themes that may have provided answers to the research questions (Patton, 2002). NVivo was used to search for words and phrases that occurred multiple times and to organize the data according to the interview questions. Patterns were sought within each case (Yin, 2009). Data was coded with the conceptual framework serving as the basis for the coding scheme (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). New codes were also added throughout the analysis process. Themes or patterns emerging from the inductive analysis were presented, further investigated, and checked during subsequent focus group discussions (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). The data was also analyzed through the use of questioning, as encouraged by Shank (2006). Through this deeper probing we analyzed, examined, and refined the preliminary themes, concepts, and codes (Patton, 2002).

Deductive analysis of the data followed the inductive analysis. Participant responses were sorted according to categories presented in the conceptual framework. Current literature provided data to prepare checklists of youth perceptions of leadership within the structure of the conceptual framework. These checklists were used to investigate how the perceptions of the proposed participants compared with the findings in the current literature. We produced context charts that listed the beliefs, the experiences, and the people of influence that were connected to the participants' perceptions of leadership.

These inductive and deductive analysis strategies were used for each case. The analysis was an iterative and non-linear process. After the analysis of each case, the findings were used to produce a conceptual framework. The three conceptual frameworks were used to clarify the perceptions of leadership and answer the research questions. After the within case analysis was completed, cross-case analysis commenced (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2006). The cross-case analysis strove to test and synthesize the themes across the cases to answer the research questions. After the data from the different cases had been compared and contrasted, a final conceptual framework was produced that included the overall themes and findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Results

Q1. What factors or characteristics do St. Lucian youth believe define leadership? In response to question 1, What factors or characteristics do St. Lucian youth believe define leadership?, all 18 participants described leadership as working for the benefit of others. Throughout the interviews and focus group discussions, participants used terms and phrases that described leadership as working for the benefit of others. The majority of participants [14 of 18] used "help" to describe the role of a leader or the focus of leadership. Participant 14 described a leader: "A good leader is somebody… that is able to help people." Participant 17 echoed this sentiment, "I would say leadership is basically the art of helping others realize their fullest potential and also helping others lead their own self." Participant 5 stated that one of the motivators of a leader was to help others grow: "Like, if I help that one to do better, that one could go on to another one and go on to help another one."

The second finding was that the majority [17 of 18] of participants viewed morality as an important characteristic of leadership. During the interviews and focus group discussions, the participants described a leader as one who would set the example for followers. The terms "set(ting) the example," "showing/leading by example," and "good example" were used by 11 participants 47 times in the interviews and focus group discussions. Additionally, the term "role model" was used eight times in reference to leaders by three participants. In total, 14 different participants made 55 different references to leaders being examples to others.

Several participants used the term "set an example" in their definitions of leadership. "Leadership is a way of setting a good example while being trustworthy and supportive" (P2). Participant 6 and Participant 11 both said that their parents had told them the importance of setting an example for those around them. "Everybody tell me the same thing. Always set a good example to… those coming up after me, set a good example for them" (P6).

The third finding was that the majority of participants [17 of 18] perceived communication as an important factor in leadership. Nearly every participant [17 of 18] connected communication skills to leadership. When asked what kind of skills leaders have, Participant 4 stated, "Like I said, you have communication skills is number one. You have to be able to communicate with your partners. Have to." Participant 16 said, "In leadership you have to learn to communicate effectively with those, the individuals who are in a group." Participant 3 said that a leader should have "the ability to speak within a group."

Fourth, the majority of participants [16 of 18] viewed teamwork as an important aspect of leadership. Although only three participants used the phrase "teamwork" in connection with leadership during the interviews or focus groups, 11 participants used the word "team" during interviews or focus group discussions while describing the teamwork aspect of leadership. Participant 13 stated that leadership was about, "Bringing ideas together. Group work.

Teamwork. Umm, what else? Being able to hear each other's views on different things, hear each other's perspective." Participant 18 said, "I think of teamwork, first thing. Teamwork. And second most important thing, discipline. Effort. Understanding. Umm, responsible. Umm, initiative." During focus group one, Participant 15 wrote that good leaders are interested in the team: "Good leaders will make decisions that benefit the group, as a whole. Build team spirit. Encourage team/group members to always be their best."

