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Youth Leadership Development Programs: Participants' Pre- and Post-perceptions of Leadership Life Skills Development

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Life Skills Development

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by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband and daughters. As a mother, I am in awe as I have watched my daughters, Grace and Sydney, make this world a better place. They inspire me to want to be a better person, a braver person. My girls have inspired me to be a lifelong learner. Completing my doctoral journey will be my ultimate gift to them. My journey will serve as an example that they can do great things, big and small, easy and hard. As a wife, I am in awe of the love and support my husband Marc has selflessly given over the years. He is my strength, my counselor, and my best friend. My husband has inspired me to believe in myself and reach for the stars. Without his support, completing this journey would have been unobtainable.

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Abstract

Research exists on the participation of youth in various types of youth leadership development programs. However, the problem is a lack of understanding of the perception of participants' pre- and postparticipation on their development of leadership life skills. The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine how youth leadership development program participants perceive themselves in the area of leadership life skills development pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program. In this study, specific consideration was given to the difference in gender and ethnic minority affiliation reporting scores. The independent variables in this study were participation in youth leadership development programs (i.e., yes or no), gender, and ethnic minority affiliation. The outcome measure in the study was self-reported student leadership life skills attribute scores. Students from the study site completed the survey associated with the data collection tool. After analyzing the responses, 123 of those responses met the criteria to be included in the study. The students surveyed in this study reported gains in how they perceived their leadership life skills development pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program. There was also a gain in the perception of leadership life skills development in gender and ethnic minority affiliation reporting scores.

Keywords: leadership, youth leadership development program, leadership life skills

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Youth leadership development programs are gaining popularity in educational settings and are being used to develop youths' leadership life skills (Bean et al., 2017). However, fewer than 1% of these programs collect data from participants on leadership life skills development perception (Bean et al., 2017, Harris Poll, 2016). Leadership life skills are important because they can reinforce self-esteem and serve a participant well in adulthood (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2017). The first youth leadership development program dates back to the 16th century with the prefect system at England's Eton College (Rehm, 2014). Rehm (2014) found evidence that some school curriculums may not address skills such as "decision making, listening, public speaking, collaboration, problem-solving, and conflict resolutions" (p. 84). These skills are synonymous with leadership life skills (Sherman et al., 2017). Public school leaders should address the importance of leadership instruction, developing students' leadership life skills, and adequately preparing them to utilize those skills (Cobia et al., 2016). Leadership and character development of participants in youth leadership development programs do not happen in a vacuum, and there is a need for additional research after participation (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2017).

Today, school boards, principals, faculties, and parents are increasingly focused on developing leadership life skills in K–12 students (Haynes-Tross, 2015). A survey conducted online by Harris Poll (2016) among 1,500 ninth- through 12th-grade students found the majority (90%) of those surveyed are concerned about young Americans' leadership life skills attributes. Youth leadership development programs are a popular way to develop leadership life skills in youths (Cobia et al., 2016). Public schools are also beginning to recognize the importance of preparing students for the leadership challenges they may face (McElravy & Hasting, 2014).

Therefore, some public schools are taking the necessary steps to nurture leadership life skills in students (Cobia et al., 2016) through youth leadership development programs. Youth leadership development programs often have undefined boundaries where youth leadership development programs and school-based leadership components begin and end (Cobia et al., 2016). Those who have studied youth leadership development programs have not established an expansive foundation of research and credible data (Marczak et al., 2016).

Students involved in youth leadership development programs can participate in administrative roles and decision-making and develop their leadership potential (Hine, 2017). The National 4-H Council released the results of a survey distributed at the 4-H Grow True Leaders Campaign in Washington, D.C., stating that 96% of high school students reported that leadership is important in addressing America's imminent issues and that only one in three youths have the skills they will need to lead (Harris Poll, 2016). The skills in the Harris Poll article (2016) referenced in the National 4-H survey results are synonymous with Cobia et al.'s (2016) leadership life skills. The impact of participation in youth leadership development programs on the development of leadership life skills has not been widely studied (Curran & Wexler, 2017).

Background

Curriculum-based youth leadership development programs, such as Leader in Me, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and International Baccalaureate (IB), are increasingly being adopted by school districts (Pannoni & Moody, 2019). Programs such as AVID focus on college readiness by emphasizing leadership, writing development, and critical thinking skills (Pannoni & Moody, 2019). In contrast, Leader in Me prepares students to become life-ready leaders (Leader in Me, n.d.). Other youth leadership development programs are

community-based programs like 4-H, Future Farmers of America, and Girl Scouts of America. Youth leadership development programs develop leadership and useful life leadership skills in youths; however, there is a need for additional research to obtain a deeper understanding of how youths perceive their development of leadership life skills and if leadership development programs are responsible for fostering needs supports (Bean et al., 2017).

Much of the research on youth leadership development programs use *youth development* and *youth leadership* synonymously (Sherman et al., 2017). Sherman et al. (2017) postulated that those involved with teaching the participants in youth leadership development programs could be more important than the program itself. The author found evidence of this in popular and successful extracurricular youth leadership development programs such as Boys Scouts of America and the National Charity League. Sherman et al. (2017) concluded that much of the known research related to youth leadership development programs came from studies of the participants rather than the participant's perception of life leadership skills ascertained as a result of participation. Comparatively, Shek and Lin (2016) also determined it was not well known why there was little research on evaluating youth leadership development programs from participants' perspectives. The authors suggested that the lack of data collection in the area of leadership skill development from the perspective of participants could be due in part to noncredit-bearing youth leadership development programs not being effective.

One of Oklahoma's largest public school districts, Jenks Public School District, has purchased and implemented several different youth leadership development programs (Jenks Public Schools, n.d.). According to the school's website, the district uses the AVID program and the Where Everyone Belongs (WEB) program at the middle and high school levels (Jenks Public Schools, n.d.). One of the Jenks public elementary schools utilizes the Leader in Me program,

and another uses the IB program (Jenks Public Schools, n.d.). However, a third elementary school in this district does not use any curriculum-based youth leadership development program and is a community school (Jenks Public Schools, n.d.). As a community school, community-based youth leadership development programs meet on-campus and recruit members from this school (Jenks Public Schools, n.d.).

Youth leadership development programs may be paid for by grants, donations from the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), or fundraising events (National PTA, n.d.). Additionally, according to Dynarski (2015), more than $12 billion of federal tax money is allocated for after-school youth leadership development programs, such as 4-H, which have a leadership life skills and self-efficacy focus. However, school districts will need follow-up research to determine if participants who complete other types of youth leadership development programs effectively use the leadership life skills they gain to become college and career-ready (Buschlen et al., 2018).

According to Buschlen et al. (2018), a need exists to understand individual and collective outcomes from participation in youth leadership development programs based on a participant's perspective. The authors found research to suggest that "many youth leadership programs are brief, fall short of collecting formalized data, and may operate without learning outcomes" (Buschlen et al., 2018, p. 3). There is a need for more research in the area of "protocols, processes, and signature pedagogies" (Buschlen et al., 2018, p. 4), which creates effective leadership life skills that are applied well into the participants' adulthood. The authors found that more research is accessible on adults' ability to learn leadership than youth's capacity to learn and retain leadership life skills and participants' perceptions of the leadership life skills gained. It is also unknown how youths transfer their perceived leadership life skills to their college and community experiences (Buschlen et al., 2018). There is also insufficient data showing which

types of programs are most effective for developing leadership life skills based on participants'

perception of leadership life skill development (Sherman et al., 2017). There is a need for

"additional longitudinal examinations of leadership development perception over the

participant's lifespan" (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2017, p. 88).

It is important to understand the difference between the perceptions of leadership life

skills development resulting from involvement in a youth leadership development program

(Harris Poll, 2016) versus nonparticipation. Some research suggested that engagement in

challenging and stimulating activities led to the development of essential leadership life skills,

not participation in youth leadership development programs (Larson et al., 2019). Another study

determined that the type of youth leadership development program was not as important as the

common elements, which "contribute to an effective leadership development program" (Cobia et

al., 2016, p. 41).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study was that data was not collected on youth leadership

development program participants' perceptions of their leadership life skills development before

and after participation in a youth leadership development program. It is not widely known how

youths perceive their development of leadership life skills (Curran & Wexler, 2017). Merely two

studies examined leadership life skills development through youth leadership development

programs; only one involved using the participant's perception (Bean et al., 2017). It is also

unknown if there was a difference in the perception of leadership life skills development pre- and

postparticipation in youth leadership development programs by gender and ethnic minority

affiliation (Weissbourd et al., 2015). Weissbourd et al. (2015) surveyed over 19,000 middle and

high school students and found a biased perception about leadership life skills development

favoring nonminority participants over minority participants. However, Weissbourd et al. (2015) did not disaggregate the results by gender or ethnicity.

This study is important because of the need to understand the extent to which participants in a youth leadership development program perceive their development of leadership life skills (Buschlen et al., 2018). There was a large pool of research on youth leadership and leadership behavior; however, there was little research on whether participation in youth leadership development programs helped develop leadership life skills as perceived by the participant (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2017). Bean et al.'s (2017) collective opinions were that if the perceived development of leadership life skills through youth leadership development programs were not studied, there was a risk of poorly developed and implemented youth leadership development programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine how youth leadership development program participants perceive themselves in the area of leadership life skills development pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program. Specific consideration was given to the difference in gender and ethnic minority affiliation reporting scores. The independent variable in this study was participation in youth leadership development programs, and the response was either *yes* or *no*. Additional independent variables were gender and ethnic minority affiliation. Outcome measures in this study were self-reported student leadership life skills attribute scores.

The Eastern region of Oklahoma was the location for this study. Key participants were college students 18 to 24 years of age. Participants were required to have previously participated in a youth leadership development program. Participants in this study completed a Youth

Leadership Life Skills Development Scale survey through an electronic data collection system called Google Forms. The research aids in the understanding of the perception of leadership life skills development pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program through the participant's leadership life skills attribute score. The research added to the existing body of literature, providing data on pre- and postparticipation perceptions of leadership life skills development of participation in a youth leadership development program.

Research Questions

The claim was that further study was needed to determine how participants in youth leadership development programs perceive themselves with regard to the development of leadership life skills before and after participation. The following research questions addressed the issue proposed in this study.

RQ1: Is there a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program?

H1$_a$: There is a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

H1$_0$: There is no difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

RQ2: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in youth leadership development programs by gender?

H2$_a$: There is a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between

participants in leadership development programs by gender.

H2$_0$: There is no difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between

participants in leadership development programs by gender.

RQ3: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants

in youth leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation?

H3$_a$: There is a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between

participants in leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation.

H3$_0$: There is no difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between

participants in leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation.

Significance of the Study

This study was a significant endeavor in understanding the participants' perception of

youth leadership development programs of their development of leadership life skills before and

after participation. First, this study contributed to the literature addressing youth leadership

development programs by understanding how the assessment tool used could be deployed in

future studies in this area. Second, this study contributed to understanding how youths perceive

the development of usable leadership life skills. This study contributed to the limited literature

on the perception of participants in youth leadership development programs and will serve as a

reference for the development of youth leadership development programs in the future. For me, this study helped uncover critical areas regarding the perceived development of leadership life skills by youths who participated in a youth leadership development program. Youths will benefit from this study as it may help them to make an informed decision on choosing whether to participate in a youth leadership development program. Moreover, school leaders will benefit from this research as it may help them make informed decisions on whether to purchase youth leadership development programs.

Definition of Key Terms

      At-risk population. An at-risk population consists of groups of students considered to be at risk of failing or dropping out of high school. Some of the factors which put students at risk are homelessness, physical or mental health issues, single-parent homes, behavior issues, socioeconomic status, and race and ethnicity (Cobia et al., 2016; Lawless et al., 2019).

      Ethnic minority affiliation. Belonging to a social group with a common national or cultural tradition is considered a part of a minority group (Lawless et al., 2019).

      Ethnicity. The state of belonging to a social group with a common national or cultural tradition (Lawless et al., 2019).

      Gender. Gender is the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex (Lawless et al., 2019).

      Leadership. Leadership is the art of motivating a group of people to act toward achieving a common goal, being able to inspire others, and being prepared to do so (Shrivastava, 2020).

Leadership life skills. Leadership life skills include the ability to communicate effectively, motivate oneself and others, prioritize, seek feedback, demonstrate flexibility, and be a problem solver in various situations (Cobia et al., 2016; Lawless et al., 2019).

Youth leadership development programs. Youth leadership development programs provide students with leadership life skills development opportunities. Youth leadership development programs can be curriculum-based or community-based. Participants engage in practices of decision-making, implementation, evaluation, goal setting, and role modeling. Programs are based on a framework of positive youth development (Cobia et al., 2016; Curran & Wexler, 2017).

Chapter Summary

This chapter included the problem of practice, the purpose of the study, and the research questions and hypotheses, which guided this study. Additionally, the key terms of this study were defined and explained. Identifying participants' perceptions of youth leadership development programs and leadership life skill development will benefit public school administrators and community members when deciding which youth leadership development programs to implement or if to implement any at all. The critical problem addressed in this study was the need to understand the perceived development of leadership life skills by participants' pre- and postparticipation in youth leadership development programs. Chapter 1 presented the study's overview. This overview included the background of youth leadership development programs, the statement of the problem, purpose statement, research questions, and key definitions. Chapter 2 provides this study's theoretical and conceptual framework and a literature review that summarizes pertinent literature related to the area of study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to determine how youth leadership development program participants perceive their development of leadership life skills before and after participation in a youth leadership development program. Data collected from this study include results from surveys. Additionally, the following review of literature focuses on types of youth leadership development programs, qualities revealed through youth leadership development programs, how the effectiveness of youth leadership development programs was measured, and the need to study the perceptions of leadership life skills development resulting from participation in youth leadership development programs. The examination of behavior leadership theory and contingency leadership theory serves as the lens through which this review is conducted.

Literature Search Methods

The goal of the literature search was to establish a deeper understanding of the types of youth leadership development programs, qualities revealed through youth leadership development programs, and how the effectiveness of youth leadership development programs was measured. Once the information was found on the aforementioned areas, that information was then compared to other data, which illustrates that a need exists to study the perceptions of leadership life skills development resulting from participation in youth leadership development programs more deeply. The majority of the literature was found in the online Margarett and Herman Brown Abilene Christian University Library. This online library was utilized because of its accessibility to scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles, empirical articles, eBooks, essays, and online librarians. Google Scholar and the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) were also used to locate literature for this study. Google Scholar is powered by the Google search engine, while ERIC is an online digital library of education research and information.

Education Resources Information Center is sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences of the United States Department of Education.

The keywords that drove the literature search were *leadership*, *youth leadership development program*, *leadership life skills*, and *youth leadership development program participation*. A thesaurus was used to identify synonyms for the keywords. The keywords and concepts were also plugged into Google Scholar. The results were scanned for alternative words and phrases, which could be used to drive the search. Relevant abstracts or articles were also examined for alternative words, phrases, and subject headings.

Theoretical Framework Discussion

Behavior leadership theory and contingency leadership theory framed this study. Behavior leadership theory focuses on a leader's behavior and assumes that other youth leaders can copy leadership life skills (Freeborough & Patterson, 2016). Behavior leadership theory suggests that leaders are created, not born (Boerma et al., 2017). This is in direct agreement with Coach Vince Lombardi's belief that leaders are not born, they are made (Agans et al., 2016). Coach Lombardi believed the way these young leaders were made was through hard work (Agans et al., 2016).

