Parental perceptions of supportive and non-supportive influences on the development of leadership

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PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPORTIVE AND NON-SUPPORTIVE INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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ABSTRACT

Research into young children’s leadership skills is sparse and focused on leadership in classroom contexts. Understanding of leadership development in young children can be expanded by studying parents’ perceptions of children’s leadership development as it is enacted in contexts outside of the school. The purpose of this qualitative study was to provide an examination of beliefs, practices, and contextual relationships of families with young children who were identified within their schools as having strong leadership skills. Student leaders were identified using the Leadership subscale of the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students--Third Edition (SRBCSS-III; Renzulli et al., 2010). Four mothers and three fathers of identified first graders who met income level, gender, and ethnic selection criteria participated. Interviews were conducted with structured and unstructured open-ended questions and parent journals were collected from participants. This research provides (a) a synthesis of early childhood leadership research in classroom settings and (b) an understanding of the parenting practices and beliefs that parents perceive as helping young children develop leadership skills.

A synthesis of early childhood leadership resulted in 10 categories of young leadership typically seen in the classroom. The resulting categories were: shows awareness of differences in people, has influence on others, regulates emotions, is socially active, expresses creativity, is highly organized, displays physical competence, displays self-confidence, exhibits linguistic competence, and listens to peers.

This study added new categories of young leadership enactment outside of the classroom setting. The new categories were: determination, morality, love of learning, and non-biased attitude.

Using Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Model (1979; 1999), contextual influences on young children’s leadership development were investigated. Findings indicate that parents perceived the
child’s personality and the child’s environment as having a joint effect on leadership development. Parents discussed their perceptions of supportive and non-supportive influences on young leadership development. Implications of parents' perceptions for classroom teachers' support of young children's leadership development are provided.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Rationale for the Study

Leadership training has been on the minds of educators for centuries. Though talked about, little was systematically done to enhance leadership development or leadership educational opportunities for Americans of any age in formal situations such as public education institutions (Gutek, 1995). That is, until the U.S. Department of Education acknowledged the need to enhance and enrich the public school curriculum for gifted and talented individuals and developed a definition of the gifted and talented population (U.S. Congress, P.L. 91-230, section 806). This definition called for special services to be rendered in the public schools for young people who exhibited extraordinary skills in several areas, including "general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, visual and performing arts, and leadership ability" [emphasis added] (Marland, 1972, p. ix). Thus, the search for sound pedagogical methods for training the next generation of leaders began in earnest as leadership training proceeded into the public school curriculum through gifted and talented education. Leadership training became of special interest to early childhood educators when, in 1978, the federal definition was modified by dropping the general term children and replacing it with grade-level specificity that included preschool and early elementary-aged children (Stephens & Karnes, 2000).

My literature review revealed that the majority of articles about leadership and leadership development are based on adult interactions. Those that focus on young people generally tend to target upper elementary students and adolescents. Early childhood educators and educational psychologists agree that the early childhood years are the years of most cognitive growth and that a is most likely stimulating environment to have the greatest positive effects on development. In
addition, skills and attitudes developed early in life are likely to be influential in determining the overall trajectory for learning (Bloom, 1964; Wardle, 2003). Therefore, given that

a) the federal definition of the gifted and talented population includes both 

*preschoolers* and *leadership abilities* and

b) educators are interested in developing a better understanding of leadership at adolescent and adult levels

it stands to reason that studying leadership development and the emergence of leadership skills at the early childhood level could prove informative.

Young people can begin honing their leadership skills in almost any setting where they have the opportunity to interact with age mates or intellectual peers. This can be seen at playgrounds, schools, churches, and extracurricular clubs activities (Pellegrini, 2005). Most any talent, however, requires the guidance of a mentor to develop into extraordinary talent and ability levels (Bloom, 1985). Likewise, strong leadership skills require both interaction with peers and tutelage from a caring adult (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1997; Hong & Milligram, 2008). Adults who want to be supportive of young people’s skill development must first define the skill set they desire to improve and identify those who are to receive the instruction.

For the purposes of this study, leadership will be defined, in part, as a type of talent that successfully combines psychosocial, interpersonal, and human relations abilities (Silverman, 2000). Generally speaking, early childhood leadership is an interaction between a child’s personality characteristics and his ability to consider the needs of group members within interactions (Foster, 1981; Kitano & Tafoya, 1982). Although there is a limited amount of research on early childhood emerging leadership, that which is available indicates that Foster’s (1981) definition of action leaders is most applicable to the early years of development. Young children who are developing into action leaders preserve the functioning of group social processes as well as make changes that
either improve the efficiency of solving a problem or advance the level of thinking in the group. Advancing the level of thinking in the group means to move toward higher-level thinking skills and greater creativity as well as elevated moral and ethical reasoning (Sternberg, 2005). These are teachable skills and therefore leadership effectiveness is teachable (Foster, 1981; Kitano & Tafoya, 1982; Kohlberg, 2008; Sternberg, 2005).

There are several groups that have been identified as potentially needing leadership development training. First, there is strong overlap between intellectual giftedness and leadership abilities; therefore there is a push to help all children who have been identified in the schools as being gifted to also receive leadership training so that their emotional sensitivities and intellect can be used to lead with wisdom and concern for the needs of others (Silverman, 2000). Second, interviews with adult leaders indicated that they perceive their extracurricular club activities such as band, 4-H, church youth group, and Scouting as vital components of their leadership development (Stodgill, 1974) therefore a maintenance of small group, adult-led, extracurricular activities seems likely to provide opportunities for continued youth leadership development. Third, young people who have shown a desire or proclivity for leadership in their community, even neighborhood gang leaders or sports leaders, should be actively recruited into adult-supervised leadership training so that they can learn the ethical and moral responsibilities attached to leadership as well as more advanced leadership strategies (Moore, Ford, & Milner, 2005). Fourth, the use of leadership observation scales such as the Nursery School Leadership Observation Scale (Fu, 1970) and the Gifted Education Scale, Second Edition (McCarney & Anderson, 1998) and the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students, Third Edition (Renzulli et al., 2010) can aid in identifying children who exhibit emergent leadership skills and would do well to receive additional training. Last, teachers are trained to observe children’s interactions and there is empirical evidence to indicate that even without specific training to do so, teachers recognize the emergent leaders
within their classrooms as well as trained observers using leadership identification instruments (Kitano & Tafoya, 1984; Lee & Recchia, 2008; Schneider, Ehrhart, & Ehrhart, 2002) therefore teacher recommendation is also a viable leadership development recruitment strategy.

Missing from this list is parental input, which is rather odd considering that parents see their children in a greater variety of circumstances and contexts than either teachers or extracurricular group directors. In addition, parents have more intimate relationships with their children than anyone else and are most likely to know what motivates and impassions them. Gifted research indicated that parents are excellent sources of information regarding reports of child behavior, skills, and attributes (Silverman, 2000). Since leadership is considered to be a type of giftedness, it doesn’t seem at all far-fetched to think that parents could contribute to our understanding of their child’s leadership as well. Furthermore, research indicated that the family is the primary agent influencing talent development in any realm, be it sports, academics, music or other talent fields (Bloom, 1985; Hong & Milligram, 2008; Piirto, 2004; Sternberg, 2004). With this in mind, it also stands to reason that the family would be influential in the development of leadership skills. So, parents fit into the overall picture both as possible informants in helping to identify potential leaders and as influences in the development of young children’s emerging leadership development.

There have been several studies of young children’s leadership in the classroom setting. Most of these studies noted different leadership characteristics and styles along with interaction outcomes. Though these studies are informative, it is important to get another view of children’s leadership skills—the perspective of parents in settings other than the school. A qualitative approach to determine patterns of behavior and cultural themes in parenting practices related to leadership development can provide insights about emerging leadership to teachers, parents, and others who work with young children in organized activities. Studying beliefs and context factors
of parents of young leaders will help to develop an understanding of how to identify, nurture, and support potential young leaders.

One way of learning more about the family, its contextual influences, and parents’ perceptions of both leadership and their role in supporting leadership development is to converse with parents of young leaders about the topic.

**Goal of the Study**

The primary purpose of this multiple case study analysis was to provide a qualitative examination of parenting beliefs and practices that influence young children’s leadership development in a variety of contextual relationships. For this study, leadership of young children is defined as the ability to preserve the functioning of social processes in a small or large group as well as make changes that either improve the efficiency of solving a problem or advance the level of thinking in the group.

The information that was gathered for this study used in-depth interviews, participant journaling, and cross-case analysis to provide (a) parent perceptions of young children’s leadership skills, (b) ways parents believe that they support young children in leadership development, (c) an understanding of young children’s emerging leadership development as a complex, interrelated system of events and relationships, and (d) information that gives educators a better understanding of how different contexts influence young children’s leadership behaviors and outcomes.

Through interviews with parents of children identified as leaders in the classroom setting, knowledge relevant to the understanding of parents’ perceptions about young children’s emerging leadership qualities, as well as both the mother and/or father’s roles in supporting their young leaders was gained. More specifically, parents’ discussions about their perceptions of social, historical, and contextual factors that they found to be either limiting or supportive of their efforts in encouraging their children to reach their maximum potential as young leaders was explored.
Theoretical Framework

There is an impression or opinion that is sometimes voiced within the general populace that leadership is not learned, that one is either born with those capabilities or they are not. Likewise, the "great man" theory is one of many leadership theories described by Bass and Stodgill (1990), and it suggested that great leaders are born. Such an idea would put leadership squarely on the nature side of the long deliberated Nature vs. Nurture debate.

The Nature vs. Nurture debate asks "Is this particular behavior or set of behaviors more the result of nature or nurture?" Whether environment or genes have a more profound effect on a person’s development is not a relevant question when one considers the overwhelming research indicating that not only are genes and environment integrated into a complex and closely intertwined system, but the individual in question must also be taken into consideration (Anastasi, 1958; Gottlieb, Wahlsten, & Lickliter, 1998). Succinctly put, not only are genes and environment acting on an individual’s development over time, the individual is, simultaneously, acting on the environment. In other words, humans do not passively wait for the environment to act on them, but instead people actively engage with their surroundings or context to help actively shape their world, thus contributing to their own development (Lerner, 2002). This view of human development is a theoretical orientation of human development that comes under the broad developmental theory termed developmental systems theory (Ford & Lerner, 1992; Gottlieb et al., 1998; Overton, 1998; Sameroff, 1983). Developmental systems theory is the conceptual frame explaining human development that is currently the most widely accepted in academia (Lerner, 2002). Seeing development as changes that occur as a consequence of bidirectional relations between an active individual and their active context over time, it stands to reason that researchers would explore the relationships between the developing individual and the variables associated with that individual’s multi-layered contexts. Bronfenbrenner (1979) organized the many contexts that
humans develop within into a set of five interrelated levels in his formulation of the bioecological approach to human development (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner’s Bioecological Model of Human Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cross & Frazier, 2010).