Fifth, the majority of participants [16 of 18] perceived that power and authority are connected to leadership and leadership positions; however, leadership is not defined by power or position. Nearly all participants [17 of 18] used terms such as "power," "authority," "someone in charge," and "control" when defining leadership or describing leadership skills and attitudes. Participant 3 described a leader as, "Somebody in charge. Somebody who takes control. Somebody who has authority over something or someone else." Participant 6 described a leader as "Like the head. Boss." Participant 8 depicted a leader as "Somebody who's in charge. Authority… The leader is somebody who takes control." Participant 1 said leadership was "Being able to have power over a set of people." Participant 11 stated, "Leadership is being in charge, being the head, being, ah, ah, not being a follower, being a trendsetter."

However, participants also emphasized that leaders can come from any background. When asked where future leaders will come from, Participant 3 said, "All walks of life. Some in prison. Some in the ghettos. In the church. From all walks of life." Other participants made similar statements. Participants also emphasized the point that "Anyone can be a leader" (P7). "You supposed to be able to lead even when you at the top and you're at the bottom" (P14). "So, even if you placed in a position of leadership, that doesn't really define you as a leader, you know. You, you don't have to be in a leadership position to be a leader. Anyone can be a leader" (P18).

Lastly, the majority [15 of 18] of the participants described selfishness as a component of bad leadership. Fifteen of the 18 participants described selfishness as a characteristic of bad leaders and bad leadership. This finding was very apparent in the first focus group. Participant 4 declared that bad leaders "don't think for the people, they think for themselves." Participant 14 described bad leaders as "looking out for themselves, basically. Some of them just like to say that they are leaders just to say that they are leaders. A leader has to be selfless. But some of them just worry about themselves." During focus group one, Participant 15 wrote, "Bad leaders think that they can do everything on their own. People's opinions are insignificant to theirs. Their plans are always the best plans. Having the final say gives them veto power."

Q2. What do St. Lucian youth perceive as leader learning experiences? In response to research question 2, What do St. Lucian youth perceive as leader learning experiences?, all 18 participants stated that school experiences helped young St. Lucians learn to lead. During the one-on-one interviews, all participants indicated that school was a place where young St. Lucians could learn to be leaders. However, participants were not united in their views concerning what types of experiences at school were beneficial for leader learning. The most often mentioned school experiences that help young St. Lucians learn to be leaders were: school sports [eight of 18 participants], school leadership positions [eight of 18 participants], school extracurricular clubs [eight of 18 participants], and school group projects [five of 18 participants]. Participant 10 stated that the purpose of school was to raise up leaders: "Then again, that's what school teach us to do. That's… the concept for school as well, to be a leader when you leave."

Also, the majority of participants [15 of 18] viewed personal leadership successes as positive leader learning experiences. Fifteen participants relayed instances where they had succeeded as leaders. However, only seven participants told of personal experiences where they had failed as leaders. According to participants, leadership success "helps

you learn what works" (P11), and "is a form of motivation" (P12).

Question 12 of the interview protocol was "Would you describe yourself as a leader? Why or why not?" In responding to the first part of this question, three participants answered "Not yet," five participants answered "Sometimes" and 10 participants answered "Yes." All 15 participants who answered "sometimes" or "yes" described their personal leader successes to answer the follow-up question: "Why or why not?" Participant 6 said, "Cuz, I deal very positive with the youth as a future coming up. Those who are looking up to me." Participant 9 stated, "Yes, because I feel like wherever I have been a leader I have done a good job at it."

The majority of participants [15 of 18] also perceived experiences at church to be influential in helping young St. Lucians learn to lead. Fifteen participants [15 of 18] mentioned church as a place where young St. Lucians learn to lead for either interview question seven: "Where are different places that young St. Lucians can go to learn to be leaders?" or for interview question eight: "What sort of experiences would help young St. Lucians learn to be leaders?" "Home, school, and church, these are the first places that you learn about leadership" (P2). Important aspects of leader learning at church mentioned by the participants included establishing a moral foundation [9 of 18]. "At church you learn morals. You learn to be a better you, to live a better life" (P7). Participant 12 spoke about using the Bible as a moral guide for life, "I have just come to this conclusion… I'm a Christian… Pentecostal, so I just follow the ten rules of the commandments and, if the Bible, if it doesn't abide by the Bible, I consider it to be wrong." Further, just under half of the participants [eight of 18], discussed their personal involvement in church groups as part of their leader learning. Participant 10 said, "Again, even in religion, you find, we have to set the example. So, we have to be the leaders after Christ, right?"