Youth leadership development programs endeavor to create leaders out of participants. Additionally, the contingency theory of leadership expresses the need for a leader to adjust their behavior based on their understanding of various situations and adopt a leadership style appropriate for the situation (Vidal et al., 2017). Youth leadership development programs give participants opportunities to apply different leadership styles in a variety of situations. Behavior theory of leadership focuses on action, and contingency theory of leadership focuses on

situational awareness. These theories allow for leader effectiveness (Freeborough & Patterson, 2016; Vidal et al., 2017) and will serve as an appropriate lens for this study.

Behavior theory of leadership focuses on action, and numerous studies of youth leadership development programs in which participants completed a survey were influenced by this theory (Freeborough & Patterson, 2016). Studies in which participants completed surveys influenced this study. Previously conducted studies provided initial support for youth leadership development programs as a promising context for fostering leadership and life skills; however, more quantitative research is needed to gain an in-depth understanding of the features of youth leadership development programs (Buschlen et al., 2018). Gaining an in-depth understanding of features is synonymous with situational awareness, which is the basis of the contingency theory of leadership. In Buschlen et al.'s (2018) study, youths received a survey to complete. The survey gathered information about their involvement in youth leadership development programs and the program's effects on the development of leadership life skills. The survey in this study was created with action (behavior theory) and situational awareness (contingency theory of leadership) as the driving forces.

Conceptual Framework Discussion

Behavior theory and contingency theory of leadership support the topic of research. The research and literature review are viewed through the lens of the previously mentioned theories. The areas of focus for this review are types of youth leadership development programs, targeted demographics, qualities revealed through youth leadership development programs, identifying qualities, how leadership is measured, and the need to study the perception of leadership life skills development resulting from participation in a youth leadership development program. Seevers and Dormody (Seevers et al., 1995), who created the data collection instrument utilized

in this study, employed a grounded theory approach to studying youth leadership life skills development as the framework for all four of their studies (Seemiller, 2018).

Types of Youth Leadership Development Programs

Youth leadership development programs are available to youths across the nation. A variety of youth leadership development programs started to gain popularity in the late 1990s, and by 2002, the U.S. Department of Education had appropriated $1 billion to support these programs (Dynarski, 2015). Federal spending within this budget targeted support for afterschool youth leadership development programs. Dynarski (2015) found when a federal budget surplus was made available, and spending was focused on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program. This program promoted schools as community resources that could be used to house youth leadership development programs when not in session. The White House has called for further evaluation and evidence to support the appropriation of this budget (Dynarski, 2015). This investment exemplifies the expectation that students will graduate from high school with leadership life skills (Harris Poll, 2016). Public school leaders should address the importance of leadership instruction, developing students' leadership life skills, and adequately preparing them to utilize those skills after graduation (Cobia et al., 2016). Cobia et al. (2016) further stressed the need to understand a participant's perceived development of leadership life skills development to aid in understanding which leadership development programs rise to the top.

Leadership about youth leadership development programs has many meanings. Leadership regarding youth leadership development programs is defined as collective minds that are drawn together and aim to have a group working toward a collective goal (Iachini et al., 2017). Iachini et al. (2017) further stated that the meaning of leadership is a static concept for

youth leadership, focused on the future leader rather than the current participant. Some types of youth leadership development programs are community-based, including the four largest national youth leadership development programs: 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA), Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts (Seemiller, 2018).

4-H

This youth leadership development program has approximately six million participants and is America's most extensive youth leadership development program (4-H, 2021). 4-H partners with colleges and engages participants in hands-on projects with support, and mentors provide guidance. This program is an after-school program, offers a camp setting, and can be found in some public schools (4-H, 2021). Pat Hendricks of Iowa State University developed the Targeting Life Skills Model in 1998 as an outline that became the 4-H categories today: Head, Heart, Hands, and Health (4-H, 2021). The 4-H curriculum model yields 26 of the student leadership competencies (Seemiller, 2018).

Future Farmers of America

Future Farmers of America was established in 1928 and now uses the moniker FFA in an effort to be more inclusive (Future Farmers of America [FFA], 2021). The FFA has a membership of over 630,000 students, each involved in a variety of agricultural endeavors (FFA, 2021). Future Farmers of America promotes itself as a "dynamic youth development organization within agricultural education that prepares students for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success" (FFA, 2021, p. 9). The FFA has the FFA mission precepts. These precepts serve as an outline of the components of the FFA mission (FFA, 2021). Through analysis, 15 student leadership competencies were found in components of the FFA mission precepts (Seemiller, 2018). Future Farmers of America members are more likely to go to college,

participate in collegiate organizations, and hold officer positions than their non-FFA counterparts (Ahrens et al., 2015).

Boy Scouts

Boys Scouts affords participants the opportunity to build character, study citizenship, and improve physical fitness (Boy Scouts of America, 2021). The Boy Scouts are "one of the largest and most prominent values-based" youth leadership development programs and has 2.3 million registered participants (Boy Scouts of America, 2021). Participation includes various programs, camping, and projects. There are no encompassing student learner outcomes that transect all the chapters, giving each participant a somewhat unique experience (Seemiller, 2018). However, every experience has to be grounded in Scout Law (Boy Scouts of America, 2021). This program demonstrated five student leadership competencies (Seemiller, 2018).

Girl Scouts

The Girl Scouts organization is over 100 years old and has 2.7 million registered members (Girl Scouts of America, 2021). The Girl Scouts organization touts that it is the "preeminent leadership development organization for girls" (Girl Scouts of America, 2021). The Girls Scouts organization published, Transforming Leadership in 2008, which outlined and described the Girl Scouts experience (Seemiller, 2018). This publication introduced a guide to help participants develop the leadership life skills needed to engage in a shared leadership experience (Girl Scouts of America, 2021). Like members of the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts engage in programs, camps, and projects. After analyzing the program and latest publication, 28 student leadership competencies emerged (Seemiller, 2018).

All four of the large youth leadership development programs previously mentioned had one student leadership competency in common: appropriate interaction (Seemiller, 2018).

Seemiller (2018) was not surprised at this commonality. Each of the four youth leadership development programs was structured to develop leadership life skills and to help youth build connections with others (Seemiller, 2018). Examples of smaller youth leadership development programs are the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), Big Brothers and Big Sisters, etc. (Lerner et al., 2014). These community-based programs are often mentoring programs as well (Buschlen et al., 2018).

Some types of youth leadership development programs are sports-based. Youth leadership life skills development through sports and physical activity are being evaluated by researchers and practitioners more often now than ever (Agans et al., 2016). These researchers and practitioners want to understand better and help youth develop leadership life skills as a result of their participation in a youth leadership development program that is sports-based. It is believed that youths are urged to do sports and physical activity so they are better prepared to lead both on and off the field of play (Agans et al., 2016). One shortcoming of many studies focusing on the development of leadership life skills in youths was that they focused on leadership development in a vacuum and should also consider the physical activity context (Agans et al., 2016).

Programs, both small and large, are often based on a formulation of the positive youth development (PYD) perspective. According to Lerner et al. (2014), the PYD is a strengths-based model and seeks to enhance or understand the lives of adolescents. Community-based programs referenced by the aforementioned author focused on a participant's ecology. The areas of ecology included family dynamics, academic interests, friend groups, etc. Lerner et al. (2014) coined the term the "five C's of PYD: competence, confidence, character, connection, and caring" (p. 19). Lerner et al. (2014) believed the five C's would manifest in participants through

participation in youth leadership development programs. The authors also believed the manifestation of these traits would have a mutually beneficial impact on the participant ecology, therefore "enhancing their world" (Lerner et al., 2014, p. 19).

In comparison, other types of youth leadership development programs focus on scholarship and are grounded in theoretical models. The Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership (HOBY) program is an example of a theoretical model. According to Ray (2016), "HOBY believes leadership is action, not title or position, and that no matter the leader's age, role, or sector, effective positive leadership is ultimately service to humanity for the betterment of the world" (p. 102). Ray (2016) studied how the HOBY program combines the social change model with the service-learning methodology. Students who participated in this program described it as an experience that changed their lives but did not specifically report their perception of leadership life skills development. The HOBY youth leadership development program is formed from a situation of successful leadership behavior where a seasoned member or group leader models the desired leadership skills over a long period of time (Turgunbaeva et al., 2016). This may or may not be accomplished through involvement in various leadership-based activities.

Some youth leadership development programs focus on the development of leadership life skills through conferences, missions, or field trips (Iachini et al., 2017). While Iachini et al. (2017) did not believe the development of leadership life skills was an event, they did find event involvement should be an integrated part of the process. The program used in the focus of their study was Girls on the Run (GOTR). It is a positive youth development program that mixes physical activity-based activities and travel across the nation. This type of program is gaining popularity, but research continues to demonstrate that not all of these types of youth leadership development programs are equally successful in promoting healthy development among the

participants (Iachini et al., 2017), and their study of the self-perceived development of leadership life skills is not existent. Additionally, a difficulty that programs such as GOTR face is short leadership cycles, resulting in the loss of organizational direction (Iachini et al., 2017). Gender differences exist in the development of leadership life skills, and females tend to show higher levels of development (Osmane & Brennan, 2018). Programs like GOTR, which focus on a specific gender, could show continued success due to females trending higher in the development of leadership life skills.

There are youth leadership development programs that focus exclusively on leadership, such as 4-H and FFA (McElravy & Hasting, 2014). Youth leadership development programs, which focus exclusively on leadership and not scholarship, align the perceived strengths of the participant with the existing resources of the youth leadership development program (Lerner et al., 2014). McElravy and Hasting (2014) found these youth leadership development programs to be essential for the transfer of leadership life skills to younger generations in agricultural communities. However, Lerner et al. (2014) found that in addition to agricultural leadership skills development, participants developed overall skills useful in "thriving" (p. 23). The authors of these studies focused on youth leadership life skills development through 4-H and FFA. Members of these two programs can continue their membership from elementary to high school and into college. The researchers chose these clubs to extensively explore the relationship between personality traits and leadership life skills. They focused on the transfer of leadership to younger generations through leadership development programs such as 4-H, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), Skills USA, Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), and FFA. The previously mentioned programs concentrate on modern trends

in leadership theories and move away from the mindset of leadership residing in isolation (Lerner et al., 2014). These student skills development organizations focus on leadership and professional skills development in high school-aged adolescents.

Some youth leadership development programs are exclusive to males or females. The XY-Zone program is a youth leadership development program that allows only male membership. A study conducted by Hartwig (2017) endeavored to examine the program's influence on the development of leadership life skills and academic improvements in high school-aged males. The males in their study had previously been identified as at risk of dropping out of school. Their study revealed that a significant gain was made for these males in many of the leadership categories. Gains were also made in the areas of academics, school attendance, and behavior issues. A participant must be referred by a teacher, parent, or self-referral to become a member of the XY-Zone program. The criteria for reference are challenges in academics, behavior, or school attendance (Hartwig, 2017). These at-risk behaviors were defined by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Their study had 290 participants. Hartwig's (2017) study is similar to this study because both utilized pre- and postdata collection tools to gather information from participants. However, Hartwig's (2017) study focused on academic gains, where this study focuses on the participant's perception of leadership life skills development. The XY-Zone program is an after-school program. Monkman and Proweller (2016) found that the genre of after-school youth leadership development programs was underresearched and undertheorized.

Conversely, a study by Esentaş et al. (2017) focused on finding the "effect from youth camp practices organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports for improving self-awareness and leadership skills of female students" (p. 212). The chief component of that study was

determining whether female students' self-awareness and leadership life skills improved after

participating in the program. The effects of participation in youth leadership development

programs can significantly differ between males and females (Lerner et al., 2014). Esentaş et al.

(2017) focused on self-awareness because, theoretically, self-awareness gives one access to their

strengths and weaknesses. Youth leadership development programs with a campus focus are

divided into two groups. The first group serves as group leaders. The second group serves as

activity leaders. Esentaş et al. (2017) found that the group leader groups were typically made up

of previous youth leadership development participants. Esentaş et al. (2017) noted that others

explored how outdoor camping programs or nature camps built interpersonal skills such as

problem-solving and enhanced communication skills. The authors identified one weakness:

directing youths at outdoor camps to promote self-awareness and leadership skills is not a

priority of local youth centers (Esentaş et al., 2017). Also, participants may already be "leaders"

since they seek out the program and are not recruited or assigned to the camps. The authors

discovered 10 themes: overcoming prejudice, communication, friendships, acculturation,

teamwork, responsibility, self-confidence, awareness, voluntariness, and role modeling. Esentaş

et al.'s (2017) study utilized Cohen's kappa coefficient method to determine consistency in their

evaluation of the camp programs.

  The 10 themes discovered in Esentaş et al.'s (2017) study were similar attributes to the

leadership life skills identified in this study. A difference between the aforementioned study and

this study was the data collection techniques. This study used a survey completed by the

participants, while Esentaş et al.'s (2017) study utilized observation, focus group discussions,

and documented analysis. Both Esentaş et al. (2017) and Lerner et al. (2014) found that camps

style youth leadership development programs positively affect changing attitudes and behaviors

that emerge as prejudices because the camp environment is typically outside the participant's typical surroundings and peers.

McElravy and Hasting (2014) indicated some studies explored the relationship between personality and leadership in adults after participation in adult leadership development programs. Their research illustrated how there was no developed profile of youth leaders who participated in youth leadership development programs. The authors believed if there was a clear profile, it could aid in planning for and developing the next generation of leaders and youth leadership development programs. Researchers such as McElravy and Hasting (2014) explored the relationships between traits to accomplish their tasks. They utilized the traits modeled in the big-five model of personality and emotional, intelligence, and self-perceived leadership life skills in youth who participated in summer leadership programs. The participants consisted of two groups of students from Nebraska. The first group had 74 incoming sixth graders, and the second group had 83 sixth- through 12th-grade students. The students received paper and pencil survey packets to complete demographic questionnaires. Their study spanned throughout the summer. Using this data, the researchers utilized meta-analysis to compare the relationship between emotional intelligence and transformational-transactional leadership but not the perception of leadership life skills development. The authors used regression analyses from the study to identify emotional intelligence as the strongest predictor of self-perceived leadership skills. Brumbaugh and Cater (2016) also used the 4-H club in their study. Their study indicated that the "perceived importance of youth leadership development training is predictive of youth educator's confidence level in teaching youth leadership development" (Brumbaugh & Cater, 2016, p. 11). In contrast to the McElravy and Hastings (2014) study, Brumbaugh and Cater (2016) showed that those involved in leading the program were more important than the program itself.

However, Brumbaugh and Cater (2016) indicated that youth leadership development programs

are the cornerstone of many organizations that serve youths.

Qualities Revealed Through Youth Leadership Development Programs

Karagianni and Montgomery (2017) pondered why youth leadership development

programs should be studied. They found that while youths of all ages can take on leadership

roles, there is a gap in the literature regarding the qualities revealed through youth leadership

programs at any age. There were a few studies focused on the qualities of or leadership life skills

development after participation in a youth leadership development program. A significant benefit

of the studies concerning youth leadership development programs is the introduction of

leadership qualities that may not naturally present themselves in students who were not involved

in such a program (Mortensen et al., 2014).