The first level is the *microsystem*, which he defines as the immediate environment containing the person along with the relations between that developing person and the immediate active environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, a child exists within a home where he has relationships with his parents and siblings. In addition, in American society one might expect a young child to exist within the environment of a school and have relationships with age-mates and teachers. The second level is the *mesosystem*. This level is the interrelationship between the different contexts the child exists within (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Because the child is directly involved with both the home and the school and there is a relationship between these two entities,
that relationship is an excellent illustration of the mesosystem at work. For example, a parent fusses at a child at home for a behavior the parent deemed inappropriate and, shortly thereafter, takes the child to school. The child may be in a bad mood as the result of the interchange and reflect his bad humor in such a way as to agitate his playmates, thus one immediate system affects another. The third system within the ecology of human development is labeled the *exosystem*. The child has little or no direct contact with individuals within this layer, but instead, is influenced by events that occur within it (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, the local school board may decide that all children must wear a standard uniform to school. Though the child has no direct contact with the school board, his behavior is influenced by its decisions. A fourth level is termed the *macrosystem*. This level of the system is an overarching level of the society that the child exists within that includes, the social, cultural, political, and historical influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Lerner, 2002). For instance, the economics and politics of the Great Depression influenced many who lived through it to be very frugal with their resources. That resulting frugality affected not only their behavior, but the values that they instilled in their children regardless of the contemporary economic setting. Another example includes historical events such as Hurricane Katrina that might influence a family to incorporate into their belief system that the government is not a dependable source of aid in times of need and to thus depend more heavily on a family support system for help instead.

In the earlier stages of the formation of his theory of human development, Bronfenbrenner only discusses the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, calling it the *ecology of human development* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As his thoughts and research evolved, Bronfenbrenner renamed his theoretical framework from *ecology of human development* to the *bioecological approach to human development*. This newly evolved, more complex and dynamic theory incorporated into the former theory both a greater emphasis on a person’s own biology as
part of the microsystem as well as time as a functioning component on human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

Bronfenbrenner realized that individual biology acted as part of the microsystem. Suppose, for instance, that a healthy child is born to a married couple who is mature, healthy, financially stable, as well as socially and emotionally well-adjusted. If their child is *cute* by societal standards, then the child is likely to draw people into social interaction simply by virtue of his attractiveness. In contrast, if the child is unattractive, then he is less likely to garner attention from adults and other children. Even though attractiveness is culturally construed, the child’s face and body structures are biologically determined. Because of the attention doted on him as the result of a biologically determined set of factors, the more attractive child will likely have more positive social experiences and will gain greater practice at reading social cues than the child who is considered to be less attractive. The attractive child will have a long history of positive social interactions so that even as a young child entering school for the first time, he will have likely gained more social skills, be better attuned to others’ social cues, and will likely be popular with age mates. Thus, we see how individual biological factors, such as cuteness can have an effect at the microsystemic level of human development (Schickedanz, Schickedanz, Hansen, & Forsyth, 1993).

Examples of time as an influential factor in development include the age of a child when he has a life-changing experience, such as the divorce of his parents, or the age of a man when he goes into a combat situation as a soldier. Another example of time influencing development is within a historical context. Consider the difference in how society would accept a woman for a high political office in modern times as compared to two hundred years ago. The very behaviors and attitudes that win her accolades and votes today might have caused her to be socially shunned in another historical context. Thus, we see that culture changes with time and, correspondingly, expectations for human development and behavior are effected by time, as well (Elder, 1999).
Each level of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems theory of human development is connected to the other. Changes, events, and disturbances at one level have a trickle up or trickle-down effect on other levels (Lerner, 2002). As such, child development, generally, and childhood leadership development, specifically for this study, will be examined by not only looking at the child in his immediate environment, but also within the interactions of the larger environment.

The developmental systems theory and the bioecological approach to human development will function as guides for this research. This paper specifically considers parental perceptions of young children’s leadership development as it might be influenced in different contexts and contextual relationships. As has been the case with other researchers, by considering each of the levels of the bioecological model of human development and considering the interrelated influences on young children’s development, a clearer overall picture is likely to emerge.

**Significance of the Study**

Interest in early childhood leadership has grown since the inception of the federal definition of the gifted and talented population that included very young children (preschoolers) who exhibited high performance in the area of leadership ability (Kitano & Tafoya, 1982). Early studies were primarily designed to measure leadership strength, then, qualitative studies designed to determine leadership styles utilized in the classroom followed. The results for a number of published studies reported on the relationship of leadership prowess to other variables such as birth order, popularity, age, and level of verbal abilities. Much of the existing data on young children’s leadership skills relies on observational studies conducted in classrooms.

Missing from the research is data obtained from parents about parenting practices, enacted beliefs, and observations made during every day, intimate and public situations. Because the existing data relies on classroom observations, there is a lack of understanding on how parent belief systems and practices influence young leadership behaviors. Considering the strong influence of
the family in the advancement of any talent development (Bloom, 1985; Olzewski, Kulieke, & Buescher, 1987; Piirto, 2004) it is important to gain a better understanding of the specific parenting practices and beliefs under which strong early childhood leadership skills develop. In addition, it is important to investigate the contextual factors that influence parent practices and childhood leadership behaviors.

This research will fill some gaps in the current body of research. First, there is a paucity of research into the emerging leadership skills of very young children, so this report is centered on young children in their early childhood years. Next, rather than trying to determine if leadership is related to specific characteristics, the use of the bioecological systems perspective allows the researcher to explore young children’s leadership development as a complex, interrelated system of events and relationships. So, instead of relationships between attributes being explored, relationships between leadership and contexts are explored as well as leadership and more abstract influences such as culture, gender, ethnicity, social class, and economic class. Third, by interviewing parents, one can get an intimate adult perspective of a young child’s emerging skill as opposed to the perspective of a teacher or observer within the structure of an academic setting that is the usual procedure for studying young children’s leadership skills. Though initial leadership abilities will be identified through reputational case sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) by professionals within the schools, details from everyday life in a variety of settings as gained from parents will likely provide a more complete picture of emerging leadership development in its many facets. Last, by exploring the interconnected spheres of the bioecological system of development--microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems—the influences on parental attitudes, beliefs, and parenting practices can be better understood. With a greater understanding of influential factors on parenting practices, researchers and teachers have the opportunity to gain greater insights into children’s leadership development.
Researcher’s Lens

In recognizing the role of the interviewer as a research instrument, it is important from the beginning to make the reader aware of the beliefs and experiences that I’ve had that have led to this particular topic of research being of interest to me. The three roles that I played that I believe are relevant to this discussion are my roles as a parent, classroom teacher, and community leader.

As a parent, I have had teachers and extracurricular directors tell me about my own child’s leadership abilities. I have watched him lead others with apparently no intention of doing so. For example, he sets trends and creates games and objects that others are quick to follow or imitate. Other times, I have either seen for myself or heard supervising adults tell of my son’s teaching others so that as a young child he was often asked to peer tutor and as a teenager the Boy Scouts filed a waiver requesting that he be a camp counselor despite the fact that he was a year younger than the requirements specified, basing this decision on observing him interact with others at another camp. In contrast, I have also seen situations where he backed up and chose not to lead even though I thought he had the skills to do so. Why lead in one context but not another? Does it have to do with level of expertise, the other people involved or familiarity with the situation? These are all questions that I pondered as a parent.

As a classroom teacher I have seen children who quickly picked up on classroom routines, mimicked my behavior and showed sensitivity to the needs of others (including adults). They used these behaviors to correct others’ behaviors, using words that were appropriate for the classroom that I felt fairly certain had not been learned in the home environment and make others feel comfortable, secure, and part of the group processes. How were they able to so quickly pick up on the nuances of the classroom? I was able to pick out children within the first month of school whose names I could put in my substitute teacher folder as potential helpers and could count on them to lead the adult substitute teacher through the day. However, there were other children in the
classroom who were not necessarily rule followers, but led their own little group in pretend play, adventures, and games they had created. I worried when they left my classroom that their leadership and creativity would not be as appreciated by their kindergarten teacher as it had been by their preschool teacher. I have also had parent-teacher conferences where I told parents that their child had a following at school and it was our responsibility as the caring adults in that child’s life to help that child lead in a direction that would have positive outcomes rather than negative outcomes. These experiences led me to wonder if there are different types of leaders or different leadership styles. It also made me wonder if what I saw as leadership might be deemed as something less desirable by others. For instance, would the child that I saw as a leader in need of some adult guidance be labeled as a troublemaker by someone else? And, if so, would that label have a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Because I live in a rather small community, I often saw the same children in different environments and compared their inside of school behaviors with their outside of school behaviors. As a community leader I have directed or worked at folk festivals, children’s literacy festivals, vacation bible schools, and athletic events. In these contexts I have seen children who never seemed to lead in the classroom context yet seemed to have quite a following in another. This led me to wonder if some settings are limiting to children. Are there classroom management techniques and teaching strategies in schools that inspire some children to lead but thwart other children’s attempts at leadership?

Certainly all children do not need to be leaders. After all, if everyone was leading, who would be following? And without followers, there are no leaders. However, if a child has a desire to lead or is, as some would say, a born leader, then shouldn’t adults nurture and support children’s efforts in response to the child’s unique needs and capabilities? I do believe that is part of my
responsibility as a teacher. So another concern that I pondered is whether schools could do a better job of supporting young children’s attempts at leadership.

These questions and concerns paved the road toward the development of this study. In the beginning, the literature review provided information that I found helpful. But I discovered that there was very little information about leadership that was specific to young children. Since I wanted to know more about children’s leadership in a variety of contexts, I determined that parents could act as a good source of information. Thus, the hypotheses that I developed is as follows: The understanding of leadership development in young children can be expanded upon by studying parents’ perceptions of their child’s leadership development as it is enacted in the home and other contexts within which the family engages. Furthermore, in-depth interviews with parents seemed to be the most productive qualitative methodology for gathering and analyzing parental perceptions.

Limitations

The following are limitations to the study:

1. This study will be limited to a particular time and place and therefore the cultural mindset of the represented families both individually and collectively can not necessarily be generalized to other contexts.

2. The sample will be limited to the families of children who are recognized by their teachers as being potential leaders therefore I cannot assume a representative sample of children from either the school or the community will be recommended.

3. The sample will be limited in diversity to the families represented at the intended study site.
Assumptions

Assumptions are as follows:

1. The participating parents will be honest about their thoughts, perceptions, observations, and behaviors.

2. The interview questions will allow for answers that communicate the parents’ perceptions about leadership development.