The next finding was that the majority of participants [14 of 18] perceived home responsibilities as experiences that help St. Lucian youth learn to lead. Most of the participants spoke of leader learning within their homes. "Leadership starts at home" (P12). "What I've learned so far I can say that leadership starts at home. So, if you learn in the home to be a good leader, then you can go outside of home and then be a good leader" (P2). Participant leader learning at home was described in four basic categories: taking care of siblings, establishing moral character, chores, and interpersonal relationships. Some participants spoke of home leader learning in more than one of these four categories. Nearly half of the participants [7 of 18] spoke of their experiences in taking care of siblings or younger relatives. The participants stated that older children in the family have responsibility for the younger ones.

> P8: You have to be in charge of everything. Everything. You have to see to it that your sisters get everything done. See to it that they do their chores at the end of the day. They do not do it; you have to pick up where they left off and finish it off (laughs). And then, my mother would come on my back because I'm the oldest and I didn't get it done, or I didn't ensure that they get it done.

Q3. Who do St. Lucian youth perceive has been instrumental in teaching them about leadership? In response to research question 3, all 18 participants viewed personal relationships with caring adults as important for leader learning. Questions nine and 10 in section four of the interview protocol ("Who is a leader you would follow?" and "Who has helped you learn about leading?") investigated aspects of research question three. In answer to these two interview questions, the youth named 66 individuals who were instrumental in teaching them about leadership or as people they would follow. Out of the 66 individuals named, 56 were St. Lucians and 10

were foreigners. The majority [49 of 66] were known personally to the participants; however, 17 of the 66 were not personally known. Parents, teachers, and adult mentors were named most often. Thirteen of the participants named parents, 12 named teachers, and 12 named adult mentors (e.g., coaches, pastors, or community leaders). In contrast, only two participants named employers and only one participant named a peer of the same age as people of influence. Overall, the young people viewed parents as very instrumental in their leader learning. "If it was not for them, I wouldn't be the man I am here today" (P4). Participant 9 stated, "[My father] gave me my foundation." Participant 1 stated this about parents:

> As a child, you born; you live in your parents' household. Not everybody might have parents they could call good leaders, but, for me, I put it at the top, cuz parents are the one who are supposed to teach their umm, children right from wrong. To me, umm, they supposed to be, like, the first leaders anybody encounters in their life, parents.

Further, all of the participants stated that current politicians are influential leaders; however, the majority of participants [14 of 18] viewed current politicians as detrimental to leader learning. All 18 participants stated that politicians are viewed as leaders in St. Lucia. "I think, what we do call the leaders of the nation are actually the politicians. That's what people consider leaders of the nation" (P2). However, even though all of the participants perceived politicians to be influential leaders in St. Lucia, only one participant mentioned current St. Lucian politicians only in a positive way. Three participants had both positive and negative things to say about current St. Lucian politicians. The majority of participants [14 of 18] mentioned current St. Lucian politicians only in a negative way. One of the major complaints about current politicians was that they "do not set the example" (P2). Other negative views of current politicians included the following: "They don't understand us" (P9). "I am under-satisfied with

leaders in St. Lucia... Most do the wrong thing" (P12). "They start good just to win the seat, but at the end they go, they go sour" (P18). "What, we get nothing from our leaders. We get nothing from them. So, I honestly don't know, but great leaders are those who make great things happen" (P5).

Q4. What are the similarities and differences of the perceptions of leadership of diverse St. Lucian youth? The final research question elicited two main findings. The first being that all six participants in case three emphasized the importance of leadership training programs in developing young leaders. Leadership training programs were recognized as important leader learning experiences by all six of the participants in case three. Only one other participant [one of 12] stated that leadership training programs were an important aspect of developing young leaders in St. Lucia. Some of the case three participants recognized the importance of leadership training in their lives. "Talking from experience, that is, umm, being a member of the cadet corps and students' council and, and training from both these voluntary organizations, you know, has instilled a positive attitude, positive mindset for me" (P18). Other participants encouraged more leadership training programs to help more St. Lucian youth learn to lead.

> P16: Well, in the context of the St. Lucian society, the issue is always the capacity of the young people. In St. Lucia, we are not at the level where we can say that a good percentage of our young population is ready, or is actually... they might have the qualities of leadership, but in terms of getting the training and that… support to bring their leadership to another level, I think that lacks a lot.