One research group, LeMire et al. (2018), discovered that it was unknown to what extent

youth leadership development programs can influence leadership life skills development in

participants. In their study, LeMire et al. (2018) found that a summer performing arts (SPA)

youth leadership development program enhanced qualities such as reading and language skills,

mathematical skills, thinking skills, social skills, motivation to learn, and striving for a positive

school environment. Summer performing arts programs have been in various schools for many

decades and develop skills in youths using transdisciplinary methods. For example, they may use

acting and singing to teach reading and leadership (LeMire et al., 2018). The enhancements

mentioned were in addition to the development of leadership life skills through the SPA

program. The SPA program utilized a leadership curriculum with the qualities or elements

identified in a handbook, which the staff studies before student sessions. The staff became

familiar with the leadership qualities so that they could acknowledge leadership behavior when

students properly exhibit the behavior. The method utilized in that study is similar to the method in this study. Both studies use similar pre- and postsurveys.

Youth leadership development programs often target specific age groups, religious groups, genders, ethnicities, or affiliations (Rehm, 2014). Franklin Covey's Leader In Me youth leadership program is an example of a curriculum-based youth leadership development program that aims to teach 21st-century leadership and life skills to faculty, staff, and students (Leader in Me, n.d.). It is important to evaluate the development of leadership life skills after participation in a youth leadership development program to determine the effectiveness of a leadership curriculum, its impact, and quality (Ahrens et al., 2015). While a study conducted by Cobia et al. (2016) determined that the type of youth leadership development program is not as important as the common elements (or qualities), which "contribute to an effective leadership development program" (p. 43). The previously mentioned study examined the features, which impacted the quality of leadership development programs in the Shelby County school system. Additionally, that study served as a means to inform the school system of the youth leadership development program's effectiveness. The interview questions in that study addressed the characteristics that make individual leadership programs distinct from other types of programs. The results led to several conclusions. Based on the qualitative research, the common elements that contributed to effective leadership development programs were involving leaders in the initial planning stage and ensuring standards or competencies become nonnegotiable. However, the previous participants' perceptions of the program's ability to develop leadership life skills were not considered because their perceptions were not collected. The authors noted that a limitation in that study was the small sample size of 22 participants.

Seemiller (2018) postulated that curriculum-based youth leadership development programs serve as a model for all youth leadership development programs. Seemiller (2018) combined youth leadership development program literature to develop a curriculum-inspired model for youth leadership development programs. This model was a hierarchical conceptual model with various stages aligned with both Bloom's taxonomy (Ruhl, 2021) and Kolb's experimental learning theory (McLeod, 2017). Seemiller (2018) also surveyed 25 experienced youth leadership development professionals and found 12 fundamental principles to the development of leadership life skills. These principles have aided determining both outcomes and content of youth leadership development programs (Seemiller, 2018). Additionally, curriculum-based models could benefit from knowing a participant's strengths and weaknesses, positive traits, and pedagogical diagnoses (Turgunbaeva et al., 2016).

It helps to understand the factors that contribute to the development of leadership life skills in youths to understand the qualities revealed through youth leadership development programs. One such descriptive correlational study was conducted to understand the factors that contribute to the development of leadership life skills further (Osmane & Brennan, 2018). That study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach in Pennsylvania. The sample population comprised high school-aged students from four different Pennsylvania public high schools. Much like many youth leadership development programs studies, programs with an agriculture foundation were targeted in their study. Data was collected from 421 participants to help determine the factors contributing to leadership life skills development (Osmane & Brennan, 2018). Interviews were also conducted as part of their research. They interviewed 19 teachers and coupled the data from the interview with the participant data. The study's findings revealed that social support was a prominent predictor of leadership life skills development (Osmane &

Brennan, 2018). The second prominent predictors revealed in their study were civic engagement and social interaction variables (Osmane & Brennan, 2018).

Educational experiences in some leadership camps aim to help youth develop leadership life skills for the future (Friedel et al., 2017). Friedel et al. (2017) studied the Virginia Summer Residential Governor's School for Agriculture (VGSA) youth leadership development program. The study found that past research showed how leadership studies focused on individual leaders' components, characteristics, and behaviors within groups but not on the perception of leadership life skills gained and developed. The body of research analyzed for this study focused on four areas. The first area addressed the different types of youth leadership development programs. The second area identified the qualities that youth leadership development programs introduce, which may not be naturally apparent. The third common area was the effectiveness of youth leadership development programs and how effectiveness was measured. The final area addressed was the need to study the lasting effects of youth leadership development programs after participation in a youth leadership development program.

However, research collected from a different study determined that the type of youth leadership development program was not as important as the common elements, which "contribute to an effective leadership development program" (Cobia et al., 2016, p. 39). It is imperative to assess the perception of the leadership life skills youth develop in a youth leadership development program to determine the program's effectiveness, quality, and impact (Ahrens et al., 2015). Ahrens et al. (2015) stated that few studies exist that determined if participation in youth leadership development programs aided in the perception of youth leadership life skills development.

In Barkley et al.'s (2014) study, they discovered that students might struggle to "connect the 3R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic), which are academic qualities, with the 4C's (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity), which are leadership life skill qualities" (p. 3). They found that the Leader in Me program was paramount for helping students bridge the gap between the two sets of qualities. In contrast, Ogurlu and Emir (2014) stated, "leadership development programs for sixth graders should focus on identity development, values, self-esteem, communication with others, boundaries and rules, team-building, the value of education, social issues, becoming a leader, refusal skills, supporting ideas, and diversity" (p. 225).

Identifying Qualities

Judge et al. (2015) searched for additional studies to examine the personality–leadership relationship in two stages. In the first stage, they searched for the keywords *personality* and *leadership* and then searched for a combination of each of the five traits individually. The second part of the search examined the resulting studies to establish whether they exhibited a personality measure for leadership, a criterion measure, and the essential data to determine a correlation between the factors. The meta-analysis occurred in two phases. The first phase calculated the sample size and weighted mean correlation for each leadership personality trait. In the second phase, correlations were individually corrected for errors in measurement in both the area of prediction and criteria. The results showed that extraversion had the strongest correlation with leadership and that agreeableness had the weakest correlation.

The first question addressed what traits distinguish leaders from other people. The second question addressed the magnitude of those differences. Judge et al. (2015) utilized the five-factor model as a framework and meta-analysis tool. The dimensions comprising the five-factor model are neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. The

five-factor model provided the authors with a taxonomy for leadership. The authors defined leadership throughout their study in relation to each of the factors in the five-factor model. Rehm (2014) also explored an alternative view where the leadership opportunities came from partnerships fostered and developed between students and proposed using the model for high school student leadership development. However, there were several methods of teaching with this model. It is not well-known which teaching model would yield the desired results after participation in youth leadership development programs. According to Rehm (2014), leadership life skills developed during the adolescent years deliver the most effective results. Some adult models of effective leadership life skills have been presented throughout the years and have aided in society's understanding of effective leadership (Harris Poll, 2016). All of this data was collected through observation of participants, questioning the participants' teachers or program directors, or through surveys. However, none of the data accounts for a participant's perception of their leadership life skills before participation in the youth leadership development program.

One area of difficulty when identifying leadership life skills qualities is that students have leadership qualities that can present themselves and be seen in different age groups at various times throughout development (Parlar et al., 2017). Parlar et al. (2017) sorted these qualities into six skill sets: "problem-solving skills, goal setting, decision-making skills, group skills, communication skills, and leadership knowledge" (p. 218). According to Parlar et al. (2017), certain qualities have to be exhibited before specific leadership skills can be developed. This research, and research like it, is part of a significant gap in the literature that does not address the perception of the development of leadership life skills pre- and postparticipation in youth leadership development programs (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2017).

When considering the qualities revealed through youth leadership development programs, it is crucial to understand that leadership qualities are formed during successful leadership behavior practices in youth leadership development programs (Turgunbaeva et al., 2016). Youth who come from low socioeconomic situations may struggle to voice their needs. When this population requires youth leadership development programs, administrators, program leaders, and staff may not know how to discover the strengths and limitations of the participants or even know about approaches to gathering the participants' perspectives (Stacy et al., 2018). Others have explored how students in public housing face sizable complications to success because of limited access to resources, such as quality youth leadership development programs (Stacy et al., 2018). Other studies have shown how poverty-stricken adolescents tend to perform poorly on academic achievement tests (Stacy et al., 2018). These factors contribute to an inability to express their perspectives. Stacy et al. (2018) identified an inconsistency with program leader and administrator training. The amount and types of training facilitators undergo will require further exploration (Turgunbaeva et al., 2016). It is also not well understood how age factors into the approaches used in gathering youth perspectives (Stacy et al., 2018). Stacy et al. (2018) postulated that youths from low socioeconomic situations could benefit from having a voice in the youth leadership programming they participate in through sharing their perspective of the leadership life skills they developed. Their perspectives could shape future programming; future research could examine whether participation in youth leadership programs has long- or short-term leadership development effects (Stacy et al., 2018).

Turgunbaeva et al. (2016) endeavored to outline the critical points in developing leadership qualities in school-aged children. Their research showed that it was possible to logically structure leadership development to reveal both predictable and manageable qualities.

Turgunbaeva et al. (2016) also found justification for the leadership development principles in younger schoolchildren and presented their findings in both structural and conceptual models. Turgunbaeva et al. (2016) focused on leadership qualities that took three primary forms. The first was the analysis of the theoretical basis of leadership quality development in school-aged children. The second was the description of the specifics of the development of leadership skills and qualities in students. The third was creating a structural and conceptual model for the development of the leadership skills and qualities that students display: their research method models axiological, system-, activity-, and student-centered approaches. The researchers created a theoretical analysis and synthesis of the information to construct their study and share the data. The data showed that the qualities most often revealed through participation in a youth leadership program were character, motivation, and a need for self-affirmation (Turgunbaeva et al., 2016). Unlike the qualities revealed through the study, the HOBY youth leadership development programs have the seven C's: consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, civility, and citizenship (Ray, 2016). Change was a quality of the program that was considered to be the "hub" or what everyone was working toward (Ray, 2016). Ray (2016) did not believe these qualities to be either predictable or manageable but simply values in which to believe.

While there are numerous types of leadership development programs, one that stands alone is the Leadership Development Over a Lifespan or LDOL (Kirton, 2015) program. Leadership Development Over a Lifespan proposes that leadership development should vary based on the age of the program participant. This program focuses on young people between the ages of 12 and 19 and focuses on the transitions between self and identity of one's self (Kirton, 2015). Through Friedel et al.'s (2017) study of this program, it was found that participants in this

age range began questioning their values and beliefs. The authors believed this was an indicator that this age range was an imperative time to help youth develop the values associated with leadership life skills. Friedel et al. (2017) also found no evidence that problem-solving style changes as one matured from 12 to 19 and was most reliably measured at 17 years of age (Friedel et al., 2017; Kirton, 2015).

How the Effectiveness of Youth Leadership Development Programs Are Measured

The majority of the studies, which measured the effectiveness of youth leadership development programs, relied on questioning and surveys. Like the study conducted by Hine (2017), some relied on group discussions and focus groups. The amount of time in which each study was conducted varies from months to years (Hine, 2017). Nationwide evaluations of youth leadership development programs have been unreliable, and focusing on measuring specific features, such as leadership life skills development, is a sensible next step (Dynarski, 2015).

Like Hine (2017), Monkman and Proweller (2016) used interviews to measure the effectiveness of youth leadership development programs. The interview tool was called the civic engagement program (CEP). The authors used semistructured interviews during the first six months of their study. However, they also used information gathered from observations of the CEP sessions and some informal conversations with the CEP group facilitators. The authors utilized "conventional qualitative data analysis procedures involving reading through the data on multiple occasions and searching for emergent patterns and themes" (Monkman & Proweller, 2016, p. 185). Unlike Hine (2017), a study by Cobia et al. (2016) to measure the youth leadership development program's effectiveness focused exclusively on examining the literature on youth leadership development programs and reviewing the structure of content and delivery methods of various youth leadership development programs.

There was a similar tool used in the study entitled *Evaluating a Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Program,* which evaluated the development of leadership life skills in school-age adolescents (Smith et al., 2005). The study evaluated a youth leadership development program developed by the Appalachian Regional Commission Youth Leadership Incubator Program (YEP). The program's goal was to teach leadership life skills using an experiential model. To evaluate this program, the researchers utilized a format that allowed for scoring sessions at various points: pretest, posttest, follow-up, and hindsight (Smith et al., 2005). The need for empirical research to identify the effectiveness of leadership training programs in adolescence inspired their study. The participants were students aged 12 to 17 and who resided in seven economically distressed Alabama counties. Participants rated their leadership abilities on a Likert scale with 30 items to address. The scale ranged from 0 (*no ability*) to 3 (*a lot of ability*). There were significant differences between the scores after repeated-measures analyses and paired-samples *t* tests. The differences occurred between the pretest, posttest, and follow-up scoring sessions. The researchers noted hindsight shifts appeared to determine the changes in participant ability more accurately. A limitation in the research was that the pre- and posttest samples showed inconsistencies in addressing exaggerated preassessment scores. Another restriction of this research was its limited demographic variables, as most of the sample were Caucasian and female.

The Smith et al. (2005) study mentioned using a pre- and posttest when studying the effectiveness of youth leadership development programs. A study that focused on evaluating the Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) utilized similar pre- and posttest in their research (Bates et al., 2019). The YLA included components of typical youth leadership development programs and incorporated positive youth development (PYP) and leadership life skill development

strategies (Bates et al., 2019). Their study used a mixed-methods approach and explored YLA participants' perceptions of the program with a focus on program outcomes. The researchers hoped to discover which program components contributed most to participants' growth and learning (Bates et al., 2019). The qualitative findings in this study suggested that participation in this youth leadership development program as perceived by participants to foster support in the areas of communication and social skills, readiness for leadership roles, and college readiness (Bates et al., 2019). The qualitative findings also showed a significant increase from pre- to posttest responses in the various areas of leadership life skills development (Bates et al. 2019).

A different approach to measuring the effectiveness of a youth leadership development program was taken by Skelton et al. (2016) as they tried to determine the impact of the Memorial Middle School Agricultural Extension and Education Center (MMSAEEC) on "student learning in science, agriculture, and youth leadership life skills; as well as attempting to understand student interest in STEM-related careers" (p. 56). These researchers utilized a quasi-experimental research design and a control group design to aid validity. However, they found the "greatest threat to internal validity for this design is possible differences in intersession history between the students" (Skelton et al., 2016, p. 59). The dependent variables in their study were standardized test scores, vocational interest, and youth leadership life skills development improvement scores. Their study revealed insignificant to weak relationships between youth leadership life skills development scores and standardized test scores. The authors used two middle schools concurrently from the area and did not find differences worth noting in their results.

Like other studies that measured youth leadership development programs' effectiveness, McElravy and Hastings (2014) conducted a study by having participants complete a survey. The

survey packet included the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS), the

Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire–Adolescent Short Form (TEIQue-ASF), the Big Five

Inventory–Youth Form (BFI), and demographic questionnaires. Each packet took between 30

and 40 minutes to complete. The researchers found "emotional intelligence as the strongest

predictor of self-perceived leadership skills" (McElravy & Hastings, 2014, p. 143). Like Parlar et

al. (2017), McElravy and Hastings (2014) also found age trends in personality may have

influenced why emotional intelligence was a better predictor of self-perceived leadership skills

than personality. McElravy and Hastings (2014) felt as though future "leadership research in

youth populations might benefit from assessing leadership effectiveness using more objective

measures" (p. 144).