3. The use of in-depth open-ended interview questions will be appropriate because the purpose of the study is to better understand the attitudes, perceptions, practices, and mental constructions held by parents who share the commonality of parenting a young leader.

Definition of Terms

Developmental systems theory-A collection of models regarding human development that examine how developing persons carry out interactions within their environments and how through those interactions the developing person’s biological, psychological, behavioral and environmental elements either change or stay the same (Lerner, 2002).

Disadvantaged-Term used to describe circumstances of families of low-income or who are disenfranchised due to ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, or other circumstances that limit available opportunities such as adequate housing, medical care, or educational facilities.

Emotional intelligence-The ability to understand people, their feelings, and their likely reactions to various stimuli in a quick and effectual manner (Willis & Schiller, 2011).

Extracurricular activities-These are organized, adult-supervised, non-classroom activities that students engage in such as athletics, student government, church youth groups, band, social clubs, and hobby clubs (McNamara, Haensly, Lupkowski, & Edlind, 1985).
Gifted and talented education-The individual standards of qualifications for gifted and talented education vary from state to state but, broadly speaking, it is a theoretical, research-based methodology consisting of special practices and procedures used in educating children who have been identified as needing enriching and challenging academic experiences that are beyond the scope of the regular classroom (Silverman, 2000).

Giftedness—"Is asynchronous development in which cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching, and counseling in order for them to develop optimally” (The Columbus Group, 1991, p. 1, as cited in Silverman, 2000).

Interpersonal skills—Individual skills centered on communicating effectively with others as well as reading other’s reactions and responding in an appropriate and effective manner (Maccagnano, 2007).

Intrapersonal skills—Individual skills based on knowing oneself and understanding one’s own strengths, weaknesses, motivations and desires (Maccagnano, 2007).

Public education—Schooling offered or mandated by a government to its citizens and paid for through public funds (White & Coleman, 2000).

Resilience—Refers to the use of protective factors to alter one’s response to some environmental risk so that positive outcomes result for the individual, instead of maladaptive outcomes that are typically the result of dysfunctional environments (Rutter, 1987).

Social intelligence—The ability to discern appropriate behaviors in group situations and the ability to manage oneself in group situations (Willis & Schiller, 2011).
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In a democratic society such as the United States, leadership skills are relevant to daily life at many different levels. Books abound on the topic of how to hone leadership skills of individuals in business, industry, athletics, religion, and education. Organized groups that cater to youth, such as 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Girls and Boys Clubs of America, state that one of their main objectives is to aid youth in developing leadership skills (Karnes & Bean, 1995). The potential leadership abilities of people ranging from preadolescents through adults are also discussed in the professional literature, but, little focuses on young children and the emerging leadership skills that they exhibit (Trawick-Smith, 1988). Early childhood educators and educational psychologists agree that the early childhood years are the years of most cognitive growth and that a stimulating environment is most likely to have the greatest positive effects on development. In addition, skills and attitudes developed early in life are likely to be influential in determining the overall trajectory for learning (Bloom, 1964; Wardle, 2003). Therefore, as a society that values leadership skills, it seems only natural to be interested in the development of those skills from a young age.

In this study, an investigation will be conducted in an effort to discover some of the family factors that influence strong young leader’s behaviors. Interviews and other qualitative methodologies will be used to explore parents’ perceptions about young children’s emerging leadership development and the ecological environment in which those leadership behaviors develop.

History of Leadership Skills Development in the United States

During the formative years of the United States, President Thomas Jefferson strongly encouraged training specifically to develop leadership skills of the nation’s young citizens in his 1779 Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge (Gutek, 1995, as cited by Jolly & Kettler,
The bill was not passed, nor was any other widespread formal leadership training made available as a mandate through the public education system as public education broadened and expanded throughout the nineteenth century. However, the concept of leadership training took on new momentum during the twentieth century through a push by noted educators such as DeHaan and Kough, Guilford, and Hollingsworth (as cited in Feldhusen, 1998). These educational pioneers studied intelligence comprehensively resulting in a conceptualization of giftedness that included leadership aptitude.

A monumental step toward defining leadership as a set of skills that needed to be acknowledged and honed in academic settings came with the first federal definition of giftedness written by U.S. Commissioner of Education, Sydney P. Marland (1972). In his response to the 1970 Congressional mandate (P.L. 91-230, section 806) requesting a report on the current status of education for gifted and talented children, Marland stated that his committee’s in-depth study of the needs of gifted and talented children revealed that children across American were not having their needs met in the classroom and that this talented group of students were often misunderstood. The definition shaped as a result of the study is as follows:

Gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons, who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas singly or in combination: (a) General Intellectual Ability, (b) Specific Academic Aptitude, (c) Creative or Productive Thinking, (d) Leadership Ability, (e) Visual and Performing Arts, and (f) Psychomotor Ability (Marland, 1972, p.ix).

Because of Marland’s definition, leadership training proceeded into the public school curriculum via gifted and talented education. The 1972 definition has gone through many modifications since its inception more than forty years ago. The first modification was made in
1978 when (a) psychomotor ability was dropped as a category of giftedness and (b) the more general term *children* was replaced with grade-level specificity so that preschool through secondary level students were expressly included (Stephens & Karnes, 2000). The Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1988 slightly redefined gifted education once again, but continued to include artistic or *leadership* capacity (U. S. Congress, 1988). Most recently, the 1994 U.S. Department of Education report, "National Excellence: A Case for Developing America’s Talent," recognized the potential of students from a variety of backgrounds and changes the term "gifted and talented" to "children and youth with outstanding talents or [who] show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment" (p. 26). It specifically noted that children who "possess an unusual leadership capacity" should be provided with "services or activities not ordinarily provided by the schools" (U.S. Department of Education, 1994, p. 26).

Although each state creates its own definition of giftedness and the services it will provide to this unique clientele, most curricula are based on one or more of the historical federal definitions. A 1998 survey conducted by Stephens and Karnes (2000) showed that of the 46 responding states, 18 specifically single out leadership as a field of talent to be identified and addressed through special services by the schools.

Although it is left up to the discretion of the individual schools in most states to determine the curriculum for promoting leadership development, it is generally based on the conceptual approach that leaders are those who are accountable for maintaining group processes and often act as agents of change for the betterment of society or for solving a problem (Foster, 1981). By having an astute understanding of people, "their motivations and their actions," these children who are gifted in the "interpersonal intelligence" (Ramos-Ford & Gardner, 1991, pp. 57-58) realm promote group cohesiveness, get high quality results, encourage involvement of the entire group, listen attentively, and, overall, show a combination of abilities that gets a task completed successfully and
ethically while helping all involved to feel worthy and accomplished. Pedagogical methodologies include for example reading and discussing biographies of great leaders, engaging in service learning projects, taking turns leading small groups in discussions, and considering the moral and ethical responsibilities involved in leadership roles or problem-solving episodes (Bisland, 2004; Bisland, Karnes, & Cobb, 2004; Hensel, 1991; Karnes & Bean, 1995; Maccagnano, 2007; Sisk & Rosselli, 1987; Sisk & Shallcross, 1986).

In addition to formal leadership training in academic settings, young people have historically been given opportunities for leadership roles in organized, extracurricular activities such as social, sports, or service groups. Some of these extracurricular activities are in conjunction with the school setting, such as the student council; others are completely separate from the school, such as church-related activities. Since each of these groups answers to a different funding agency or governing agency, it is not surprising that they do not share a common definition of leadership or pedagogical practices. These differences in constructs and operationalization make it is difficult to draw comparisons between the groups being studied. Some have attempted the endeavor, however. In his study of several different youth leadership organizations, Klau (2006) concluded that those implementing the activities seemed to lack clarity about the theory on which their work was based, thus failing to provide a foundation on which to inform their work. However, in retrospective studies of adult leaders, many stated that their experiences as youths in extracurricular activities helped mold their present-day adult leadership abilities (Karnes & Bean, 1996; Stodgill, 1974). Furthermore, some studies suggested that active participation in organized out-of-school activities was more indicative of future adult leadership skills than was academic prowess (Karnes & Bean, 1996). After having conducted a 10-year longitudinal study of young leaders, Roach et al. (1999) agree that out-of-school activities are probably the most realistic avenue for giving youth opportunities to hone their leadership abilities.
Though leadership is specifically taught primarily in gifted and talented classes or in extracurricular programs, some would propose that it is taught in classrooms everywhere, intentionally or unintentionally, as part of what is termed the "hidden curriculum" (Lee & Recchia, 2008). The hidden curriculum of any school is the unarticulated, and often unacknowledged, set of beliefs, values, and knowledge transferred to students through the educational system that indoctrinates them into a specific culture (Horn, 2003). Still others would argue that intentionally teaching leadership skills to a select few who meet a particular qualification or are part of a particular group is a form of elitism and is, therefore, an unethical teaching practice (Howley, Howley, & Pendarvis, 1995).

Despite these concerns, there are a wide range of experiences designed with the intent to aid youth in developing leadership skills. However, there is a lack of consensus about the exact definition of leadership and how to best practice leadership or improve leadership skills.

**Theories and Definitions of Leadership**

In his extensive volume on leadership that covers thousands of research studies spanning over 40 years, Stodgill (1974) concluded that leadership means different things to different people and, overall, there is a lack of agreement concerning leadership theory and definitions of leadership based on theory. More recently, Stodgill’s research has been added to thus creating an even more comprehensive volume about leadership theory, research, and management of groups (Bass & Stodgill, 1990). Though it is considered by many to be the quintessential reference regarding leadership research, it is quite complex, offering many different leadership typologies such as transformational, transactional, charismatic, organizational, and directive just to name a few. Besides offering so many different typologies, it also provides sundry theories of leadership, with many overlapping. In searching for definitions and theories more applicable to classroom situations, and, by extension, to young children in general, Foster’s (1981) theoretical framework
proved to be user-friendly, bringing logic and understanding to the many overlapping theories presented by Stodgill.