Lastly, the majority [five of six] of participants in case three indicated that their leadership failures were important experiences in their leader learning. Unlike the participants in cases one and two, most of the participants in case three [five of six] discussed their failures in leadership as positive experiences. Only two other participants in the

study [two of 12] indicated that their personal leader failures were an important aspect of their leader learning. Five participants in case three told personal stories of their failures in leading and also spoke of how these failures helped them to improve as leaders. Participant 18 spoke about the leader learning benefits of failure:

> P18: Well, for me, personally, ironically, I thrive on failure, if I can put it that way. Umm, well, I shouldn't say thrive, I should say thrive through failure. In a sense that, ahh, ahh to be successful, I believe you need to fail… Once you could learn from it.

Discussion

Several conclusions can be made from the findings related to the definition of leadership. First, the St. Lucian youth participants believed that leadership is about the people much more than it is about the task. The job of a leader is, first and foremost, to encourage, support, and help others. Second, the participants believed that a good leader will be concerned about the good of the followers, not the good of the leader. The "good" mattered to the participants. Morality and ethical behavior were seen as important aspects of leadership. Third, participants believed that leadership is both positional and non-positional. Power and authority were seen as important aspects of leadership and leadership positions. However, participants stated that anyone could be a leader and that holding a position, in and of itself, did not equate to leadership. The attitudes and the actions of the leader were more important than the leader's position.

These conclusions reflect modern leadership theories more than they reflect traditional theories (van Linden & Fertman, 1998) and are connected to youth leader development literature and the

Caribbean leadership literature. Youth participants in other studies perceived leadership as being relational, and teamwork was viewed as an important part of leadership (Archard, 2013; Lizzio, Andrews, et al., 2011; Lizzio, Dempster, & Neumann, 2011). Other common themes were that anyone could be a leader and that service and helping others were important parts of leadership (Archard, 2013; Dempster et al., 2010; Lizzio, Andrews, et al., 2011). Strong moral character was also viewed as an important aspect of leadership in both youth and Caribbean studies (Grant, 2012; Mortensen et al., 2014).

The findings related to leader learning experiences lead to three conclusions. First, all of the participants have potential and desire to grow as leaders. None of the participants viewed themselves as unable to learn or unworthy of leadership. Most of the participants viewed themselves as leaders, those who did not see themselves as leaders indicated that they were "not yet" leaders; however, they could become leaders with some more training and experience. Second, St. Lucian youth can learn about leading in a variety of contexts and from a variety of experiences. Unsurprisingly, the prominent three contexts – home, school, and church – were also spoken of as the three places where most St. Lucian young people have spent most of their time while growing up. Therefore, these contexts are important for their lives, which also make them important for their leader development. A third conclusion is that the most valuable experiences for the youth seemed to be experiences that they perceived were connected to leadership. It seems that to learn about leading, the young people needed to be doing something that they considered was leadership. To learn about leading, they needed to lead. These conclusions support current literature. The youth leader development literature maintained that young people can be developed into leaders and

that anyone could be a leader (Dugan, 2011; van Linden & Fertman, 1998). Additionally, researchers have contended that through early experiences with family, community, and school, the individual begins to understand leadership by building a leader identity and leader self-perception (Ligon et al., 2008; Lizzio, Dempster, et al., 2011).

Three conclusions can be drawn from the findings about the people of influence in St. Lucian youth leader learning. First, adults, and not peers, were viewed by the youth as the most important people for St. Lucian youth leader development. Second, personally known adults, rather than famous unknown foreigners, are the main people of influence. The personal relationships seem to be a key to having an effect on the leader development of the youth. Adults who cared for the young people, listened to them, encouraged them, and supported them were spoken of as the greatest influence on the leader development of the youth. Third, current politicians possess the powers of position, authority, and example to affect St. Lucian youth leader development. Even though many of the participants spoke negatively about current politicians, the number of references to current politicians reveals the important place that politicians hold in the leader learning of young St. Lucians. Personal relationships were mentioned throughout the youth leader development literature as important aspects of youth leader learning. Parents and guardians were revealed to be important to leader development in their children through their parenting styles and encouragement (Adler, 2011; Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Mentors, coaches, and teachers were also found to be influential in helping young people grow as leaders (Carter et al., 2011; Eva & Sendjaya, 2013).