McElravy and Hastings (2014) utilized a grounded theory to examine the relationship

between youth leadership development and community engagement. Within the research, a

paradigm model illustrated the developmental process. The process included the conditions that

allowed adolescents to be involved in their communities. Included in their study were the

strategies and the effectiveness of these strategies. The research results illustrated that one-on-

one connections, common feelings, and asking youths to engage were the most relevant ways to

develop engaging relationships between youths in leadership development and their community.

The participants in that study were members of a leadership program called home town

competitiveness (HTC). The participants comprised 14 adolescents, six older adults, and three

younger adults. The data collection consisted of semistructured interviews and observations. The

paradigm model depicted the conditions that caused the youth to engage in their community,

strategies used by both youths and adults as they worked together, conditions that helped or

hindered implementing strategies, and the outcomes between the social capital and the sense of

community. A limitation of this research was that it measured the impact of a leadership program over a short period. The authors noted this research could benefit from a longitudinal study design to capture possible antecedents to the development of youth leadership and community engagement.

If a youth leadership development program is used in conjunction with a public school curriculum, the program's effectiveness may be measured by surveying faculty and staff (Hine, 2017). One example comes from interviews by Hine (2017) of eight Catholic secondary school administrators regarding the effectiveness of youth leadership development programs housed in their teaching institutions. The interviews revealed that youth leadership development programs were highly effective and should be available to all students at the Catholic school targeted in their study. The administrators were pleased with how the participants displayed components of school identity and culture. This is similar to the sentiment that public school leaders should address the importance of leadership instruction, developing students' leadership life skills, and adequately preparing them to utilize those skills (Cobia et al., 2016).

Parlar et al. (2017) conceptualized a different approach for measuring youth leadership development programs' effectiveness. These researchers utilized a mixed model method in their descriptive study of leadership development in students. They used teacher opinions to determine the leadership qualities in students. They collected teacher opinions using surveys and questionnaires. The questionnaire was a prepared, five-point Likert-type rating. There were 15 items on the questionnaire. The questionnaire included demographics, gender, school type, leadership qualities that need to be gained by students, and levels of in-class and out-of-class activities to acquire leadership qualities.

Parlar et al. (2017) utilized qualitative and quantitative research methods. Thirteen teachers participated in the qualitative part of their study, and 304 participated in the quantitative portion. Some of the data for the qualitative portion of their study used semistructured interview methods. The quantitative portion used a questionnaire. The participants came from a private school in the Uskudar district of Istanbul. This district was easily accessible for the researchers, and the school was running leadership activities that added to their study. Their study yielded the results that the teachers anticipated: the leadership qualities, which should be the focus of leadership development, were communication skills, problem-solving skills, responsibility, honesty, and goal setting. The results obtained from the quantitative portion of their study showed applicability levels for the activities through which students could acquire leadership qualities. The researchers divided leadership development activities into three categories. The first was activities performed in the classroom. The second was activities performed outside of the classroom. The third was activities explicitly aimed at providing a conceptual understanding of leadership.

A similar study by Cobia et al. (2016) examined the features that impacted the program quality of youth leadership development programs in the Shelby County school system. Cobia et al.'s (2016) study served as a means to inform the school system of the youth leadership development programs' effectiveness. There is a need for ongoing evaluations of youth leadership development programs to determine their success (Ahrens et al., 2015). There were three research questions addressed in Cobia et al.'s (2016) study. The first explored K–12 school systems recognized for their best practices in youth leadership development programs. The second asked what was distinctive in the delivery, content, and practices of the nation's best youth leadership development programs. The third question addressed the steps K–12 school

systems took to ensure an outstanding youth leadership development program for aspiring, novice, and veteran leaders. The methodology utilized was a qualitative, grounded theory research design. The interview questions address the characteristics that made individual leadership development programs distinct from other types of programs. Based on the qualitative research, the common elements that contributed to effective youth leadership development programs were involving leaders in the initial planning stage and ensuring standards or competencies become nonnegotiable. The authors noted that a limitation in their study was the small sample size of less than 25 high school principals. Their study did not reveal if there were lasting effects from participation in the youth leadership development program.

The Need to Study the Perception of Leadership Life Skills Development

There is substantial research assessing if and how participation in youth leadership development programs can improve participants' lives (Lerner et al., 2014). However, Lerner et al.'s (2014) research does not consider or measure these youths' self-efficacy, which is similar to perception, before participation. Their research was longitudinal, beginning at fifth grade and ending at graduation, and they studied participation in 4-H, a community-based youth leadership program. Dynarski (2015) emphasized a need to focus studies on specific outcomes based on features like leadership life skills. Leadership and character development of students are not to be a terminal, one-time event, as leadership is a process that evolves throughout one's life (Buschlen et al., 2018). Their research, and research like it, is part of a significant gap in the literature that does not address the perception of the development of leadership life skills pre- and postparticipation in youth leadership development programs (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2017). Additionally, more research is needed to identify which leadership life skills components

promote higher perceptions of a youth's leadership life skill development (Knaggs et al., 2015; Lerner et al., 2014).

Previous studies of youth leadership development programs do not offer insight into the participant's perception of their development of leadership life skills (Bean et al., 2017). The authors further stated that more quantitative research was needed to gain a deeper understanding of the outcomes of participation in a youth leadership development program. Bean et al. (2017) postulated that the development of leadership life skills comes from the "notion of intentionality" (p. 76). This notion comes from teaching leadership life skills within the paradigm of a youth leadership development program (Bean et al., 2017). They also noted that all youths are born with the capacity to lead, various life experiences, and varying maturation rates, and this is why utilizing the participant's pre- and postparticipation perception of leadership life skills development is vital (Bean et al., 2017).

Based on the concept of utilizing a pre- and posttest model, one study endeavored to understand how participants of youth leadership development programs viewed their perceived skills and knowledge after participation (Frey & Parent, 2019). The study was designed to measure the perceived change in participants' leadership life skills, increased knowledge, and increased interest in the program curriculum areas. The researchers used a survey before and after participation in the program. The survey was a questionnaire with 12 questions divided into three parts. Of those who completed the questionnaire, 69 responses were used in the analysis. A Wilcoxon paired signed-rank test determined participants' change in perception. This before and after response came after two years apart. Overall, results revealed an increase in participant perception of their leadership life skills development (Frey & Parent, 2019). The researchers believed this study included more focus on perceived knowledge than perceived life leadership

skill development, and they would like to conduct further research to see if a direct correlation exists between the two variables (Frey & Parent, 2019).

Participation in community-based youth leadership development programs is studied and measured most often (Buschlen et al., 2018). Youth leadership development programs, such as the Leader in Me curriculum-based program, are needed to develop a leadership mindset (Barkley et al., 2014). Some schools strive to instill in students skill sets that allow them to live in and contribute to society after graduation. The mindsets included in these skills are the self-care to become independent, the effective interactions with others to become interdependent, and the desire to improve over time continually. While the Leader in Me program identifies the skills it will endeavor to develop in participants, it does not track the students' perception of leadership life skills development. It is imperative to understand how a participant perceives the development of leadership life skills before and after participation in a youth leadership development program (Buschlen et al., 2018). Shek and Lin (2016) also determined that it was not well known why there was little research on evaluating youth leadership development programs from participants' perspectives. Shek and Lin (2016) suggested that the lack of data collection in the area of leadership skill development from the perspective of participants could be due in part to noncredit-bearing youth leadership development programs not being effective.

If a youth has volunteered to join a youth leadership development program, their perceived development of life leadership skills may be hard to capture because of a strong intrinsic motivation to learn (Shek & Lin, 2016). Shek and Lin (2016) stated that a strong intrinsic motivation in a student was associated with better learning outcomes. A comparable study by Larson et al. (2019) found that youth leadership development programs were unnecessary to develop leadership life skills in youths. Their study utilized focal questions as a

starting place for examining the roles that youths may inhabit or experience. Larson et al. (2019) found that leadership life skills were developed in youths through responsibility for something or someone. They concluded that "motivation came from a 'don't quit ethic,' and a growing investment in personal role-related goals" (Larson et al., 2019, p. 1028). Their study revealed that youth leadership development programs could limit experience with substantive roles. According to Larson et al. (2019), roles that provide practice with "diverse, difficult, and moral demands" (p. 1023) can only be acquired through real-life experience and consistent mentorship. Moreover, youths were motivated to learn and would retain knowledge when given hands-on learning opportunities (San Jose & Nelson, 2017). The participants in their study consisted of 73 teenage students; about half of the participants were male, and the other half were female. Participants were interviewed. The interview consisted of 40 structured questions and various probes. The interview endeavored to collect a participant's experience in a youth leadership development program to determine effectiveness. Their method varies from the method of this study. While this study utilizes questions, it collects responses using a Likert scale instead of collecting a narrative response from participants. A significant takeaway from the Larson et al. (2019) study was the discovery of how youth learn leadership through youth leadership development programs. Larson et al. (2019) found activities based on role demands and obligations develop leadership life skills in participants. The authors mentioned a need for additional research in the areas of ethnicity and gender to gain a deeper understanding of the role of these factors in participation in youth leadership development programs.

A group of students from three high schools was the center of Buschlen et al.'s (2018) study focusing on the relationship between student experiences and self-perceived leadership life skills development. Over 3,000 high school students from Iowa were selected to participate in

this study. The instrument utilized measured the students' self-perception of leadership life skills on a 10-point scale with the following categories: personal development, citizenship, cooperation, attitude toward group work, group drive, productivity, cohesiveness, degree of attainment of leadership, achievement, and self-confidence. Buschlen et al.'s (2018) findings showed that participants who served as leaders within the youth leadership development program had significantly higher self-perception scores of leadership life skills than those who did not. Their study undertook objective measurements of actual outcomes, which is fundamental for accurate reporting (Dynarski, 2015). Participants who acted as committee chairs in a youth leadership development program rated higher than noncommittee chairs. While those who received formal leadership training in conjunction with participation in youth leadership development programs rated higher than those who did not.

Hine (2017) also believed that there were shortcomings in youth development leadership programs. Two such shortcomings were "student leader disengagement and a lack of support or understanding from those who staff" (Hine, 2017, p. 80) these programs. Hine (2017) felt that disengagement in the assigned leadership roles stemmed from the leadership activities being "little more than manipulation, decoration, or tokenism" (p. 80). Hine (2017) believed the lack of understanding from the staff possibly attributed to their focus on management instead of leadership. This is much like Shek and Lin's (2016) findings of a disconnect between program staff and participants. The disconnect presents a further need to study the participants' perception of leadership life skills development in youth leadership development programs.

Hine's (2017) research examined the strengths and shortcomings of how one Catholic secondary school attempted to develop young students' leadership potential. The author also explored how efforts to develop leadership life skills in adolescents were improving. Their study

focused on 50 participants in 10th through 12th grade over three years. It was a longitudinal case study with the primary methods for collecting data being qualitative interviews, focus group interviews, observation, field notes, analysis of documents, and some journaling. Hine (2017) felt that a longitudinal case study would maximize the opportunities to track, report, and compare findings over the three years. The research revealed several key strengths of youth leadership development programs. Some strengths of the program were the leadership opportunities available for participants and the participation of multiple elected leaders in the program. Hine (2017) reported a few shortcomings as well. The first and most commonly reported were student leaders evading their responsibilities. Another shortcoming was the noninvolvement of younger leaders. There was also a perception of the influence of a "popularity vote" (Hine, 2017, p. 82) for elected student leaders. Their research was limited because it was conducted in one private school facility and did not follow up with the students once they graduated. A similar shortcoming exists in examining publicly offered youth leadership development programs. Dynarski (2015) found that youth leadership development programs that are required to be provided by public schools do not often meet the adequate annual progress under the No Child Left Behind guidelines.

The challenges to initiate youth leadership development programs "are numerous, and they come from all directions" (Ruben et al., 2018, p. 249). According to Ruben et al. (2018), challenges exist in the economy of the marketplace and the career needs of students. There are also challenges in the capabilities and difficulties posed by new technologies. Employer demands for a better-prepared workforce pose a challenge as well, according to the authors. One component of this problem comes from the lack of "systematic approaches to leadership recruitment and preparation" (Ruben et al., 2018, p. 242). Also, some consider leadership a

discipline or technical issue instead of a set of leadership life skills. The authors contributed this to being part of the problem because leadership should be considered on an individual basis and not on a per-issue basis. Ruben et al. (2018) concentrated their study on the Rutgers Leadership Academy (RLA), where they focused on the development of leadership issues and competencies as applied within departments, schools of study, and campuses. The authors found that the Rutgers–New Brunswick strategic plan led to the development of the RLA, and the plan needed more "systematic leadership development" (Ruben et al., 2018, p. 243). An area that requires further exploration is how informal leadership measures up against or influences formal leadership training. The authors also explored the impact of social influence on formal authority related to leadership development. With the information discovered about the RLA program, it could now serve as a model for developing youth leadership development programs evaluations.

Brumbaugh and Cater (2016) found that the educator's confidence in the program was more important than the program. The researchers also discovered that when teachers perceived the youth leadership development program as important and relevant, then the teachers' confidence in utilizing the program soared; however, the participant's perception of the program was not considered. The authors believed professional development should focus on building teacher confidence in the youth leadership development program. Brumbaugh and Cater (2016) stressed the importance of the primary role of understanding "leadership concepts and … teach[ing] youth leadership to adolescents" (p. 11) for those who work in youth leadership programs. A shortcoming of their study was that the authors did not reveal if the staff had a historical connection to the youth leadership development program. A comparable study postulated that those who were involved with teaching the participants in youth leadership development programs could be more important than the program itself (Sherman et al., 2017).

Sherman et al. (2017) concluded that much of the known research related to youth leadership development programs came from studies of the participants rather than the participant's perception of life leadership skills ascertained as a result of participation.

According to Brumbaugh and Cater (2016), a vital component of the problem was that those in the field of youth development studies had to intentionally hire and train youth educators to have a successful program. If a youth leadership development educator is trained in the most important concepts of the program and can implement the program curriculum successfully, this will bring "confidence to the overall program" (Brumbaugh & Cater, 2016, p. 3). However, the participant's perceived development of leadership life skills is not considered an important concept. Past evidence has shown how professional development has impacted youth leadership development educators. When a youth educator reported professional development as "helpful," they also reported that they were confident in their effectiveness as youth educators. However, when they found the training "not helpful," they also reported not feeling effective in their roles. Brumbaugh and Cater (2016) noted a gap in the literature addressing how training targets youth educators. Specifically, there was little to no research addressing the training of youth leadership educators in how to deliver the youth leadership curriculum. Adding to their study could benefit two groups: the youth leadership educators because of the addressing of professional development, and the youth, who would receive better leadership development lessons from more highly qualified and effective youth educators (Brumbaugh & Carter, 2016). This could be revealed by collecting the participants' perception of leadership life skills developed after participation in the program (Friedel et al., 2017).