Foster’s framework consists of four models of or approaches to leadership, each with distinct characteristics. The first is the great person model that emphasizes that leaders have strong personalities and that the accompanying characteristics are something with which they are born and that cannot be taught to others. The assumption is that the ability to lead emanates from within an individual and without that person to guide the group there would be no action from the group. The second is the small group dynamic model that asserts that a leader will rise to the occasion if the skills he possesses are those needed by the particular group being lead at that particular point in time. A transactional, give and take social process that enhances the collective purpose of the group is highlighted in this model. Leadership in and of itself is the focus in this model, suggesting that several people within a group could have different leadership roles. For instance, one person may lead the group in organizing information and materials while another attends to the social and emotional needs of the group. One aspect that clearly separates this model from the other models is that Foster makes it clear that this type of leader can be taught the skills needed for the leadership position as opposed to being born with the necessary traits to carry out those roles. Nonleader leadership is the third approach. Here, leadership is seen basically as a social position. Anyone who is in the group would look to the leader to determine the cultural and behavioral expectations for continued membership in the group. The nonleader is in a culturally created position that symbolizes hierarchy but actually is "subordinate to the overall social psychology of the group" (Foster, 1981, p. 22). The fourth model is the social role perspective. This approach dictates that some roles are bigger than the individual who fills them and the job of this leader is to maintain the system over which he presides rather than change it. It seems that the leadership role is shaped by
the bureaucracy and encoded demands of the organization’s power structure such that the person deemed as the leader of the group is actually more of a leadership actor than a true leader.

It is logical that most any educational system that proposes to support students in developing or acquiring skills that will aid them in leading more effectively would lean toward the small group dynamic as it is the only model that purportedly can be taught through a skills-based approach. However, it is also clear that few programs are designed to create leaders of all of its group members; instead, people who demonstrate a desire to lead or have a natural proclivity are usually chosen to participate in skills training to further develop those skills. Thus, it appears that educators define the talent of leadership, both conceptually and operationally, as a combination of the great man theory and the small group dynamics theory. This blending of theories results in what Foster (1981) refers to as action leaders.

Although there is a very limited amount of research focusing on young children’s leadership skills, that which is available indicates that, like other educators, early childhood educators concentrate on a conceptual definition of leadership that cultivates the action leaders to which Foster (1981) refers. Young children who are action leaders preserve the functioning of social processes as well as make changes that either improve the efficiency of solving a problem or advance the level of thinking in the group. Generally speaking, early childhood researchers agree that leadership is an interaction between a child’s personality characteristics and his ability to consider the needs of the group interaction (Kitano & Tafoya, 1982) and that leadership effectiveness is teachable (Foster, 1981; Kitano & Tafoya, 1982).

One component of the action leadership concept that requires further explanation is the young leader’s ability to advance the level of the thinking of the group. This can and does encompass many ideas. Advancing the level of thinking means that an individual helps to move the group toward using higher level thinking skills, greater creativity, and moral and ethical reasoning.
Sternberg’s WICS Leadership Model (2005) aptly described this component of leadership succinctly. Sternberg’s acronym stands for wisdom, intelligence, creativity, and synthesis. He proposed that truly great leaders must have wisdom, intelligence, and creativity plus, most importantly, be able to synthesize the three. Most of his discussion of wisdom revolves around moral development. Thus, leaders can be those who lead developing thoughts rather than social actions. These leaders tend to be behind the scenes, producing thoughts and consciousness. They are often referred to as reflective leaders and are the ones who help to shape morals and values, teach, and inspire others (Sternberg, 2005). Though reflective leadership does not seem to be the primary focus of early childhood educators who are interested in helping young children develop leadership skills, it does seem to be a part of the complete leadership curriculum. This is evident when investigating the activities that are proposed by researchers to help young children in their leadership development. Activities designed to compare ethical and unethical behavior, judge behavior as having either a positive or negative outcome, and discussions revolving around the concept of responsibility are just a few of the indicators that reflective leadership is encompassed within the overall conceptualization of leadership development and is deemed as important in our society (Maccagnano, 2007).

It should be pointed out that although not all leaders are academically gifted and not all academically gifted students are leaders, there is an overlap of personality traits that indicate that most gifted students do have the potential to be leaders. Personality traits such as "sensitivity, intensity, perfectionism, and vulnerability" (Silverman, 2000, p. 310) are strong personality components for both the gifted and leaders. As such, there is a push to include the development of moral decision-making and leadership in gifted education classes (Passow, 1988). Kohlberg’s (2008) research into moral development indicated that morally based decision-making can be strongly influenced through environmental factors and Passow (1988) further advocated for
designing gifted curriculum to enhance morality and a strong sense of justice so that our future leaders are prepared to be of "service to mankind" in a way that is "caring, compassionate, conscientious, committed, and involved" (Passow, 1988, p. 15).

Though an attempt has been made thus far in this paper to determine the empirical definitions and theories of leadership that can best be applied by early childhood educators, the majority of definitions and theories of leadership in the empirical data are based on adult interactions. Studying adults in leadership positions can be misleading, however, because of the many ways leadership positions are obtained in the adult world. Many times adults are placed in leadership positions because of seniority, academic degree or personal/professional connections. In contrast, the study of young children’s leadership gives us a glimpse of a natural process emerging, with no established hierarchies, input from a superior or appointed positions. Because of this contrast between adult leaders and child leaders, it has been postulated that researchers can get a clearer picture of true leadership by studying young children’s emerging leadership development in natural settings than by studying adults in leadership positions (Scharf & Mayseless, 2009).

**Leadership Development Studies of Young Children**

**Quantitative Studies and Measurements**

Although the study of leadership in middle childhood, adolescence, and adulthood expanded throughout the 20th century, few empirical studies attempted to analyze the leadership behaviors of children in the early childhood years. One exception is the seminal works conducted by Parten (1932) of preschooler’s social participation and leadership in the nursery school setting. Parten devised a method to observe and measure the expression of leadership which included (a) following another child’s directions, (b) neither directing nor following, but respecting his own bidding without regard for those around him, (c) simultaneously following some children while leading others, (d) sharing leadership with another child, or (e) directing a group. While her pioneering
efforts are appreciated, the study was limited because the observers measured children’s social
interactions in one minute increments, thus often failing to see an interaction through to completion
and, consequently, failing to see if the interaction had the positive outcomes of keeping the play
scenario or group processes going, solving a problem, or elevating thinking to a new level. She
reported that more negative outcomes such as causing the play scenario to disintegrate, children
reporting being hurt, or groups scattering to find other people or objects to interact with also
occurred after an interaction that she initially labeled as an act of leadership. Parten defined
leadership in preschoolers as the ability to shape the plans and/or activities of a group of peers. She
acknowledged in her conclusions that this definition was limiting because diplomatic leadership
episodes tended to have positive outcomes and brute force leadership episodes tended to have
negative outcomes, but she had not provided a way to differentiate between these two styles in her
scoring.

Despite its shortcomings, the Parten (1932) scale has had continuous usage, though often
modified for specific research projects. For example, Nath and Seriven (1981) had classroom
teachers rate each of their preschool students according to the categories developed by Parten,
instead of using it as a tool during direct observation. The teacher ratings, conjoined with an
individually administered self-concept scale, were used in an effort to determine the relationship
between leadership and self-esteem in young children. However, once again, the results called for
an expansion of the leadership categories developed by Parten in order to differentiate between
coercive leaders and cooperative leaders.

Others have also attempted to develop instruments for measuring leadership abilities in
young children. As part of her master’s thesis, Fu (1970) developed the Nursery School Leadership
Observation Schedule (NSLOS) that considered both the classroom teachers’ views of children’s
exhibited leadership behaviors and a series of 5-minute observations by researchers watching for
specific leadership and followership behaviors during play episodes. Fu (1970) labeled both leading and following as prosocial behaviors, stating that even though Western Society does not tend to value following, it is a necessary and relevant interactional process within group relations. Furthermore, in order to effectively function as a social leader one must know when to lead and when to follow. Almost a decade after developing the instrument, Fu (1979) concluded that children from middle income homes were more likely to engage in following as a way to maintain cooperation for the sake of the group process than were children from low-income homes. Using the NSLOS in later research with kindergarteners, she discussed early childhood leadership in terms of being successful or unsuccessful, concluding that creativity and leadership were related spheres but that leadership success may be dependent on both language proficiency and fitting into peer expectations for gender-specific behaviors (Fu, 1982).

Studies have continued to search for circumstances or behaviors that correlate with strong leadership tendencies. In addition to Fu’s 1982 investigation into a correlation between leadership and creativity, a 1978 study conducted by Hardy, Hunt, and Lehr was designed to investigate the possibility of a correlation between nursery school children’s leadership style and their birth order. The team devised a least preferred playmate scale based on the least preferred co-worker scale designed by Fiedler (1967) to determine those children who were task-oriented and those children who were more relationship-oriented and then, the results were compared with birth order information. Although the results did not show a strong relationship between leadership style and birth order for boys, the results were significant for girls. First-born girls tended to be task-oriented leaders whereas later-borns tended to be more relation oriented in their leadership style.

Attempting to look at early childhood leadership as more than a set of observable behaviors or a two-dimensional phenomenon, Fukada, Fukada, and Hicks (1994) developed an instrument intended to show the multidimensionality of leadership. The Fukada team used teacher nomination
to classify children as high, medium, or low social players within the group of 5- and 6-year-olds. Then trained, independent observers used a 15-item behavior checklist while observing the children in free play interactions. The resulting factor analysis indicated a two factor structure consisting of (a) facilitation of play and (b) consideration/evaluation of playmates. High profile social players used the consideration/evaluation of playmates dimension more frequently than other children, but both high profile and medium profile participants used the facilitation of play dimension equally. The authors concluded that there is a relationship between an individual’s social and personal attributes when interacting with another child and the way leadership is exhibited within that individual interaction that is dependent on the dimension of leadership (Fukada et al., 1994).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines early childhood as encompassing the period of human growth and development from birth to age 8 years (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Using that definition, not only are very young children included but children in the early primary grades are as well. Thus, there are additional quantitative instruments that measure leadership in the early childhood years, but are only appropriate for the upper end of the early childhood continuum, those children in the early primary grades. Furthermore, it should be taken into consideration that these instruments are intended for use with a broad developmental range, often recommended for children ranging in age as young as 5 years to as old as 18 years. These instruments can be divided into three groups: Observation instruments completed by a teacher, parent, or other adult intimately familiar with the student’s work and behavior, student self-assessment, or a combination of the two (Shaunessy & Karnes, 2004). An example of an observation format instrument is the Gifted Education Scale, Second Edition (McCarney & Anderson, 1998). The 48-item observation instrument includes questions regarding all five areas of giftedness addressed in the federal definition of giftedness with ten items specifically addressing leadership. It is constructed to assist in identifying gifted youngsters ranging from kindergarten to
grade 12. An example of a self-assessment type rating scale is the Murphy-Meisgeier Type Indicator for Children (Murphy & Meisgeier, 1987). Standardized for use with children from 7-14 years of age, it is designed to determine psychological factors to "explain the nature of differences among leaders based on Jung’s theory of observable differences in mental functioning" (Shaunessy & Karnes, 2004, p. 43).