Last, participants in case three seem to have more developed and more mature perceptions of leadership than the participants in cases one and two. The case three participants repeatedly spoke about representation, service, and learning through leadership failures. Case three participants were more likely to describe themselves as leaders than participants in cases one and two. The leader training

these young people received and the experiences in school government may have been two experiences that aided the case three participants in their leader development. This conclusion is supported by the literature. Secondary school students with school government experiences were found to have more motivation to lead and to have a more developed leadership identity (Archard, 2013; Wielkiewicz, Fisher, Stelzner, Overland, & Sinner, 2012).

Limitations. Several limitations were present. First, the results of the study may not be transferable to a larger population because of the small study size of purposely recruited volunteers. Second, none of the focus group discussions were attended by all of the participants in any of the cases. Additionally, when using qualitative methods to investigate youth perceptions, the young people may tell adults what they think the adults want to hear (Jakobsen, 2012; Lizzio, Andrews, et al., 2011). This aspect may have been an issue with several of the participants. The researcher had a different cultural background than the participants, therefore, researcher bias may also be a limitation. The quality of answers from the participants may also be a limitation. Some of the participants were much more eloquent and talkative than others. Various digital recorder problems were also a limitation of the study.

Measures were taken to mitigate the limitations of the study. The participants were consistently reminded that their thoughts, perceptions, and voice were needed and wanted for the study. Participants were asked for clarification and follow-up questions in the interview protocol were used to elicit more responses from the participants. Local experts were used to review interview questions and the first focus group discussion (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Member checking was used during each interview and was also a part of the second focus group discussion (Patton, 2002). The majority of the interviews and focus group discussions were recorded, and transcripts were transcribed verbatim into the case study database (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Written researcher notes from the interviews and focus groups were used as data when the recorder failed. The triangulation of

multiple cases, multiple data collection methods, and multiple analysis methods helped to ensure that the perceptions of the youth were being collected (Shank, 2006). A formal case study design, which included coding and analysis procedures developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), was used (Yin, 2009).

Recommendations. Leader training at school, in church, and in the community was an important aspect of the leader development of the participants in case three. Therefore, to further develop more young St. Lucian leaders, we recommend that schools, churches, and community organizations be recognized as important contexts for developing young St. Lucian leaders. Leader development should be intentionalized, using both formal and informal methods, for as many young people as possible. The leader training should include some aspects of leadership theory (Who is a leader? What do leaders do?) and also practical experiences where the participants are actually involved in leading. Reflection after the experiences will help the participants to learn and further develop as leaders. We also recommend that training be made available for the important adults that influence the leader development of St. Lucian youth. Teachers, parents, adult mentors, and politicians may all benefit from training that would focus on how they, as important people in the lives of the youth, could help more young St. Lucians grow into quality leaders.

This multiple case study was exploratory in nature. The limitations, findings, and conclusions lead to several recommendations for further study. Because this study only included 18 purposely selected individuals, we recommend that a similar study be conducted with more and a wider variety of St. Lucian youth to explore the perceptions of the youth further and evaluate the findings of this study. As an example, secondary school leavers, youth entrepreneurs, and youth working in management-level positions could be included to widen the sample. Additionally, the study could be conducted in various secondary schools around St. Lucia to compare differences and similarities in perceptions of leadership across various age groups, backgrounds, geographical location, and schools.

This study is significant because St. Lucian society needs to build its youth into leaders (CCYD, 2010; Zimmerman et al., 2012). This study has given a voice to diverse St. Lucian youth (CCYD, 2010; Head, 2011). The voice of the youth is a key to understanding how youth comprehend leadership (Archard, 2013; Lizzio, Andrews, et al., 2011), which is the starting point of a leader's development journey (Haber, 2012; Mortensen et al., 2014). Once the starting point is known, a map toward deeper, more mature leadership beliefs, attitudes, and actions can be drawn and followed. An understanding of St. Lucian youth views of leadership may help St. Lucian teachers, mentors, practitioners, and community leaders to comprehend better what the young people know about leading and leadership and, therefore, what could be or should be taught (Eva & Sendjaya, 2013; Wielkiewicz et al., 2012). The engagement of more youth in leader development may empower more youth to be part of positive change in their communities as youth and also as adults (Mortensen et al., 2014; Amit et al., 2009).

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