Youth leadership development programs are known for their activities to promote leadership life skills in their participants. Activities such as Boy Scouts selling popcorn, Girl

Scouts selling cookies, and the FFA auctioning livestock are vital parts of youth leadership development programs (Parlar et al., 2017). Parlar et al.'s (2017) results showed that activities could successfully be "performed in the classroom, outside of the classroom, or for the conceptual understanding of leadership" (p. 224). Their study stated that these activities could replicate or replace real-life experiences and serve as a preparation for future real-life experiences or opportunities. However, a need exists to evaluate the perception of leadership life skills development after participation in and utilization of the accompanying activities of youth leadership development programs to determine their success (Ahrens et al., 2015).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 covered four main topics in the literature review: the types of youth leadership development programs, the qualities revealed through youth leadership development programs, how the efficiency of youth leadership development programs was measured, and the need to study the development of leadership life skills from participation in a youth leadership development program. The subtopics in each area explored in detail the context of youth leadership development programs. While significant research exists in each area, limited literature was available in the area of how participants perceive their level of leadership life skills development. A need exists to understand both the individual and collective outcomes found in youth leadership education experiences (Buschlen et al., 2018). This gap in the literature supports the proposed research questions and related subquestions. This study effectively determined the perception of the development of leadership life skills in participants in a youth leadership development program. The next chapter will outline the research methodology for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Youth leadership development programs may play an essential role in the development of leadership life skills (Rehm, 2014). This quantitative, causal-comparative study examined to what extent the perception of the development of leadership life skills level differs before and after participation in youth leadership development programs. This chapter includes the research design and methodology, the research questions and hypotheses, the target populations, and the sampling method. Additionally, this chapter covers the research materials and instruments, data collection and analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations of this study.

Research Design and Method

The university institutional review board (IRB) approved the study processes. Survey data was collected during the 2021 summer semester. There was no need for parental consent, as all the participants were college-aged students. I distributed and managed surveys. This study used the quantitative method, self-reporting surveys, Likert scores, and data analysis to determine a measurable outcome. This method was the most appropriate to use because it allowed for greater objectivity and accuracy of the results. Also, a quantitative approach allowed for a broader study with a more significant number of participants, thus enhancing the results' generalization.

This study utilized a causal-comparative study design to determine the extent to which participation in youth leadership development programs affects youths' perceptions of the development of their leadership life skills. This approach is appropriate when researchers seek to examine mean differences between two or more groups on some outcome measure (Pearson, 2010). This method was chosen because the treatment is nonmanipulated (Salkind 2010). In other words, individual participation in a youth leadership development program had already

occurred at the time this study was conducted. Moreover, as presented in this study, a causal-comparative research design is suitable when preexisting groups are compared (Cherry, 2019). The independent variable in this study was participation in youth leadership development programs, and the response was either *yes* or *no*. Additional independent variables were gender and ethnic minority affiliation. The outcome measure in the study was self-reported student leadership life skills attribute scores. A nominal scale was the level of measurement for these variables. A nominal scale was ideal for this study as data was collected via a survey.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study posed the following research questions to test the corresponding hypotheses to determine the effect of participation in youth leadership development programs on the self-perceived development of leadership life skills.

RQ1: Is there a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program?

H1$_a$: There is a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

H1$_0$: There is no difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

RQ2: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in youth leadership development programs by gender?

H2$_a$: There is a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between

participants in leadership development programs by gender.

H2$_0$: There is no difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between

participants in leadership development programs by gender.

RQ3: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants

in youth leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation?

H3$_a$: There is a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between

participants in leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation.

H3$_0$: There is no difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between

participants in leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation.

Population

Participants in this study were comprised of first-year college students. The target

population for this study was students from a community college in Eastern Oklahoma.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 24 years old. Those students in the target population who

have participated in a youth leadership development program while in high school or currently in

college were considered for this study. The community college population consisted of a variety

of genders and ethnicities. According to the college's website, the study site has an enrollment of

over 25,000 students, with 67% of students being under the age of 24. The website also mentions

that minorities represent 46.6% of the community college's student population. The accessible

population was college students whose emails were available through the School of Liberal Arts

program. Participants were invited to participate via email.

Study Sample

Convenience sampling was used to gather respondents. Convenience sampling is

uncomplicated and economical (Young & Kallemeyn, 2019). Surveys were distributed via a

mass email to approximately 350 students. In the body of the email, a statement encouraged

those who had participated in a youth leadership development program to complete and return

the attached survey. The statement directed those who have not participated in a youth leadership

development program to disregard the email and attached surveys. Examples of youth leadership

development programs were included in the body of the email to help recipients determine if

participation in a youth leadership development program had occurred. Responses from all the

volunteer participants who completed the survey were considered in the study. Participants

accessed surveys for this study directly through their liberal arts classes.

Once the survey and informed consent forms were disseminated to each student in the

population, the response rate was determined. According to Fincharm (2008), a 60% return rate

should be a researcher's goal and is considered "best practices" (p. 37). However, because the

surveys in this study are unsolicited, a 20%–30% return rate is more realistic. Using G*Power

version 3.01, an effect size of .05, power of .80, and alpha of .05, it was determined that a total of

51 male participants and 51 female participants were necessary to conduct an independent

sample *t* test. Twenty percent was added for a total number of 122 to account for possible

attrition. To obtain this goal and encourage participation, follow-up emails were sent out to

potential participants to encourage them to return the survey at the end of the first and second

weeks of the study. Five gift cards were awarded to random participants who wished to submit their contact information to a drawing for the cards to encourage the completion of surveys further. Contact information submitted for the drawing was not linked to data collected anonymously in the study.

Participants were informed of the study's purpose and parameters for qualifying through an email sent through the participants' liberal arts classes. Included in the initial email to potential participants were the ethical considerations and guidelines for the study. The initial email also included a link to a survey through Google Forms. Potential participants had to use a school-based email address to access the survey. Samples for this study were collected from a community college located in Eastern Oklahoma. The sample was limited to those students currently enrolled at the educational institution. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary.

Materials and Instruments

The level of leadership life skills development of youth leadership development programs participants was measured using the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS; Seevers et al., 1995). The scale measured an individual's perception of their leadership life skills and was developed by the YOUTHREX research and evaluation exchange. This instrument gives a total score in seven leadership life skills areas: communication skills, decision-making skills, skills in getting along with others, learning skills, management skills, skills in understanding yourself, and skills in working with groups (see Appendix A). Then, this study compared levels of leadership life skills attribute scores between a participant's perception of themselves before participation in a youth leadership development program and after participation. This study also collected the type of youth leadership development programs in which a student participated, gender, and ethnic minority affiliation.

Two instruments were used in the proposed study to collect data. The first instrument collected demographic information, such as gender and ethnic minority affiliation. The first instrument also asked participants if they had participated in a youth leadership development program and to describe the program. This instrument was a simple survey created using Google Forms for use in this study only.

The second data collection instrument used in this study was the YLLSDS developed by Seevers et al. (1995). Participants were asked to complete the scale twice. The first time they completed the survey retrospectively to gain their perception of leadership life skills before participation in a youth leadership development program. The second time they completed the scale was to measure their perception of leadership life skills gained after completing a youth leadership development program. Both scales were completed on the same day in succession. Surveys took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Using a retrospective pre- and postsurvey instead of a traditional prospective pre- and postsurvey is a viable substitute for youth leadership development program participants (Shilts et al., 2008) to evaluate the perception of leadership life skills development. According to Shilts et al. (2008), "The retrospective pretest-posttest method has been recommended when conducting program evaluation using self-report measures because the design encourages participants to rate themselves from the same perspective producing a more legitimate evaluation of program outcomes" (p. 133).

The YLLSDS consists of 30 items describing different leadership life skills, measuring seven subscales, and asking individuals to rate their perception of their growth in these skills. Each item is measured using a Likert scale with four anchors ranging from *no gain* or 0 to *a lot of gain* or 3. A final summative scale of all subscales measured was collected. Summative scale

scores can range from 0 to 90. The seven subscales measured on the instrument were the following:

- Communication Skills (two statements)

- Decision-Making Skills (five statements)

- Skills in Getting Along with Others (seven statements)

- Learning Skills (four statements)

- Management Skills (three statements)

- Skills in Understanding Yourself (six statements)

- Skills in Working with Groups (three statements)

Seevers et al. (1995) performed field testing on a sample of 262 participants to establish reliability and validity on the instrument. The test asked experts to independently rate the relevance of each item identified on the instrument. They rated each item's relevance using a 4-point scale ranging from *not relevant* to *extremely relevant*. The instrument's validity was assessed using statistical testing, and the overall content validity index was calculated at .95 according to Guion and Rivera's (2006) finding. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the scale of 30 questions is .98. The results of this analysis indicated that the YLLSDS is a valid and reliable measure of youths' perceptions of their development in the areas of leadership life skills resulting from their participation in youth leadership development programs (Guion & Rivera, 2006). For internal structure construct validity, an indicator was eliminated if it had a low association or was negligible.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection was done through the use of online software called Google Forms. In this case, students participating in the study were granted access to complete the two surveys

associated with the study. Data from the completed surveys was converted into a Microsoft Excel file, then imported into the IBM SPSS Statistics version 27 software for analysis. Surveys with missing data were excluded from the study. Actual data collection began in the spring semester of 2021.

Three independent *t* tests were conducted in this study to determine the impact of participation in youth leadership development programs on respondents' perceptions of their leadership life skills. An a priori power analysis was conducted to determine how many participants were needed to obtain a powerful enough study. Using G*Power version 3.01, an effect size of .05, power of .80, and alpha of .05, it was determined that a total of 51 participants in each group would be necessary to conduct an independent sample *t* test (see Appendix B) with enough power to determine a significant finding. Twenty percent was added for a total number of 122 to account for possible attrition. The use of this *t* test assumes that, although different samples can come from populations with different means, they have the same variance. It was assumed that there were no significant outliers in the group, and the data for each group was approximately normally distributed. It should be noted that this study was only interested in the model results of the main effect (participation in youth leadership development programs) and the interaction of the main effect across gender and ethnic minority affiliation separately. Moreover, the results of the main effect of the perceived development of leadership life skills pre- and postparticipation in youth leadership development programs on life skills attribute scores were used to address the first question in this study. The results of the interaction between participation and gender pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program on leadership life skills attribute scores were used to address question two in the study. Finally, the results of the interaction between participation and ethnic minority affiliation pre- and

postparticipation in a youth leadership development program on leadership life skills attribute

scores were used to address question three in this study.

Ethical Considerations

This study was submitted to the Abilene Christian University IRB for approval. Data was

collected after Abilene Christian University fully approved this study. This study honored the

Belmont Report's ethical principles. The Belmont Report guides all research involving human

subjects: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Adashi et al., 2018). The informed

consent addressed any possible risks associated with this study. Once IRB approval was granted

(see Appendix C), I gained the college's permission, and the use of the data collection tool was

granted (see Appendix D), the process of gathering participants for the study began. An informed

consent form was given to each participant before they were asked to complete a survey.

Participants also had detailed information about both the study and the methods before

completing the survey. The anonymity of the participants' identities and survey results were

ensured by using a Google Form, which required students to log in using their school email

addresses as logins but did not require students to use their email addresses to complete the form.

Participants were not coerced and participated of their own free will. It was understood

that participants were informed of any potential risks. As participants were only asked to

complete a survey online, there were no risks to participants. Participants were informed that

they could withdraw their consent to participate at any time. If they chose to withdraw consent,

they were not penalized. All data collected in the study is stored in compliance with Abilene

Christian University's IRB regulations. Data is stored electronically in my Abilene Christian

University Google Cloud platform. Access to this platform is password protected. Data will be

stored until I no longer have access to the Abilene Christian University Google Cloud platform, at which time, all data will be deleted.

Assumptions

Assumptions are areas of research that are accepted as plausible or true (Price & Murnan, 2014). For the purposes of this study, it was assumed that participants would answer the survey questions truthfully and accurately. The use of a t test assumes that, although different samples can come from populations with different means, they have the same variance. The sample size had no less than 30 students in each group. The study accessed and surveyed students directly through their liberal arts classes. Students answered survey questions based on their specific experiences with youth leadership development programs retrospectively and after participation. Another assumption in this research was that all participants were high school graduates and college students enrolled in a common community college. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality were preserved, and participation was voluntary. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time with no negative ramifications.

Limitations

The limitations of a study are shortcomings in the methodology, which could impact or influence the findings in research (Price & Murnan, 2014). There were limitations to this study, which relied on self-reporting data, which cannot be reasonably dismissed and can affect the design and results (Young & Kallemeyn, 2019). Time was a limiting factor. The survey was only made available for a restricted amount of time, which may have affected the sampling size or reliability of the collected samples. Funding was not available for this research, which may have presented a limitation. Without funding, I was not able to print flyers or posters. Flyers or posters could have served as another avenue for recruitment. Lack of funding limited this study because

I had to rely on Google Forms, which is free survey administration software. Paid subscriptions to survey administration software collect data and have the potential to analyze it. Another potential limitation was a lack of interest by participants. The participant bias was also a limitation (Young & Kallemeyn, 2019). The most challenging participant bias may have been sampling bias. All participants were college students, meaning the study did not represent all youth leadership development programs participants but was limited to only those who both attended college and participated in a youth leadership development program. Convenience sampling was a limitation of this study. Convenience sampling does not represent the entire population of youth leadership development program participants, and unintentional bias may have occurred (Shapiro et al., 2015). Minority expectations or biases may limit the development of leadership life skills in minority participants of youth leadership development programs (Bian et al., 2017; Shapiro et al., 2015); this may have served as a limitation to this study as well.

Delimitations

A delimitation is a boundary or outer limit in which the researcher operates (Price & Murnan, 2014). A delimitation in this study was its confinement to surveying and collecting data from a single community college. Those who took the survey and did not indicate if they had or had not participated in a youth leadership development program were excluded. Those who did not identify their gender or ethnic minority affiliation were excluded. A delimitation of this study was that it only recognized two genders: male and female. This study was further delimited by the methodology and research questions. An additional delimitation in this study was the use of close-ended responses in the survey.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodological procedures followed in this study. The research design and methodology, research questions and hypotheses, study populations, and sample method were included. Additionally, it covered the study's research materials and instruments, data collection and analysis, limitations, delimitations, and ethical considerations. This study endeavored to discover youths' perceptions of the development of leadership life skills before and after participation in youth leadership development programs. The causal-comparative research design was a good fit because there were no variables to manipulate in the study, seeing as they have already occurred. The subsequent chapters discuss the results of this study. Information is shared on the findings, tables and relevant figures are provided, and the research provides evidence that addresses the research questions which motivated it.

Chapter 4: Results

This study was a quantitative, causal-comparative study. This study's purpose was to determine whether and to what extend youth leadership development program participants perceive themselves in the area of leadership life skills development pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program. Specific consideration was given to the differences in scores reported by gender and ethnic minority affiliation. In this study, the first independent variable was participation in a youth leadership development program, measured dichotomously (*yes* or *no*). Additional independent variables are gender and ethnic minority affiliation. This response was an open-response question; participants could fill in their choice of gender or ethnic minority affiliation. Outcome measures in the study are self-reported student leadership life skills attribute scores. This chapter contains the findings of the perceived relationships between participation in youth leadership development programs and the development of leadership life skills. The following research questions and hypotheses guided this study:

RQ1: Is there a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program?

$H1_a$: There is a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

$H1_0$: There is no difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

RQ2: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in youth leadership development programs by gender?

H2$_a$: There is a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in leadership development programs by gender.

H2$_0$: There is no difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in leadership development programs by gender.

RQ3: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in youth leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation?

H3$_a$: There is a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Skills Life Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation.