**Summary of Quantitative Studies.** Generally speaking, the quantitative measures used at the early childhood level indicate differences in how children manage others or socialize with them. On the one hand, some children are cooperative and carefully consider the needs of other group members. On the other hand, some children use coercive measures in their intent to conduct peer group actions and behaviors. Some children always want to be at the forefront of the action, while others see the benefits of both leading and following dependent on the situation. Some young children are mostly concerned with their own needs and enact their leadership skills to persuade others to follow suit, while others are concerned about relationships or task completion. Questions remain about the skills enacted, the styles of leadership and associated outcomes, and the circumstances that influence leadership choices.

**Qualitative Studies**

Even though quantitative studies, as well as the instruments designed for measuring leadership aptitude, have undoubtedly contributed to our knowledge base, a research review of literature organized around the central theme of early childhood leadership by Kitano and Tafoya (1982) raised many questions and urged early childhood researchers to engage in observational and qualitative studies of young children’s leadership skills with the anticipated outcome of enhancing information gleaned thus far through quantitative studies. Several researchers took up this challenge and the resulting qualitative studies can be classified into five broad categories: Identifying typical behaviors of children who influence the behaviors of playmates, classifying
children as particular types of leaders or having specific leadership styles, analyzing children’s perceptions of leadership, determining the influence of classroom leaders on the overall dynamics of the classroom community, and researching and developing leadership enhancement activities.

**Typical Behaviors.** Leadership is usually accomplished successfully by those who possess a combination of psychosocial, interpersonal, and human relations abilities (Silverman, 2000). Young leaders typically enjoy social interaction and many of the behaviors exhibited by young leaders are behaviors that show a meshing of communication, intelligence, and ability to accurately read situations and individuals. Often times, young leaders are described as having social and/or emotional intelligence. Social intelligence is the ability to discern appropriate behaviors in group situations and the ability manage oneself in group situations. Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand people, as well as their feelings and likely reactions to various stimuli quickly, then responding effectually (Willis & Schiller, 2011). One researcher described emotional intelligence as "the ability to read people as well as we read books" (Bruno, 2011, p. 24).

Topping the list as both most prevalent and most important in the execution of leadership in almost every study reviewed was linguistic competence, evidenced as both advanced verbal skills such as broad vocabulary and the use of compound and complex sentences, as well as the ability to communicate effectively with age mates and adults, effectively modulating words to fit the circumstances and intended audience (Kemple, Speranza, & Hazen, 1992; Kitano, 1982; Milligan, 2004; Perez, Chassin, Ellington, & Smith, 1982; Trawick-Smith, 1988; Wolfle, 1989). Young leaders were more likely than their same-age co-horts to promote continuation of play and interaction by rejecting suggestions diplomatically, usually either giving a reason or an alternative suggestion rather than a simple no (Kemple et al., 1992; Trawick-Smith, 1988; Williams & Schaller, 1990). In addition, skilled communication was observed as a primary reason for leaders effectively entering into an existing play group. Entrance into an existing play episode was
typically achieved by observing the play, determining a role or action that would advance or complement the existing play, then stepping in with a relevant suggestion (Kemple et al., 1992; Trawick-Smith, 1988). It was also noted that effective communicators consistently responded to peers with relevant information as opposed to ignoring them or saying something unrelated to the verbal initiation. Leaders also made sure that they had the attention of the intended recipient of a verbal message by either saying the person’s name, gently touching the intended recipient, or making direct eye contact with them (Kemple et al., 1992).

Many of the skills that young leaders exhibit are difficult to categorize but seem to be an amalgamation of advanced give and take communication skills, social skills, and problem-solving. For example, it seems that leaders not only express themselves well, but also have the ability to listen to their followers and make good decisions based on that input. Positive outcomes of leadership are the result of a give and take communication scheme that includes negotiation, persuasion, compromise, and taking the group needs into consideration as opposed to acting in a self-serving capacity (Sankar-DeLeeuw, 2007; Trawick-Smith, 1988; Wolfle, 1989).

It may not be necessary to be a gifted academic learner to possess extraordinary leadership skills (Sternberg, 2005), but it does seem that there is a general tendency for leaders to be of above average intelligence. This is evidenced by the ability to quickly analyze a situation, analyze possible outcomes and consequences of decisions, reach a logical conclusion, and organize a plan of action (Kitano, 1982; Landau & Milich, 1990; Sternberg, 2005). Above average intelligence is also apparent as exceptional leaders express creativity while enhancing the make-believe quality of play and acting as the generator of new or innovative ideas (Feldhusen & Pleiss, 1994; Kitano, 1982; Trawick-Smith, 1988). Though leaders may not be the highest ranking academicians in their grade-level, they are usually above the average intelligence level of the small group they are leading (Hollingsworth, 1939; Pasternak & Silvey, 1969). More recent studies determined that children are
more likely to act in a leadership capacity when interacting with others who function at about their same mental age, as opposed to chronological age (Roedell, 1985). Studies of gifted students indicated that the higher level thinking skills and vocabulary of highly intelligent children may actually be a deterrent to leading less able students who do not understand the gifted child’s communication and thought processes (Silverman, 2000).

A proclivity for dealing with social and emotional issues such as maintaining personal emotional control (Landau & Milich, 1990), helping to regulate the social interactions of players within a group, enjoying group interaction, and attending to the feelings of playmates are also skills and attitudes typically evident in young leaders (Feldhusen & Pleiss, 1994; Trawick-Smith, 1988). Not only do young leaders have a tendency to think about group needs as opposed to being self-serving, but also have a tendency to see needs of the less fortunate and seek solutions to solving the problem causing the misfortune (Passow, 1988). Furthermore, leaders also have an affinity for generating and applying conflict resolution strategies quickly and effectively without using coercive measures (Sankar-DeLeeuw, 2007; Trawick-Smith, 1988; Wolfle, 1989).

Young leaders are curious, creative, and willing to take risks. This is evidenced by their willingness to enter into established groups (Trawick-Smith, 1988) and to offer suggestions for new play episodes and problem-solving strategies (Adcock & Segal, 1983; Hatch, 1990; Segal, Peck, Vega-Lahr & Field, 1987) as well as explore innovative methods for accomplishing a task (Sternberg, 2004). Table 1 shows a synthesis of typical leadership behaviors exhibited by young children as observed by teachers and researchers in classroom settings (Adcock & Segal, 1983; Feldhussen & Pleiss, 1994; Hatch, 1990; Kemple et al., 1992; Kitano, 1982; Landau & Milich, 1990; Milligan, 2004; Passow, 1988; Perez et al., 1982; Sankar-DeLeeuw, 2007; Segal et al., 1987; Sternberg, 2004; Trawick-Smith, 1988; Williams & Schaller, 1990; Wolfle, 1989).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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| Shows awareness of differences in  | Attends to feelings of playmates  
| people                             | Adapts different strategies per personality or maturity level of playmates  
|                                    | Implements ideas that help many/not self-serving                                                                                       |
| Influences others                  | Influences playmates through modeling behaviors  
|                                    | Guides play toward more complex levels  
|                                    | Uses verbal skills to influence others behaviors  
|                                    | Encourages others toward goal                                                                                                           |
| Regulates emotions                 | Helps regulate interaction of players within group  
|                                    | Exhibits emotional self-control  
|                                    | Finds acceptable ways to meet personal needs  
|                                    | Generally has positive outlook                                                                                                          |
| Is socially active                 | Cooperates/Interacts easily with others  
|                                    | Shows enjoyment of group interaction  
|                                    | Not aggressive or submissive, but assertive                                                                                              |
| Expresses creativity               | Enhances make-believe quality of play  
|                                    | Is looked to by others for ideas, creativity, or decisions  
|                                    | Sees many possibilities                                                                                                                 |
| Is highly organized                | Thinks of many ways to accomplish goal  
|                                    | Leads others in solving problem  
|                                    | Evaluates group progress toward goal  
|                                    | Delegates jobs to playmates  
|                                    | Plans ahead  
|                                    | Guides group decision-making                                                                                                             |
| Displays physical competence       | Physically energetic  
|                                    | Displays athletic prowess, coordination, and/or strength                                                                               |
| Displays self-confidence           | Willing to take risks  
|                                    | Enters into existing play group successfully  
|                                    | Adapts to change easily                                                                                                                 |
| Exhibits linguistic competence     | Broad vocabulary for age  
|                                    | Suggestions or requests evoke positive responses from other children  
|                                    | Exhibits diplomacy                                                                                                                     |
| Listens to peers                  | Sees others’ perspective  
|                                    | Negotiates/compromises  
|                                    | Willingness to accept others’ ideas  
|                                    | Presents tactful rejections that include clear rationale for non-acceptance and/or offers alternative                                     |

*Note: Reprinted with permission from Hailey, D. J. (2013). "I wanna be president!" Nurturing leadership in young children, *Focus on PK&K*, 25(3), 1-4.*
Young leaders are likely to bring unique leadership characteristics and strengths to a given situation. The characteristics and examples listed in Table 1 outline the typical behavioral commonalities shared by many young children as they exhibit their leadership.

**Leadership Styles.** Prior to the appeal for qualitative studies of young children’s leadership, few such studies existed (Kitano & Tafoya, 1982). One exception, Hanfmann’s observational studies of kindergarteners (1935), identified at least 4 types of leaders in the kindergarten setting, signifying discreet distinctions between coercive leadership and cooperative leadership while at the same time taking into consideration whether the child’s interactions were primarily geared toward social relationships or task completion. In the final determination, Hanfmann concluded that only children who are both cooperative and primarily interested in social interactions are genuine leaders because those children’s actions and reactions result in other children gladly following them and play episodes being expanded upon.

Hanfmann’s categories of young children’s leadership styles were very broad, whereas, more recent studies of children’s leadership styles have been more focused. For example, like Hanfmann, Hatch (1990) described a young leader as the one that other children gladly follow for hours as the leader proposes more advanced play than what the other children are accustomed. However, rather than describing a broad category of leadership style, Hatch was describing two particular children in a case study conducted within a university preschool setting. One child was described as being creative, initiating elaborate play scenarios, and assigning roles. Overall, this style of leadership might be referred to as an initiator or an inspiration. The *initiator* style of leadership is contrasted to the *moderator* of activities, which described the leadership style of the second child. The moderator is described as a negotiator, a diplomat, or a salesman whose main objective does not seem to be to initiate activities but to be in the middle of the action, conducting everyone’s behavior based on his own very strong sense of right and wrong. This second style of
leadership maintains order within a play scenario or task, yet allows for flexibility through negotiation and compromise that others willingly accept (Hatch, 1990).

As opposed to intentions and behaviors determining leadership style categorizations, some research categorizes young leadership style according to the level of histrionics and numbers of followers. For example, a medieval kingdom metaphor categorizing leadership into three distinct styles was developed as the result of two observational studies and an associated case study that describes a social dominance hierarchy along with associated roles and behaviors of preschoolers and kindergarteners leading and following their playmates (Adcock & Segal, 1983; Segal et al., 1987). The three categories were termed Kings and Queens, Lords, and Bishops. Kings and Queens usually had a large, active group that followed their directions and were described as "outgoing, fun-loving, independent, and self-confident" (Segal et al., 1987, p. 80). Lords described the most frequent leadership style observed. Lords were more likely to lead a small, stable group and were described as "bossy, assertive, and full of ideas for pretend play" (Segal et al., 1987, p. 80). The Bishop-style of leadership was reserved for children who preferred only one or two play partners and did an excellent job of reconciling their group or interceding between children who expressed differences of opinion. Bishops were described as "flexible, reasonable, verbal, nurturant, and teacher-oriented" (Segal et al., 1987, p. 80).

Even very young children, such as those in the toddler classroom of a preschool, have been observed and unique styles of leadership described. In one particular study, four toddlers were determined by researchers to be the classroom leaders. Their individual styles were classified as the "director," the "free spirit," the "manager," and the "power man" (Lee, Recchia, & Shin, 2005, pp. 123-129). Each child-leader exhibited his or her personality in a distinct way, and, in turn, classmates responded to each of them differently. However, the four children who were described in this study were usually the center of attention or the one whose ideas the other children followed
in any group of which they were a part regardless of the leadership style that was used (Lee et al., 2005).

**Children’s Perceptions.** Another early qualitative study consisted of interviews with public school students ranging from kindergarten to twelfth grade (DeHaan, 1962). Parts of the overall study were aimed primarily at older students but some aspects included younger children. For example, younger children were interviewed to determine their view of what leadership looked like. Most of the kindergarten through second graders agreed that leaders were the fastest or first in line whereas older students saw leaders as having high morals, good ideas, the ability to maintain personal relationships, or the ability to get a job done. DeHaan, citing Piaget’s research as a reference, noted a distinct developmental trend in that younger children’s depictions of leaders were "realistic, concrete, immediate, and experiential" whereas older students characterizations of leaders were "idealistic, vicarious, and abstract" (DeHaan, 1962, p. 6).

Many years later, Kitano and Tafoya (1984) also sought to determine young children’s perceptions of leaders, and like DeHaan (1962), found that 5-8 year-olds typically described leaders in concrete and experiential terms such as being a cheerleader, a person who leads the class outdoors for recess, or a person to be followed in a game of "Follow the Leader." Many studies indicated that teachers can usually identify the children in the class who are leaders as well as instruments specifically designed to do so (Edwards, 1994; Nath & Seriven, 1981; Scharf & Mayseless, 2009). The young children in this study chose the same children as leaders as did the teachers, indicating to the researchers that the children had some awareness of leadership characteristics even if they could not articulate them (Kitano & Tafoya, 1984).

**Influence on Classroom Dynamics.** Although most research into early childhood leadership focuses on individual leadership characteristics in one way or another, a different research perspective looks at how young leaders behaviors effect the overall dynamics of their classrooms
The focus is on relationships, both with other children and with classroom teachers, as well as the context in which interactions occur. Unlike most leadership literature, these authors do not define leadership as successful or unsuccessful, nor do they make judgments about the direction a leader is taking other children as being positive or negative. Instead, they analyzed interactions to determine who is leading and the context in which it occurs, then watched how teachers and fellow students reacted. The resulting information focuses on issues of power. Even though teachers initially stated that they appreciated children’s leadership skills in the classroom, observations indicated that teachers had power struggles more frequently with young leaders as compared to children who were less likely to lead (Mullarkey et al., 2005). Furthermore, young leaders tended to take over situations such that other children who wanted to be heard had difficulty doing so. This situation brought up issues of fairness, social justice, and questions of when it might be appropriate for a teacher to intervene on behalf of a less dominating child (Lee & Recchia, 2008).

**Leadership Activities.** Leadership development activities are generally designed to enhance both interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Interpersonal skills are centered on communicating effectively with others as well as reading other’s reactions and responding in an appropriate and effective manner. Intrapersonal skills, on the other hand, are based on knowing oneself and understanding one’s own strengths, weaknesses, motivations, and desires (Maccagnano, 2007).

Foundational knowledge of defining leadership and understanding leadership, in terms of its purpose, what it looks like, and the moral and ethical responsibilities associated with it are addressed through activities such as exploring misconceptions about leadership, reading and analyzing biographies of historical leaders, researching exemplary current groups and individual young leaders, identifying leadership characteristics, and judging leadership behaviors as having
either negative or positive impacts (Bisland, 2004; Karnes & Stephens, 1999; Sisk & Shallcross, 1986).

Communication skills are enhanced by giving students many opportunities to present individual or small group research to audiences, especially research projects that call for some type of remedying action. These presentations may take many forms such as puppet shows, dramatic recreations, displays in shopping malls, or high tech electronic audio visual productions (Karnes & Bean, 1995; Maccagnano, 2007). In addition to sharing information, children are encouraged to take action based on information learned through research in ways such as community service projects or fund raisers. Moreover, researchers encourage teachers to give young children opportunities to collaborate and interact with others to improve communication skills (Hensel, 1991). Suggested activities for building skills in collaboration include participating in extracurricular activities, mentorships with adult community leaders or older youth leaders, small group projects, and supervised group play (Bisland, et al., 2004; Hensel, 1991; Karnes & Bean, 1995).

Adults can help students fine tune their intrapersonal skills by encouraging them to engage in activities such as completing an interest survey and comparing it with those of classmates, writing an autobiography, making a T-chart of their strengths and weaknesses, setting personal goals and determining ways of reaching those goals, and engaging in self-paced high interest projects (Maccagnano, 2007). Overall, research-based leadership development activities that are appropriate for young children are generally designed to increase understanding about leadership and leadership responsibility, enhance communication and social skills, as well as gain self-knowledge.

**Summary of Qualitative Studies.** Taken individually, these studies of young children’s leadership give information for identifying and categorizing leaders in public situations such as classrooms and
social clubs. Research-based activities for developing leadership skills in young children are presented. In addition, we gain understanding into how children perceive the concept of leadership and a glimpse is given into the dynamics that are created or supported by young children who take the lead in social situations.

In combination, however, there seems to be some explicit concepts woven throughout leadership studies of young children. First, leadership takes place in a group context. Whether gaining skills as a social leader or a more reflective leader, it seems that the developing leader would need to spend time with others to determine the needs of the group. Second, leaders influence others and good communication is central to that end. Leaders not only produce and receive communication competently, but process it and respond to it effectually as well. Third, leadership is not only a group process, but is goal directed such that a leader has a purpose in piloting the way toward some target idea or intent. Next, teaching leadership skills entails teaching young people to consider their own ethical and moral behavior as well as possible outcomes of their directives.

In addition, it seems that leadership behaviors may be exhibited strongly in one context or within specific group dynamics and not exhibited or exhibited differently in another. Many variables seem to affect a young child’s style of leadership. For instance, Hanfmann (1935) concluded that the configuration of play partners, as well as the context or activity were relevant in determining whether a child took a leadership role or not. So, even though a particular child may have a typical behavior pattern or style, that pattern is not inflexible, but can change dependent on the circumstances in which an interaction occurs. Other variables that researchers noted as possibly making a difference in how children engaged with peers, and therefore differences in how their leadership was classified, included mental and chronological age, sense of belonging, structure of
classroom, classroom social dynamics, social competence, and level of verbal abilities (Adcock & Segal, 1983; Lee et al., 2005; Roedell, 1985; Segal et al., 1987; Shin et al., 2004).

**Connections between Child Leader Studies and Adult Leader Studies**

This review of leadership development studies of young children was garnered from many different sources. It is interesting to note, however, that in books explaining his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner (1983, 2004) put together a comprehensive list of characteristics typically exhibited by adult leaders that closely reflects many of the attributes noted in young children. The types of intelligences generally implemented by adult leaders are linguistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and existential intelligence. Linguistic intelligence includes creating and telling stories that embody a mission, resonate with the intended audience, and create an excitement that inspires others. In addition, those who are linguistically intelligent are able to adapt communication strategies so that the intended audience feels understood plus, they are capable of communicating a specific knowledge base (a CEO can discuss the business of enterprise or a politician can talk intelligently about economics or health care reform).

Interpersonal intelligence is required by leaders as they "understand other people, motivate them, listen to them, and respond to their needs and aspirations" (Gardner, 2004, p. 108). Intrapersonal intelligence benefits leaders as they come to know their own strengths and weaknesses. Existential intelligence is demonstrated by leaders as they ask fundamental questions, contemplate on the lessons of the past, and share their vision for the future. Gardner (2004) linked these four types of intelligence with both instinct and integrity to round out the attributes of high quality leaders. Gardner posited that instinct is more than a gut feeling, but stems from the ability to learn from past mistakes and successes as well as analyze the decision-making process. Integrity is closely aligned with wisdom. It includes frequent engagement in personal reflection and analyzing, sensitivity to cultural and historical changes, adaptability to change, deep consideration of personal ethical and
moral philosophy, and "a sense of deep commitment to a mission coupled with humility about one’s actual potency" (Gardner, 2004, p. 111). The similarities between these two compilations of leadership characteristics, one focusing on young children and one focusing on adults, is unmistakable.

So much is learned, and yet, little information is gleaned about how young children’s leadership skills are initially manifested. Why do some children arrive at their school setting more ready to take the lead than others? Given that most children are in a home environment for the majority of the time that they are not in a school-type setting, it seems prudent to investigate how experiences in and around home life might affect the development of emerging leadership behaviors.

**Contextual Influences on Leadership Development**

Before proceeding, however, consider the influence of the environment on one’s development. There are some who have a very simplistic view of human development wherein they ask such questions as "Is this particular behavior or set of behaviors more the result of nature or nurture?" Whether genes or environment have a more profound effect on a person’s development is not a relevant question when one considers the overwhelming research indicating that not only are genes and environment integrated into a complex and closely intertwined system, but the individual in question must also be taken into consideration (Anastasi, 1958; Gottlieb et al., 1998). Succinctly put, not only are genes and environment acting on an individual’s development over time, the individual is, simultaneously, acting on the environment. In other words, humans do not passively wait for the environment to act on them, but instead people actively engage with their surroundings or context to help actively shape their world, thus contributing to their own development (Lerner, 2002). This view of human development is a theoretical orientation of human development that comes under the broad developmental theory termed developmental systems theory (Ford & Lerner,
Developmental systems theory is the conceptual frame explaining human development that is currently the most widely accepted in academia (Lerner, 2002).

Seeing development as changes that occur as a consequence of bidirectional relations between an individual and their active context over time, it stands to reason that researchers would explore the relationships between the developing individual and the variables associated with that individual’s multi-layered contexts.