H3$_0$: There is no difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation.

Participant Responses

Using G*Power version 3.01, an effect size of .05, power of .80, and alpha of .05 helped to determine an estimate of 51 participants in each group, with a total of 102 being necessary to conduct an independent sample *t* test (see Appendix B) with enough power to determine a significant finding. Twenty percent was added for a total number of 121 to account for possible

attrition. In total, 139 students from the study site completed the survey associated with the data collection tool (see Table 1; see Appendix E). However, after analyzing the responses, only 123 responses met the criteria for the study and were used for statistical calculations. Responses were excluded if open-ended response questions were left blank, answered nonsensically, or participants did not identify as male or female. For this study, only male or female genders were considered. The group defined by females had 69 responses (see Appendix F). The group defined by male participants had 54 responses (see Appendix G). The group defined by ethnic minority affiliation had 49 responses (see Appendix H), with all other responses identifying as Caucasian. For this study, all ethnicity responses were coded as African American, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, or Native American (see Table 2). It should be noted that there were no ethnic responses that did not fit into one of these five categories.

Table 1

Usable Survey Responses

Survey participants	Yes	No
Participated in a Youth Leadership Development Program	123	16
Male	54	69
Female	69	54
Ethnic Minority Affiliation (not Caucasian)	49	74

Table 2

Ethnic Minority Affiliation

Ethnicity	Yes
African American	16
Asian	7
Caucasian	74
Hispanic	16
Native American	10
Total Responses	123

Participation in Youth Leadership Development Program

Survey participants were given the opportunity to self-report the type of youth leadership development programs in which they had participated. This section of the survey was optional. Of the 123 responses, 80 participants chose to indicate the specific youth leadership development program in which they had participated. Some participants revealed that they had participated in multiple youth leadership development programs, while others revealed they had only participated in one program. A majority of participants who indicated which youth leadership development programs they had participated in had only participated in one program at a time. A few indicated that they had participated in multiple youth leadership development programs simultaneously.

The most popular youth leadership development programs were the four largest national youth leadership development programs: 4-H, FFA, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts (Seemiller, 2018). The popularity of these programs was reflected in the data collected for this study. The bolded lines in Table 3 show that Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts were the most popular youth

leadership development programs in this study, followed by 4-H and FFA. Student council had a higher number of participants than 4-H and FFA but not as high a number as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. There were 28 different youth leadership development programs represented by some of the participants of this study.

Table 3

Youth Leadership Development Programs in Which Respondents Participated

Name of program	Number of participants (some respondents participated in multiple programs)
4-H	**5**
AVID	4
Beta Club	1
Black Student Union	1
Boy Scouts	**15**
Brownies	1
Campfire	2
Cheer	1
Church Group	2
Color Guard	1
Cub Scouts	4
EQRT	1
FCA	2
FCCLA	1
FFA	**8**
Film Club	1

Name of program	Number of participants (some respondents participated in multiple programs)
Girls Scouts	**20**
Guides	1
JROTC	1
Latin American Student Organization	1
National Sorority	1
NCAI Youth Commission	1
NHS	2
NJHS	1
NTLP	1
Student Council	10
YMCA	1
Youth Court	1
Total Programs Represented	91

Note. Table acronym usage: AVID = Advancement Via Individual Determination;

EQRT = student did not specify; FCA = Fellowship of Christian Athletes; FCCLA = Family,

Career and Community Leaders of America; FFA = Future Farmers of America; JROTC =

Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps; NCAI = National Congress of American Indian Youth;

NHS = National Honor Society; NJHS = National Junior Honor Society; NTLP = National Teen

Leadership Program; YMCA = Young Men's Christian Association

Participants Perception of Leadership Life Skills Development

By using the quantitative analysis process, the hope was to gain an understanding of

participant perceptions of the leadership life skills they had gained by participating in a youth

leadership development program. Findings are displayed as they pertain to each research question. Data is presented to support a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

Research Question 1

RQ1: Is there a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program?

The first research question focused on determining if there was a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale. This research question addresses the difference between pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program. Table 4 serves as a reminder of the subscales and types of questions on the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale used for this study.

Table 4

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale Subscales

Subscales and Questions	Description
Communication Skills 　Two questions addressed this subscale.	*I am a good listener.*
Decision-Making Skills 　Five questions addressed this subscale.	*I consider all choices before making a decision.*
Skills in Getting Along With Others 　Seven questions addressed this subscale.	*I consider the needs of others.*
Learning Skills 　Four questions addressed this subscale.	*I can use information to solve problems.*

Management Skills	*I can delegate responsibly.*
Three questions addressed this subscale.	
Skills in Understanding Yourself	*I am sure of my abilities.*
Six questions addressed this subscale.	
Skills in Working With Groups	*I trust others.*
Three questions addressed this subscale.	

During the process of collecting, identifying, and categorizing individual data for this study, three observations in the overall data correlate to the first research question. The first observation was that only 7% of participants indicated no gain in leadership life skills development. The second observation was that 10% of participants reported zero gain in their perceived leadership life skills development. The third observation was that 83% of participants reported gains in their perceived leadership life skills development. The gain or no gain was determined by looking at the difference between pre- and postscale scores on the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale.

A paired-sample *t* test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and postmeasures of a participant's perception of their leadership skills development after participation in a youth leadership development program. Data were mean ± standard deviation unless otherwise stated (Laerd Statistics, 2015). A standard deviation of 20.02 in leadership life skills development perception was discovered when analyzing all the participants' data (see Appendix I). Using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27, three outliers were detected that were less than 1.5 box lengths from the edge of the box in a boxplot (see Figure 1). These values were plotted as data points and fell beyond the whisker in Figure 1. The outliers are shown as open dots above and below the upper and lower whisker. The whiskers represent the expected variation of the data (Laerd Statistics, 2015). The assumption of normality was not violated (Laerd Statistics, 2015) by these three outliers, and they were kept in the analysis.

Figure 1

Assumptions Boxplot
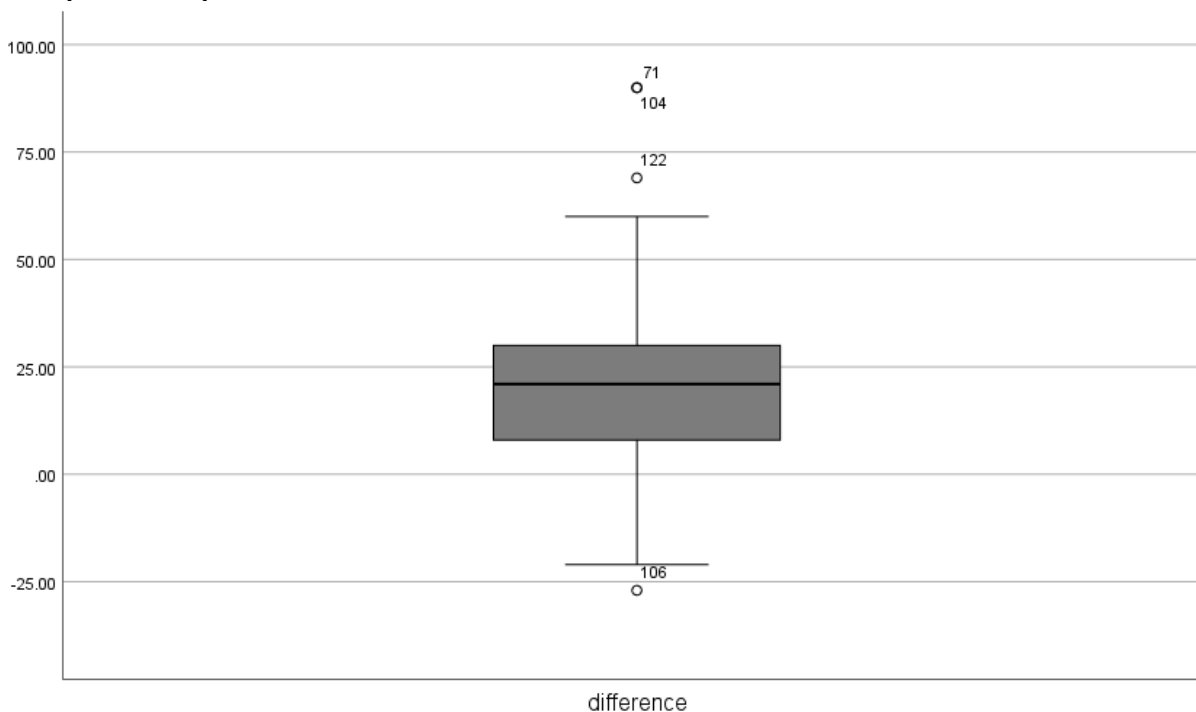
Participants viewed their leadership life skills development preparticipation lower (M = 52.65, SD = 22.37) as opposed to postparticipation (M = 73.94, SD = 15; see Table 5). This shows a statistically significant mean increase of 21.285, 95% CI [24.699, 17.871], t(122) = 12.342, p = < .0001, d = 1.112 (see Appendix E). This statistically significant mean increase means the first hypothesis in this study is true. The first hypothesis stated that there is a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

Table 5

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale Results Overall

	M	*SD*	Paired Difference Mean
All Participants			21.285
Preparticipation	52.65	22.37	
Postparticipation	73.94	15.00	

Research Question 2

RQ2: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in youth leadership development programs by gender?

The results of the second research question described the difference in perception of leadership life skills development in a youth leadership development program by gender. A paired-sample t test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and postmeasures of a participant's perception of their leadership skills development by gender after participation in a youth leadership development program. The

paired-sample *t* test did prove a statistically significant mean difference in perception leadership life skills development by gender. Female participants viewed their leadership life skills development preparticipation lower (*M* = 53.07, *SD* = 22.79) as opposed to postparticipation (*M* = 74.20, *SD* = 14.96). This shows a statistically significant mean increase of 21.130, 95% CI [25.604, 16.656], *t*(68) = 9.425, *p* = < .0001, *d* = 1.134 (see Appendix F). Male participants viewed their leadership life skills development preparticipation lower (*M* = 52.11, *SD* = 22.02) as opposed to postparticipation (*M* = 73.61, *SD* = 15.17). This shows a statistically significant mean increase of 21.500, 95% CI [26.941, 16.059], *t*(53) = 7.926, *p* = < .0001, *d* = 1.079 (see Appendix G).

This collection tool was not normed for participants who indicated a gender other than male or female. Some participants identified as nonbinary, cisgender, nonconforming, and no response. These responses accounted for less than 2% of the total responses about gender, and their responses were not included in the study. This is addressed in Chapter 5.

Research Question 3

RQ3: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in youth leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation?

Similar to the second research question, the third research question described the difference in perception of leadership life skills development in a youth leadership development program by ethnic minority affiliation. A paired-sample *t* test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the pre- and postmeasures of a participant's perception of their leadership skills development by ethnic minority affiliation after participation in a youth leadership development program. The paired-sample *t* test did show a

statistically significant mean difference between participants' perception of their leadership life skills development by this subgroup. These participants viewed their leadership life skills development preparticipation lower ($M = 53.59$, $SD = 25.71$) than postparticipation ($M = 72.51$, $SD = 16.72$). This shows a statistically significant mean increase of 18.918, 95% CI [-24.320, 13.516], $t(49) = 7.041$, $p = < .0001$, $d = 1.006$ (see Appendix H). This subgroup had 49 participants. One observable observation from the data was that each identified group within this subgroup reported significant gains (see Figure 2). African American and Asian participants had the highest reported "gain" in perceived leadership life skills development.

Figure 2

Comparing Perceived Leadership Life Skills Gain by Ethnic Minority Affiliation
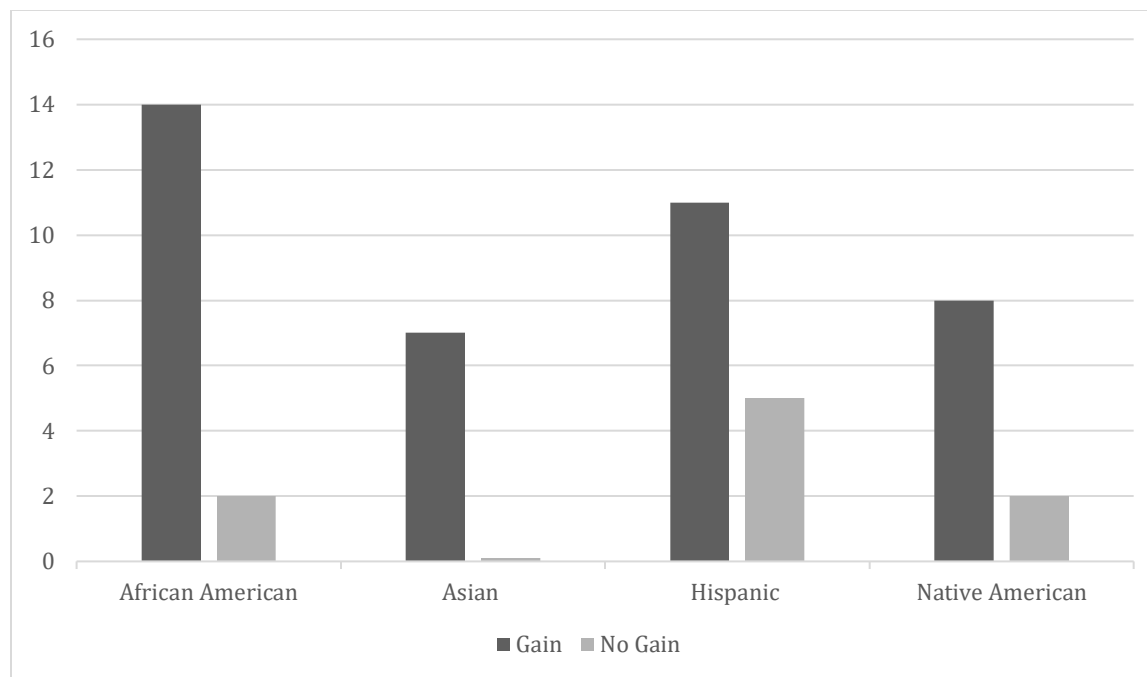
Chapter Summary

This chapter described the perceptions of 123 participants who participated in a youth leadership development program. This chapter presented data for each of the three research

questions posed in this study. Two of the research questions met the prescribed number of

participants needed, while one research question fell short by two participants. However, all

three research questions had significant results. Presented in this chapter were informal data and

the observations after processing and collecting the data. This chapter also had the formal data

processed using the IBM SPSS Statistic version 27 and Laerd Statistics (2015). A statistically

significant difference was demonstrated in each participant's perceptions of leadership life skills

development pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative, causal-comparative study was to determine how youth leadership development program participants perceive themselves in the area of leadership life skills development pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program. This chapter discusses the specific consideration that was given to the difference in reporting scores by gender and ethnic minority affiliation. Additionally, this chapter discusses the significance of the study, findings for each of the three research questions, and the study's limitations. Finally, this chapter will discuss recommendations for future studies.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature

Over the years, I have been involved with many youth leadership development programs. I have been both participant and facilitator. In the United States, hundreds of different types of youth leadership development programs can be found. However, fewer than 1% of youth leadership development programs collect data from participants on their perception of leadership life skills development (Bean et al., 2017, Harris Poll, 2016). This percentage mirrors my own experiences with youth leadership development programs. This percentage is surprisingly low considering how popular youth leadership development programs are in educational settings for developing leadership life skills (Bean et al., 2017). Part of the appeal of youth leadership development programs is that they reinforce self-esteem by developing leadership life skills (Karagianni & Montgomery, 2017). This is significant because evidence shows that some school curriculums may not address leadership life skills such as decision-making, listening, public speaking, collaboration, problem-solving, and conflict resolutions (Rehm, 2014). A limited number of studies collect data to show how youth perceive themselves before and after participation in the youth leadership development programs.