Bronfenbrenner organized the many contexts that humans develop within into a set of four interrelated levels in his formulation of the ecological approach to human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The first level is the *microsystem*, which he defines as the immediate environment containing the person along with the relations between that developing person and the immediate active environment. For example, a child exists within a home where he has relationships with his parents and siblings. In addition, in American society one might expect a young child to exist within the environment of a school and have relationships with age-mates and teachers. The second level is the *mesosystem*. This level is the interrelationship between the different contexts the child exists within. Because the child is directly involved with both the home and the school and there is a relationship between these two entities, that relationship is an excellent illustration of the mesosystem at work. For example, children whose families have a relaxed view of time and do not mention deadlines or itineraries may have difficulty adjusting to and managing the expectations and time limits imposed in the school environment. The third system within the ecology of human development is labeled the *exosystem*. The child has little or no direct contact with individuals within this layer, but instead, is influenced by events that occur within it. For example, the local school board may decide that all children must wear a standard uniform to school. Though the child has no direct contact with the school board, his behavior is influenced by
its decisions. Finally, a fourth level is termed the *macrosystem*. This level of the system is an overarching level of the society that the child exists within that includes the social, cultural, political and historical influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Lerner, 2002). For instance, the economics and politics of the Great Depression influenced many who lived through it to be very frugal with their resources. That resulting frugality affected not only their behavior, but the values they instilled in their children regardless of the contemporary economic setting. Another example includes historical events such as Hurricane Katrina that might influence a family to incorporate into their belief system that the government is not a dependable source of aid in times of need to thus depend more heavily on a family support system for help instead.

In the earlier stages of the formation of his theory of human development, Bronfenbrenner only discussed the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, calling it the *ecology of human development*. As his thoughts and research evolved, two elements became more significant—biology and time. Although the individual biology of humans had always been a part of the microsystem, the new theory he was developing placed more emphasis on that. It also incorporated into the former components the element of *time*, labeling this system as the *chronosystem*. Bronfenbrenner termed the newly evolved, more complex, and dynamic theoretical structure, the *bioecological system of human development* (1995). Examples of time as an influential factor in development include the age of a child when he has a life-changing experience, such as the divorce of his parents, or the age of a man when he goes into a combat situation as a soldier. Another example of time influencing development is within a historical context. Consider the difference in how society would accept a woman for a high political office in modern times as compared to two hundred years ago. The very behaviors and attitudes that win her accolades and votes today might have caused her to be socially shunned in another historical context. Thus, we
see that culture changes with time and, correspondingly, expectations for human development and behavior are effected by time, as well.

These theories, developmental systems theory and the bioecological approach to human development, will function as guides for this research. Therefore, let us specifically consider the development of leadership abilities in young children as it might be influenced in different contexts and contextual relationships.

**Microsystem Influences: Families and Talent Development**

Every individual is born into the world with his own disposition or temperament (Kagan, 1997). The environment (including the womb in which he develops) acts upon that individual and he responds. As these interactions take place, the individual’s ideas, reactions, and behaviors are gradually shaped. The shape is malleable. Environmental factors such as prenatal care, infant-parent interactions, family dynamics, and opportunities to informally interact with other children can influence how behaviors are manifested (Bloom, 1985; Kagan, 1997; Lamb & Nash, 1989; Sroufe & Fleeson, 1986). For example, in the case of leadership development, Scharf and Mayseless (2009) found that children who had siblings at home to interact with were more likely than those without siblings to show strong leadership characteristics in the classroom. They attributed this to the day-to-day experiences of "influencing and managing others" (Scharf & Mayseless, 2009, p. 88).

Leadership has been established as a type of giftedness. Many models of giftedness acknowledge the influence that the family has on the child’s development (Bloom, 1985; Hong & Milligram, 2008; Piirto, 2004; Sternberg, 2004). The family influence is so strong that it is considered by many to be the strongest influence on individuals developing extraordinary abilities in any realm (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002; Runco & Albert, 2005; VanTassel-Baska, 1989). However, pulling apart the many dimensions of family life to scrutinize the effects of each proves to
be complex. In an extensive literature review of the family influence on general talent development, (see Olszewski, Kulieke, & Buescher, 1987) four specific categories or dimensions of family life that proved effectual were delineated: Family and structural characteristics, family climate and environment, values espoused by parents, and values modeled in the home.

Family and Structural Characteristics. The literature review of Olszewski et al. (1987) revealed interesting information about the family life of talented individuals. In looking at the family structural characteristics, evidence indicated that many gifted individuals were firstborns and had only one or two siblings. The parents of these talented people tended to attain a post-secondary education, stay married, and were in their thirties when the talented child was born. It is very interesting to note that many of these gifted people experienced parental loss at a young age, particularly father loss.

Family Climate and Environment. The family climate of those who develop extraordinary talent tended to encourage creativity by not being overly-dominant, but rather respecting the child’s thought processes and openly encouraging expression. Furthermore, an authoritative parenting style was found to both aid children in earning better grades and in getting along socially. In contrast, authoritarianism was linked with conformity and lack of originality, neither of which were associated with outstanding talent development. There seemed to be disparity in family relations with some studies showing that talented individuals were more likely to hail from harmonious families with unusually close relationships while others had less positive relationships with either parents or siblings. Many studies indicated that highly achieving academic children come from homes that are child-centered, where, basically, the child is the focus of the family and family activities revolve around the interests of the child. However, there is an indication that highly creative children tend to have families where the parents have their own personal hobbies and interests, leaving the children to become involved in their own interests and pursuits. Most studies
indicated a high degree of structure and organization within the family with parents specifically expressing their high expectations for good behavior and achievement. Once again, however, there was a divide between those who were highly creative versus those who were high academic achievers. Unlike parents of academic achievers, parents of creative children established a less structured home life and were very accepting of children’s behavior (Olszewski et al., 1987).

**Values Espoused by Parents.** Values that were discussed within the families of talented people included encouragement toward excellence in pursuits, pressure to achieve scholastically, and usage of time in a wise manner (i.e. in pursuit of knowledge, cultural endeavors, or honing valued skills rather than watching television or playing video games, for example). In addition, these parents emphasized a strong work ethic and finding joy in one’s interests, specifically communicating their vision of the work world and avenues for success that included education. Interestingly, grandmothers also played a significant role in espousing family values, encouraging their grandchildren to win honors and awards (Olszewski et al., 1987).

**Values Modeled in the Home.** Although families espouse values, they also model their values and expectations, directly enacting the family values as part of the family dynamics. Olzewski et al. (1987) found that value-enactment occurred through such practices as parents gaining knowledge about the educational system, providing an appropriate study environment in the home, monitoring homework, practice time, and school progress, as well as communicating with the child’s teachers. Many eminent individuals were found to have been influenced by a parent’s vocation or talent field and were initially introduced to it by the parent. In addition, parents often provided a variety of rich learning experiences for their children.

**Other Family Influences.** Other studies have been published that have added to our understanding of how families influence their children to achieve highly. For instance, a family quality oft cited as influential in helping children develop into high achievers is a strong attachment between a primary
caregiver, usually the mother, and the young child (Howe, 1990; Kemple et al., 1992; Scharf & Mayseless, 2009). Attachment begins at birth, continuing throughout childhood and is the result of tender nurturing, sensitivity to perceiving a child’s state of being at each given moment, determining the child’s needs and acting upon them, and talking with the child frequently. Young children who are securely attached use the parent as a secure base from which they can explore the world with confidence, thus expanding their world and satisfying their curiosity. In addition, secure attachment teaches a child that people can be trusted and intimate relationships can be developed without fear of rejection. The strong bond between child and primary caregiver promotes the give and take of good communication such that strong communication skills are developed from an early age. Self-confidence is bolstered as the child develops a mental image of himself as a capable and loveable individual. Confidence and a positive self-image, in turn, support the individual in his quest for success in his chosen field (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Karen, 1994). The quality of an individual’s attachments early in life affects social relationships with people of all ages both while the individual is young and, later, in adult relationships with the ability to initiate and maintain relationships cited as examples of manifestations of early attachment (Lamb, Bornstein, & Teti, 2002).

It seems that a particular style of parenting is more likely to be seen in the homes of children who are extraordinarily talented, as opposed to those who are less likely to be high achievers (Bloom, 1985). Parents who encourage independence, are warm and nurturing, give explanations for their discipline and guidance decisions, maintain parental control through discussion more so than through punishment, and encourage open communication (even allowing the child to express views that are in opposition to parental views) are liable to have children who are socially competent, academically successful, and psychologically healthy. This parenting style is termed authoritative (Baumrind, 1971; Baumrind, 1972). Furthermore, authoritative parents tend to
balance a high degree of demandingness (firm control and restrictiveness) with a high degree of responsiveness, (warmth and non-coerciveness) resulting in children who are both socially confident and socially responsible (Baumrind, 1991).

Although a discussion of family factors that seem to influence giftedness or extraordinary talent is indeed relevant for the purposes of this study, it suffers from a lack of specificity. As discussed earlier, leadership is a type of giftedness, but being gifted does not necessarily mean that one is also a leader. Therefore, despite the obvious overlap of leadership and giftedness, the question still remains: What family factors specifically seem to enhance leadership development?

**Microsystem Influences: Families and Leadership Development**

Attributes of leaders are often emphasized by those who study leadership. However, seldom do researchers mention the home environment or family factors that might have helped shape those relevant attributes. Some exceptions include historical biographical research about leaders of the twentieth century including (a) a collection of biographies of American leaders who meet meticulous, research-based standards qualifying them as leaders according to Gardner and Laskin (1995); (b) a study of U.S. presidents and vice-presidents, as well as British prime ministers (Albert, 1980); and, (c) reports on the family factors of political personalities who were most often the subject of biographies as per public library surveys (Goertzel, Goertzel, & Goertzel, 1978).

Based on the authors’ descriptions, each subject described in *Leading Minds* (Gardner & Laskin, 1995) meets the qualifications of being an action leader, that is, each is highly influential in shaping ideas because he/she communicates well with a wide range of people so that his/her ideas about change and improvement are understood, embraced, and, eventually lead to a new or advanced ways of thinking. The other historical biographies under discussion (Albert, 1980; Goertzel et al., 1978) present a wide variety of eminent personalities, not just those considered to be leaders. For the purposes of this discussion, only the high-ranking politicians will be considered
because, as one of the writers puts it, "politicians are surrounded by them [people] and must work closely with them" as opposed to eminent scientists or writers who "need not be as socially immersed as politicians" (Albert, 1980, p. 90). In addition, the very fact that they were elected by their constituents speaks to politicians’ ability to influence many people and persuade them of their sincerity in wanting to improve the human condition.