Some previous studies utilized a pre- and posttest model, similar to the one utilized in this study. One study, in particular, sought to understand how participants of youth leadership development programs viewed their perceived skills and knowledge after participation (Frey & Parent, 2019). However, like many others, that study did not differentiate leadership development scores based on gender or ethnic minority affiliation. The present study does differentiate scores by both gender and ethnic minority affiliation. This is important because there is very little documentation about the leadership experiences of ethnic minority students compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Okozi et al., 2020) in the same youth leadership development program. The lack of documentation is similar in regards to reporting leadership development scores by gender. The literature regarding gender reporting of the perception of leadership life skills development is vague and often focused on topics such as redefining leadership to include the experiences of women and girls (Baldwin et al., 2016) but does not account for the participants' perception. Also, this study was not normed for participants who indicated a gender other than male or female. Some initial participants identified as nonbinary, cisgender, nonconforming, and no response. These responses accounted for less than 2% of the total responses about gender, and their responses were not included in the study. Moreover, most studies do not use a pre- and postsurvey model like the current study.

Developing leadership life skills in K–12 students is becoming a focal area of public-school boards, school administrators, faculty and staff, and parents in the United States (Haynes-Tross, 2015). Many public schools are using youth leadership development programs to nurture leadership life skills in their students (Cobia et al., 2016). Previous studies of youth leadership development programs have not established an expansive foundation of research and credible data (Marczak et al., 2016). Therefore, this study endeavored to determine the perception of

youth leadership development program participants before and after their participation, specifically in leadership life skills development. The data collected in this study will add to the body of research in this area.

This study was a specific endeavor to find the difference in perception between youth leadership development participants and nonparticipants, participants by gender, and if there is a difference in reporting by ethnic minority affiliation. A focused effort was made to understand whether their pre- and postscores would show a significant enough difference to determine if there is value in participating in a youth leadership development program. This data would be valuable to those individuals who are influential in deciding if a school should adopt a youth leadership development program. To measure perception, the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (YLLSDS), which Thomas Dormody and Brenda Seevers developed in affiliation with the YOUTHREX research and evaluation exchange (Seevers et al., 1995), was utilized. This scale measures a participant's perception of leadership life skills development. This instrument gives a total score in seven leadership life skills areas: communication skills, decision-making skills, skills in getting along with others, learning skills, management skills, skills in understanding yourself, and skills in working with groups. This study compared the levels of leadership life skills attribute scores between participants' perception of themselves pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program. The participant's gender and ethnic minority affiliation were collected. The option was given for participants to self-report the youth leadership development program in which they participated. This survey was sent to approximately 350 students at the study site via the study sites School of Liberal Arts program. Of the 139 respondents, only 123 participant responses were utilized in this study.

Summary of the Study

Research Question 1

RQ1: Is there a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program?

Like my study, a recent study in Arkansas used the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale (Ahrens et al., 2015). Unlike my research, they only used the scale as a postparticipation survey. The researchers (Ahrens et al., 2015) used this scale to measure the perceived leadership life skills developed through participation in the Arkansas FFA youth leadership development program. The study showed participants perceived a gain in their leadership life skills (Ahrens et al., 2015); however, this study did not measure the participant's perception of their leadership life skills before they participated in the program. Two other studies similar to mine used pre- and postsurveys to measure leadership life skills development in participants. One attribute that my study had in common with Frey and Parent (2019) and Bates et al. (2019) was the measurement of the subscale of problem-solving. The results of my study were similar to their studies in this one area (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Similarity of One Leadership Life Skills Attribute Among Three Studies

In the current study, participants were asked to measure their perceived leadership life skills pre- and postparticipation. The data collected comparing the pre- and postparticipation perception of leadership life skills shows a statistically significant gain in the overall perception of leadership life skill development after participating in a youth leadership development program. The answer to the first research question is yes. There was a difference in the overall leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program (see Appendix E). Most importantly, this data will help to reassure others that participation in a youth leadership development program is beneficial in developing leadership life skills in participants.

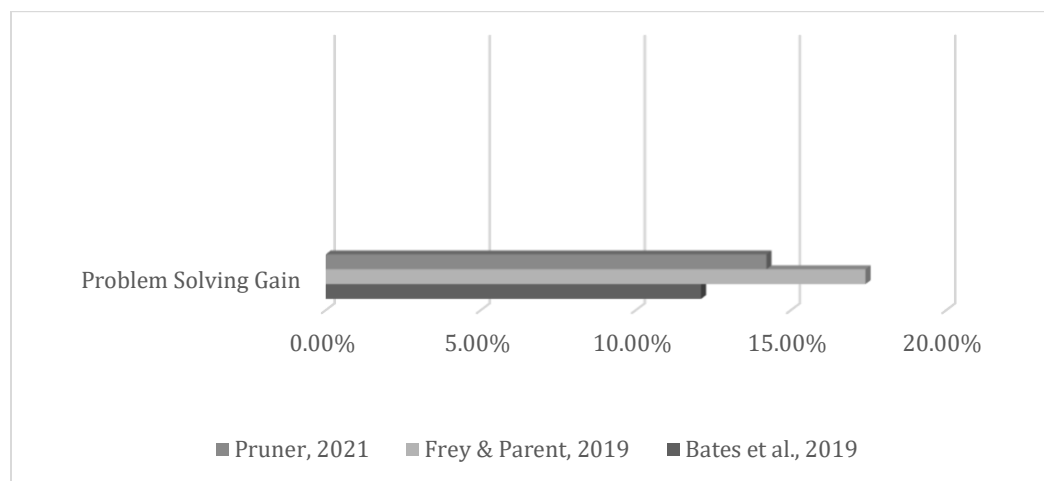***Research Question 2***

RQ2: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in youth leadership development programs by gender?

Research Question 2 focused on the perception of leadership life skill development pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program by gender. I specifically asked if there would be a significant difference in leadership life skills development perception based on gender. This study hypothesized that there would be no difference in the attribute score by gender. When the paired difference mean scores for females and males are compared (see Table 6), the results are similar, males at 21.5 and females at 21.13. Conversely, a mixed-methods study with participants from various high schools reported different results. In their study, Osmane and Brennan (2018) found that gender differences exist in leadership life skills development and that females have a significantly higher level of development than males.

Table 6

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale Results by Gender

	M	*SD*	Paired Difference Mean
Female			21.13
Preparticipation	53.07	22.79	
Postparticipation	74.20	14.96	
Male			21.50
Preparticipation	52.11	22.02	
Postparticipation	73.61	15.17	

These findings are significant because few studies seek to compare the difference in leadership life skills development perception pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program by gender. The most similar study focused on the competencies taught through youth leadership development programs to each gender and how they differed

(Seemiller, 2018). The competencies listed in Seemiller's (2018) study were very similar to the leadership life skills mentioned in this study. In his study, Seemiller (2018) found that youth leadership development programs that exclusively had male participants offer more competencies studies than those that serve females exclusively. Interestingly, the male and female participants in the present study both showed almost equal gains in perceived leadership life skills development. Initial speculation is because most youth leadership development program participants do not know what other programs have to offer in the area of competencies.

The results of Research Question 2 were also somewhat different from Lerner et al.'s (2014) results. Lerner et al. (2014) found that the effects of participation in youth leadership development programs could significantly differ between males and females. However, their research focused on determining whether female students' perception of leadership life skills improved after participating in a youth leadership development program. The research in this study could be more effective than other studies because it asked males and females the same questions and measured their perceptions simultaneously. Also, while Lerner et al.'s (2014) research was longitudinal, it did not measure participants' perception of leadership life skill development before participation.

Research Question 3

RQ3: Is there a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score as measured by the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale pre- and postparticipation between participants in youth leadership development programs by ethnic minority affiliation?

The third research question in this study was similar to the second and focused on a subgroup of participants. Again, the answer is yes. Table 7 illustrates how a majority of each of the subgroups reported a perceived gain in leadership life skills development. Research Question

3 endeavored to reveal if there was a difference in the leadership life skills attribute score pre and postparticipation by ethnic minority affiliation. The study participants who identified as having an affiliation with an ethnic minority group showed significant gains in the area of perceived leadership life skills (see Appendix H). This result is similar to a study focused on low-income minority youths who participated in youth leadership programs in New Jersey. The study out of New Jersey found that youths with a minority affiliation who participated in youth leadership development programs reported having a higher perception of self-efficacy (Murphy et al., 2020). Self-efficacy is described in the study as the system in oneself that encompasses a person's attitudes, abilities, and cognitive skills (Murphy et al., 2020). This definition of self-efficacy is similar to the seven subscales that were used to measure an individual's perception of their own leadership life skills in this study.

Table 7

Gains in Perceived Leadership Life Skills Development by Ethnic Minority Affiliation

Ethnic minority affiliation	Total number of participants	Those who reported gains	Those who reported no gains
African American	16	14	2
Asian	7	7	0
Hispanic	16	11	5
Native American	10	8	2

Limitations

This study had several limitations. The most impactful limitation of this study was that it relied on self-reporting. There was no way to know if a participant's biases were affecting their responses with self-reporting. Due to the retrospective reporting, participants may have had a bias when looking back on their leadership life skills development in the pretest. It is also

unknown if a participant took their time and read each question or randomly selected responses on the survey. The self-reporting nature of this study negatively affected the sample size as well.

Time restrictions were also a limiting factor of this study. Initially, this survey was distributed at the end of the summer semester. While some responses were collected, there were not enough responses to move forward with the data analysis. The data collection tool was sent out again at the beginning of the fall semester and had a higher number of respondents. However, there was a limited amount of time to collect data. This restriction did affect the sampling size. More participants could have taken the first survey when they signed up for a specific youth leadership development program with more time. If there were no time restrictions, participants would retake the survey after participating in the program for a predetermined and specific amount of time. The amount of time in which studies are currently conducted to evaluate youth leadership development programs varies from months to years (Hine, 2017). Modifying this study by giving more time would have given an even more accurate set of data to compare pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

Sample bias was a limitation of this study. All participants were from the same community college and enrolled through the liberal arts department. These students all share common classes, and this may have skewed their responses to be similar. The participants were also not chosen for participation in a specific youth leadership development program but for participation in any youth leadership development program. Since a specific youth leadership development program was not designated, each participant's experience would vary considerably.

There was also no way of knowing if participants were affluent or impoverished or somewhere in between. A student's socioeconomic situation could significantly impact their

perception of leadership life skills development; moreover, it could affect their opportunity to participate in a youth leadership development program. When impoverished youth require youth leadership development programs, administrators, program leaders, and staff may not know how to accurately collect data regarding the participants' strengths and limitations or even know about approaches to gathering the participants' perspectives (Stacy et al., 2018). Collecting information about the participant's current socioeconomic situation would be beneficial in knowing how to administer the survey.

The demographic collection process was a limitation of this study. Participants were allowed to self-report their gender and ethnicity. Self-reporting allowed for a wide variety of responses. If a participant did not understand how to respond or refused to answer, the participant left the question blank. A blank response in the demographics area invalidated the survey. Also, when the demographic tool and research questions were developed, genders other than male or female were not considered.

Another limitation of this study was that multiple participants participated in numerous youth leadership development programs simultaneously. The majority of the literature on youth leadership development program participation showcases studies in which participants were involved in only one youth leadership development program. An example of this type of singularly focused study was conducted by Lerner et al. (2014), in which they exclusively focused on participants in 4-H from fifth grade to graduation.

Implications for Practice

The implications from the results of this study will be impactful for current and future participants, facilitators, and designers of youth leadership development programs. Most importantly, public school leaders and public education policymakers can make informed

decisions about the importance of youth leadership development programs. There is no argument that youth leadership development programs need to continue to evolve and become more accessible to all youths (Seemiller, 2018). More than $12 billion of federal tax money has been spent on youth leadership development programs that have not been evaluated (Dynarski, 2015). It is important to know that those identified as having an affiliation with an ethnic minority group showed gains in this study because nationwide, a gap still exists for leadership life skills development opportunities for youths of color (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Additionally, understanding how ethnic minority affiliates perceive their leadership life skills development is beneficial because it could lead to better recruiting and retention of ethnic minority leaders (Okozi et al., 2020).

Research like the one constructed and conducted in this study can be applied to specific youth leadership development programs like AVID, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, etc. The data collected for specific programs could help parents and youths make informed decisions on which youth leadership development program to select. It would be advantageous to see how participants perceive leadership life skills development pre- and postparticipation. It would also be advantageous to see how participants perceive themselves by gender and ethnic minority affiliation. The data collected from this study could benefit the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs (NCLP). The NCLP works to connect leadership educators and facilitators while supporting those developing leadership programs in their areas (National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs, n.d.).

Based on the current study's findings, I suggested the following practices be implemented to determine how youth leadership development program participants perceive

themselves in the area of leadership life skills development pre- and postparticipation in a youth

leadership development program.

- Obtain permission from one of the large youth leadership development programs such

  as Boy Scouts or Girls Scouts and administer the data collection tool in this study pre-

  and postparticipation in the program.

- Obtain permission from smaller community-based and curriculum-based youth

  leadership development programs and administer the data collection tool in this study

  pre- and postparticipation in the program.

- After obtaining permission to collect data from the youth leadership development

  programs (e.g., Boy Scouts or Girls Scouts), focus on the difference in gender and

  ethnic minority affiliation reporting scores in the perception of leadership life skill

  development.

- Conduct interviews and develop a mixed-methods research design utilizing both

  qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study did detect a significant change in the perception of leadership life skills

development, additional study is needed. This study could be replicated and enhanced with

specific demographic groups and specific youth leadership development programs. Furthermore,

the socioeconomic situations of each participant should be taken into account. This study would

be better suited for high school juniors and seniors entering a youth leadership development

program for the first time. Suppose a youth leadership development program is used in a public

school setting in conjunction with a curriculum. In that case, the program's effectiveness may be

measured over time with support from and input from faculty and staff (Hine, 2017). One glaring

shortcoming of this study was that it excluded those who identified as a gender other than male or female. Youths who are nonbinary need a way to be included in studies such as this one and their gains measured against their male and female peers (Diaz & Kosciw, 2012).

This study would be more cohesive if it were conducted with a focus on one specific youth leadership development program. With a focus on a specific youth leadership development program, the study could be conducted at numerous high schools concurrently for a specified time. Self-reporting is not suggested when collecting demographic information. The demographic collection tool should be multiple-choice, like the survey. Furthermore, when conducting this study in the future, it could be advantageous to utilize an ANOVA instead of a paired-sample t test. Utilizing an ANOVA could detect any interaction affects between the independent variables (Cherry, 2019; Laerd Statistics, 2015). This could prove to reduce errors that went undetected in the sample t test.

This study would be better if conducted over a two-year time frame. The benefit of conducting this research as a longitudinal study would be the ability to detect changes or new developments in the characteristics of the youth leadership development program and sample populations. Additionally, the ability to work with changes at both the individual and group levels would be significant. Longitudinal studies extend beyond a single moment in time, which would give more validity to the study results. With a longitudinal study, it would be easier to detect correlations between leadership life skills development perceptions and the effect of holding a leadership position within a youth leadership development program.

Conclusions

Overall, the students surveyed in this study reported gains in how they perceived their leadership life skills development pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development

program. There were gains in the perception of leadership life skills development in gender and ethnic minority affiliation reporting scores. The future of the world depends on the development of leaders today (Brumbaugh & Cater, 2016). The more that is understood how youths perceive their experience in youth leadership development programs and their perception of leadership life skills development, the more educators and facilitators can work to hone and design the types of youth leadership development programs needed to help drive our future. Those who have studied youth leadership development programs have not established an expansive foundation of research and credible data (Marczak et al., 2016). This research is a small but solid step toward establishing a more expansive foundation in understanding participants' perception of the development of leadership life skills pre- and postparticipation in a youth leadership development program.

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Appendix A: Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale

Evaluation Measures

YOUTHREX
Research &
Evaluation eXchange

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale

OVERVIEW

- This scale measures individual's perceptions of their own leadership skills

SUBSCALES

- **Communication Skills (2)**
  » I am a good listener

- **Decision Making Skills (5)**
  » I consider all choices before making a decision

- **Skills in Getting Along with Others (7)**
  » Consider the needs of others

- **Learning Skills (4)**
  » I can use information to solve problems

- **Management Skills (3)**
  » I can delegate responsibility

- **Skills in Understanding Yourself (6)**
  » I am sure of my abilities

- **Skills in Working with Groups (3)**
  » I trust other people

STEPPING UP THEME(S) & OUTCOME(S)

- **Education Training & Apprenticeships**
  » Youth have education experiences that respond to their need and prepare them to lead

- **Civic Engagement & Youth Leadership**
  » Youth leverage their assets to address social issues

TARGET POPULATION

- General population (has been validated with youth 17 years of age and older)

LENGTH & HOW IT IS MEASURED

- 30 items
- Response scale ranges from 0 (no gain) to 3 (a lot of gain)
- Self-report, paper-pencil version
- Available in: English

DEVELOPER

- Seevers, Domnody, & Clason, 1995

PSYCHOMETRICS

- **Reliability**
  High reliability (internal consistency $\alpha > .90$)

- **Validity**
  - Face validity
  - Construct validity
  - Content validity

LEARN MORE

- Morris, J. C. (1996). Self-perceived youth leadership life skills development among Iowa 4-H members. Retrospective Theses and Dissertations. Paper 11122.

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Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale

....

Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Survey
Please answer each item by circling the number that you feel represents your gain.
As a result of my [program name]

experiences, I…	No Gain	Slight Gain	Moderate Gain	A Lot of Gain
1. Can determine community needs.	0	1	2	3
2. Am able to rely on my strengths.	0	1	2	3
3. Respect what I am good at.	0	1	2	3
4. Can set realistic goals.	0	1	2	3
5. Can be honest with others.	0	1	2	3
6. Can use information to solve problems.	0	1	2	3
7. Understand stress from being a leader.	0	1	2	3
8. Can set priorities.	0	1	2	3
9. Am sensitive to others.	0	1	2	3
10. Am open-minded.	0	1	2	3
11. Consider the needs of others.	0	1	2	3
12. Show a responsible attitude.	0	1	2	3
13. Am willing to speak up for my ideas.	0	1	2	3
14. Consider input from all group members.	0	1	2	3
15. Can listen effectively	0	1	2	3
16. Can make alternative plans.	0	1	2	3
17. Recognize the worth of others.	0	1	2	3
18. Create an atmosphere of acceptance.	0	1	2	3
19. Can think about alternatives.	0	1	2	3
20. Respect others' feelings.	0	1	2	3
21. Can solve problems as a team.	0	1	2	3
22. Can handle mistakes.	0	1	2	3
23. Can be tactful.	0	1	2	3
24. Am flexible when making team decisions.	0	1	2	3
25. Get along with others.	0	1	2	3
26. Can clarify my values.	0	1	2	3
27. Use rational thinking.	0	1	2	3
28. Understand what it takes to be a leader.	0	1	2	3
29. Have good manners.	0	1	2	3
30. Trust other people.	0	1	2	3

Appendix B: G*Power Analysis
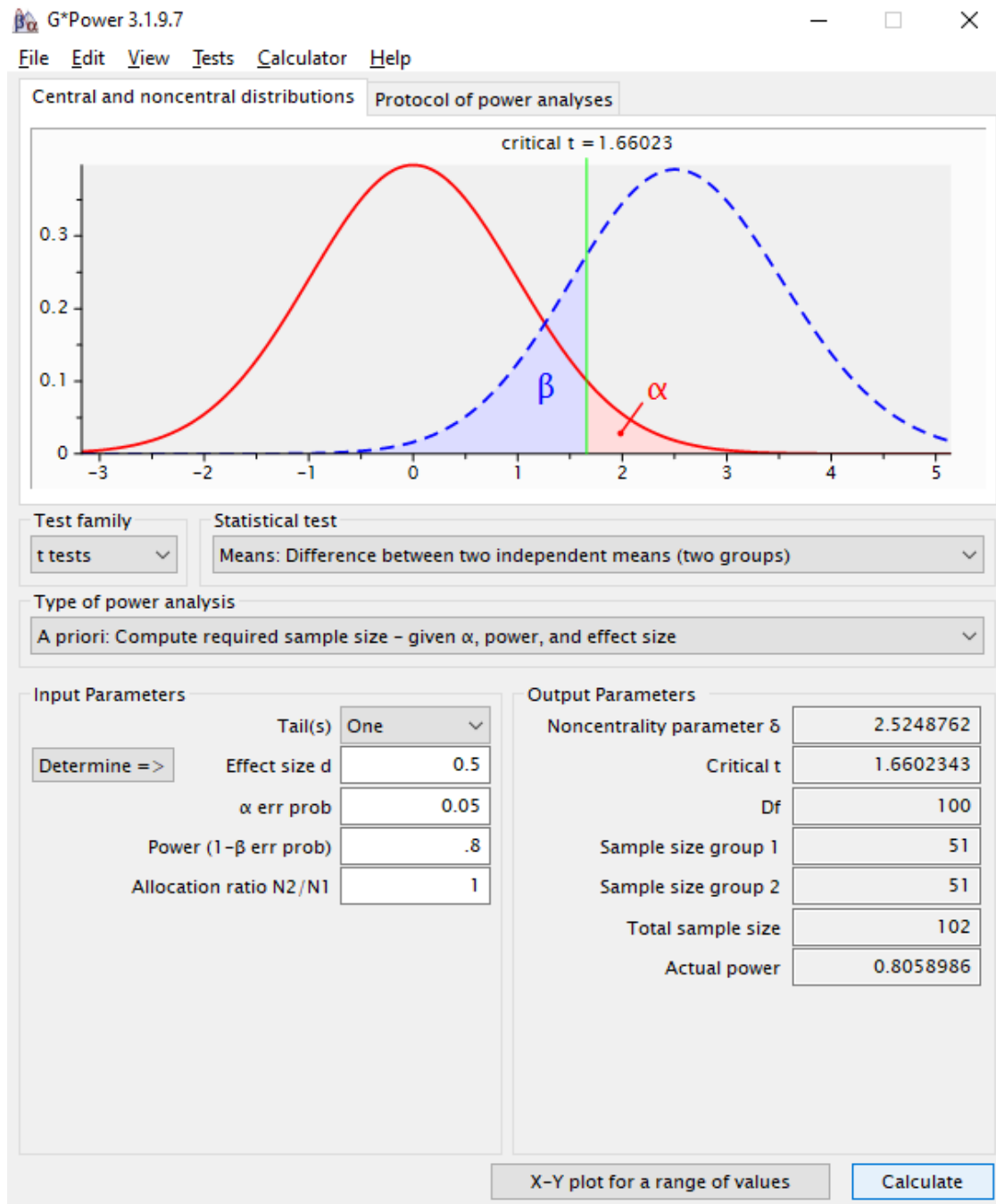
Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Permission

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

June 1, 2021

Courtney Pruner
Department of Graduate and Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Courtney,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled
"Youth Leadership Development Programs: Participants Pre- and Post- Perceptions of Leadership Life Skills Development",

(IRB# 21-069   )is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix D: Permission to Use Data Collection Tool

Re: Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale Dissertation Info × 🖨

Tom Dormody ▭▭▭▭▭▭▭ 🖉 Sun, Jun 14, 2020, 6:54 PM ⭐ ↩ ⋮
to me ▾

Hi Courtney: Joan and I just spent a night in Abilene on our way back to Las Cruces after visiting family in Kansas City. Looks like a nice town to live and go to school in! Yes, please use the YLLSDS in your research. I've attached the scale and the Journal of Ag. Ed article discussing how it was developed and pilot-tested (this article will help you defend using the YLLSDS with your committee and in publications. To my knowledge, the scale has been used over 80 times in research and evaluation projects across the country and overseas, so you should see in the literature other applications of the scale. Give me a call on my cell ▭▭▭▭▭ if you want to discuss one vs two deliveries of the scale, how to modify it for your study, etc. We can set up a Zoom conference, too.

Good luck with your study, Courtney! Sounds interesting.

Dr. Dormody

Dr. Thomas J. Dormody, Regents Professor
Department of Agricultural and Extension Education
P.O. Box 30003, MSC 3501
New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, NM 88003-8003

Web: aces.nmsu.edu/academics/axed

*"When we try to pick out anything by itself,
we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."* - John Muir

From: Courtney Pruner ▭▭▭▭▭▭▭ >
Date: Saturday, June 13, 2020 at 1:29 PM
To: Tom Dormody ▭▭▭▭▭▭▭▭
Subject: Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale

WARNING: This email originated external to the NMSU email system. Do not click on links or open attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.

Hello Professor Dormody,

My name is Courtney Pruner. I am pursuing a doctoral degree through Abilene Christian University in the area of Higher Education Leadership. I would very much like to use your YLLSDS in my research. With your permission, I will use the YLLSDS in a causal-comparative research method to study the development of leadership life skills in participants of local youth leadership development programs versus non-participants in youth leadership development program.

While conducting the research and in publication, I will give full credit to you and your colleague, Brenda Seevers, for the development of the YLLSDS through citations. I am also happy to share my research with you and Ms. Seevers.

I appreciate your consideration in sharing the YLLSDS for my research purposes. Please feel free to email or call if you have any questions or comments (or tips on researching the development of leadership life skills).

Respectfully,
Courtney Pruner

Appendix E: All Participants

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PreParticipation	52.6504	123	22.37277	2.01728
	PostParticipation	73.9431	123	15.00016	1.35252

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	PreParticipation & PostParticipation	123	.536	.000

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences						
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df
Pair 1	PreParticipation - PostParticipation	-21.29268	19.12930	1.72483	-24.70716	-17.87821	-12.345	122

Paired Samples Effect Sizes

			Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	PreParticipation - PostParticipation	Cohen's d	19.12930	-1.113	-1.337	-.886
		Hedges' correction	19.18835	-1.110	-1.333	-.884

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
  Cohen's d uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference.
  Hedges' correction uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference, plus a correction factor.

Appendix F: Gender Female

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PreParticipation	53.0725	69	22.79081	2.74369
	PostParticipation	74.2029	69	14.96425	1.80148

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	PreParticipation & PostParticipation	69	.581	.000

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences						
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df
Pair 1	PreParticipation - PostParticipation	-21.13043	18.62234	2.24187	-25.60401	-16.65686	-9.425	68

Paired Samples Effect Sizes

			Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	PreParticipation - PostParticipation	Cohen's d	18.62234	-1.135	-1.435	-.829
		Hedges' correction	18.72583	-1.128	-1.427	-.824

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
   Cohen's d uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference.
   Hedges' correction uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference, plus a correction factor.

Appendix G: Gender Male

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PreParticipation	52.1111	54	22.02800	2.99763
	PostParticipation	73.6111	54	15.17995	2.06573

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	PreParticipation & PostParticipation	54	.476	.000

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences						
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df
Pair 1	PreParticipation - PostParticipation	-21.50000	19.93267	2.71249	-26.94057	-16.05943	-7.926	53

Paired Samples Effect Sizes

		Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
Pair 1	PreParticipation - PostParticipation	Cohen's d	19.93267	-1.079	-1.412	-.739
		Hedges' correction	20.07510	-1.071	-1.402	-.734

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
   Cohen's d uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference.
   Hedges' correction uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference, plus a correction factor.

Appendix H: Ethnic Minority Affiliation

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PreParticipation	53.5918	49	25.71715	3.67388
	PostParticipation	72.5102	49	16.72214	2.38888

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	PreParticipation & PostParticipation	49	.683	.000

Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference			
					Lower	Upper		
Pair 1	PreParticipation - PostParticipation	-18.91837	18.80695	2.68671	-24.32036	-13.51638	-7.041	48

Paired Samples Effect Sizes

			Standardizer[a]	Point Estimate	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1	PreParticipation - PostParticipation	Cohen's d	18.80695	-1.006	-1.347	-.658
		Hedges' correction	18.95550	-.998	-1.336	-.653

a. The denominator used in estimating the effect sizes.
   Cohen's d uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference.
   Hedges' correction uses the sample standard deviation of the mean difference, plus a correction factor.

Appendix I: Standard Deviation Calculations

Standard Deviation, s: **20.022414661229**

Count, N: 89
Sum, Σx: 1939
Mean, x̄:   21.786516853933
Variance, s^2: 400.89708886619

Steps

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N-1} \sum_{i=1}^{N}(x_i - \overline{x})^2},$$

$$s^2 = \frac{\Sigma(x_i - \bar{x})^2}{N - 1}$$

$$= \frac{(18 - 21.786516853933)^2 + ... + (-3 - 21.786516853933)^2}{89 - 1}$$

$$= \frac{35278.943820225}{88}$$

$$= 400.89708886619$$

$$s = \sqrt{400.89708886619}$$

$$= 20.022414661229$$

Margin of Error (Confidence Interval)

The sampling mean most likely follows a normal distribution. In this case, the standard error of the mean (*SEM*) can be calculated using the following equation:

$$s_{\bar{x}} = \frac{s}{\sqrt{N}} = 2.1223717093511$$

Based on the *SEM*, the following are the margins of error (or confidence intervals) at different confidence levels. Depending on the field of study, a confidence level of 95% (or statistical significance of 5%) is typically used for data representation.

Confidence Level	Margin of Error	Error Bar
68.3%, $s_{\bar{x}}$	21.7865 ±2.122 (±9.74%)	
90%, 1.645$s_{\bar{x}}$	21.7865 ±3.491 (±16.03%)	
95%, 1.960$s_{\bar{x}}$	21.7865 ±4.16 (±19.09%)	
99%, 2.576$s_{\bar{x}}$	21.7865 ±5.467 (±25.09%)	
99.9%, 3.291$s_{\bar{x}}$	21.7865 ±6.985 (±32.06%)	
99.99%, 3.891$s_{\bar{x}}$	21.7865 ±8.258 (±37.90%)	

| 99.999%, 4.417s$_{\bar{x}}$ 21.7865 ±9.375 (±43.03%) | |
| 99.9999%, 4.892s$_{\bar{x}}$ 21.7865 ±10.383 (±47.66%) | |