Borrowing from the four dimensions of family life outlined by Olszewski, Kulieke, and Buescher, (1987), consideration will be given to these categories in relation to the information made available through studied biographical data about twentieth century eminent leaders. As the reader may recall, those categories are as follows: Family and structural characteristics, family climate and environment, values espoused by parents, and values modeled in the home.

**Family and Structural Characteristics.** Looking at the family structural characteristics of the wide variety of leaders studied there is some overlap with characteristics seen in families of children talented in other ways. Like talented people in general, leaders tend to be firstborns with siblings. However, leaders differ in that many of them have more than just one or two siblings. For example, American presidents have an average 5.4 siblings (Albert, 1980). Although only children often do well academically, they do not tend to perform well in the leader role. Another birth order position that seems to do well in the leader role is the baby of the family, especially if that child is male and even more particularly if he had older sisters to dote on him. In contrast to others, Goertzel et al. (1978) indicated that children whose birth order puts them as a middle child are in good stead to grow up to be politicians. However, for the sake of comparison, the politicians of countries other than the United States were taken out of consideration, and, once again, firstborns were overrepresented as leaders. If, as indicated by Goertzel et al., the middle child fares well as a leader in some countries, but specifically does not fare well in the United States, there is some indication of cultural differences between United States citizens and citizens of other countries. Cross-cultural...
research between nations supports the notion that how people define leadership and how they perceive its effectiveness are both culturally construed (Chong & Thomas, 1997).

The phenomenon of the firstborn child being most likely to grow into an eminent adult is explained as the outcome of several possible dynamics (Albert, 1980; Pfouts, 1980). Primarily, firstborn children have the parents all to themselves for a while, and thus are more likely to have more frequent and engaging interaction with one another than those children who are born later who must share the valuable resources of parent time and energy with their older siblings. In addition, the oldest child often takes the position of parent-surrogate/teacher to the younger child which is intellectually beneficial to the eldest in that he learns to teach and explain, as well as read the needs of another individual. Furthermore, parents may be more likely to overtly express their goals and aspirations for first born males than for the other children in the family (Albert, 1980).

The youngest male in a family with older doting sisters may have an advantage in becoming a future eminent leader if older siblings are very involved in parenting the child but with close adult supervision. In other words, the siblings are not left on their own to parent, but act as surrogates in devoting time, energy, and nurturance to the youngest child under the guidance of the parent. In addition, it seems that if the young child is a gifted thinker and/or socially enjoyable, he attracts positive attention from his older siblings, thus beginning a bi-directional relationship that further enhances his abilities (Albert, 1980).

Another family structural characteristic shared between both the gifted and eminent leaders is the phenomena of parental loss. All three biographical researchers note the prevalence of loss of one or both parents, with loss of the father occurring most frequently (Albert, 1980; Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978). Albert (1980) determines that 51% of U.S. presidents and 45% of Prime Ministers experienced the death of a parent by the age of 16. The recurring theme of parental loss, especially father loss, that permeates the literature on highly achieving individuals,
including leaders, is both remarkable and puzzling. Gardner and Laskin (1995) suggested that leadership skills may develop in those who have lost a parent at an early age because the child develops the ability to "formulate their own precepts and practices in the social and moral domains" (p. 32) rather than taking their social cues from the interaction of the parents. Albert (1980) proposed that a forced early maturation of psychological processes combined with the disruption of parent-child identification processes makes for freedom from conventional family relationships, thus helping the child to think in a more creative manner. Neither of these suggestions, however, solves the dilemma of why children who lose a parent to death are more likely to be high achieving leaders than children who grow up in a home with a single parent as the result of either divorce or never marrying. Goertzel et al. (1978) suggested yet another theory that does explain the difference between being left with only one parent as the result of death as opposed to other circumstances that cause an adult to parent singly. Generally speaking, children want to please their parents and make a favorable impression on the important adults in their lives. When the parent was an important part of the child’s life and then is suddenly gone, the child may continue to strive to conduct himself in such a way that he believes he is pleasing the deceased parent. Since the deceased parent is not there to acknowledge the child’s achievements, the child constantly strives to develop greater skills and win higher achievements. There is also a tendency to romanticize the character of the deceased such that their legacy may create lofty goals to be achieved by their descendents. In addition, Goertzel et al. (1978) believed that widowed mothers garnered extra attention to their sons, stating that "Widows’ sons are high in any listing of the eminent," (p. 346).

In spite of these findings, it should be pointed out that parental death has also been linked with psychological problems and even criminality (Albert, 1980). In homes where parental loss has the outcome of advanced development or talent, the following factors are prevalent: "child is intellectually gifted, has special talents or high ability levels, stimulating education is provided, and
parent or mentor takes special interest in the child’s education” (Albert, 1980, p. 94). Though the overall functionality of parenting can be influenced by many factors or combination of factors, overall, supportive single parenting is believed to act as a buffer against risks such as criminality (Pettit, Bates, & Dodge, 1997). It appears that perhaps the behaviors and reactions of both parent and child, and the interaction of the two, combine to determine whether adverse circumstances, such as death of one parent, results in a child who is a socially acceptable high achiever or a child who is at-risk for perpetuating behaviors deemed unacceptable by society.

In the literature review by Olzewski et al. (1987), it was found that parents of children who exhibit extraordinariness in a domain were frequently college graduates or at least had obtained some secondary education. Likewise, parents of future leaders were likely to have attended secondary education and to be either a professional or a business person. Quite frequently a father, grandfather or uncle was either a clergyman or involved in politics at some level so that the young child was accustomed to watching a loved one speak publicly with the intention of persuading his audience. Parents of young leaders typically stay married, which creates a lasting impression, influencing the leaders to also stay in long-term marital relationships. The ages of the parents at the time of the birth of the future leader was seldom reported, thus giving little indication whether this was a similar or dissimilar to the data for the general gifted and talented population. Most of the future leaders studied were raised in homes that enjoyed a middle-to upper-class lifestyle with the means and desire to take advantage of opportunities such as higher level education and travel abroad (Albert, 1980; Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978).

**Family Climate and Environment.** The family climate or environment developed within the families of leaders seems to lend itself to the establishment of strong social networks (Albert, 1980; Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978). Almost all of the leaders had some type of relationship to an institution or organization that provided a springboard of sorts for the young
leaders to communicate their messages. Their eloquent speaking skills, coupled with their ability to stay attuned to and persuade their audiences, rapidly expanded and increased their relationship circles. Many had role models or mentors at a very young age that either taught them specific leadership skills or new ways of seeing the world that broadened and deepened their perspective such that the mentor/pupil relationship was life-changing or direction altering (Gardner & Laskin, 1995). The interrelationships of family members were mostly positive though some of the young leaders had strained relationships with one or the other parent (Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978). Overall, the families supported an openness of expression, encouraging children to think and express ideas. In many of the families, the children were treated much like adults. The combination of encouraging expression and willingness of adults to listen to and respect the child’s opinion may, at least partially, have influenced the later manifestation of a willingness to confront authority figures when the young leader had a conflicting viewpoint from the authority figure (Gardner & Laskin, 1995). In addition, there seems to be some indication that young leaders were given ample time to reflect on their ideas; every moment was not filled with structured activities or chores, but, instead, those who developed into leaders as adults were given the time and opportunity to self-reflect (Gardner & Laskin, 1995).

**Values Espoused by Parents.** Values espoused by families include the value of a quality education (Albert, 1980; Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978). However, education was not only seen as the academic learning that took place in an educational institution; education in the form of travel was also often encouraged. Though academic education seems to have been encouraged, the future leaders had grades in school that ranged from mediocre to excellent. Families of leaders also seem to value risk-taking, as well as encouraging competition and achievement. A strong work ethic and expanding the mind seemed to be valued by most as well.
Values Modeled in the Home. The values enacted or modeled in families of leaders were varied. Children were often encouraged to think about and reflect on topics, then express their ideas and opinions, thus helping the children to develop eloquent and persuasive speaking skills (Gardner & Laskin, 1995). Families used the means available to them to send their children to post-secondary education and/or travel abroad (Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978). The travels are said to have enlightened the future leaders, building a foundation for an astute ability to observe and study differing peoples, developing into a strong interest in and understanding of humans and human relationships. Opportunities for travel also probably figure into the attitude that many of the leaders developed as adults of noticing the inequities in the world and wanting to be a part of correcting that situation (Gardner & Laskin, 1995). Furthermore, like children in many families that produce talented children in various domains, leaders often followed a family interest path. They have a propensity toward developing expertise in a sphere of interest similar to one or both parents, such as social sciences, religion, or politics (Albert, 1980; Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978). Very evident in all of the biographical data was the early identification by parents of their child’s special interests and the continued support and provision of opportunities for enhancement of those special interests. Albert (1980) stressed that as the family recognized and supported the child’s giftedness, the ensuing relationship acted as an organizer, much like family values or goals. He asserted that giftedness "pulls together diverse personal and interpersonal factors to make a more coherent organization of a child and family’s transactions" (Albert, 1980, p. 93).

A Note about Methods. It is important to note that the information gleaned about these leaders is extracted from biographies, not interviews or observations. There are certainly questions that arise when discrepancies between different historical accounts become evident. For instance, Martin Luther King, Jr. describes his childhood as happy even though there is other documentation that his father was prone to beating him (Gardner & Laskin, 1995). Whether this refers to corporal
punishment that was considered the norm in the culture of the southern U.S. during King’s childhood or if the punishment was more brutal is unknown. There is empirical research that argues against the use of biographies for determining family variables that influence exceptional achievement, instead promoting the use of longitudinal studies which look at behaviors as they occur over time, rather than retrospectively (Runco & Albert, 2005). The lack of longitudinal research into young people’s leadership skills and lack of evidence indicating a predictable trajectory path for leadership based on the skills exhibited at a young age is a complaint of many who have researched the topic (Bloom, 1985; Kitano & Tafoya, 1982; Matthews, 2004; Roach et al., 1999).

In a search for the developmental processes that helped highly talented individuals across many fields of interest to attain eminence, Bloom (1985) chose not to use biographies because he found that most biographies concentrated on the time span after eminence was attained, rather than on earlier times in the individual’s life when talents were being developed. Instead, his team interviewed individuals who had reached world-class status, along with family members and people within the talented individual’s social network who had played a prominent role in supporting their efforts. To be considered world-class status for the purpose of Bloom’s study (1985), one had to be a top twenty-five contender in the chosen field as measured by peers, world organizations, and competitions. Such competitions revealed individuals who were consequently studied in the fields of athletics, arts, and intellectual pursuits. But, despite all efforts, and unfortunately for this study, no such competitions or world status awards were determined for those who are considered to be experts in interpersonal relations or social/emotional intelligence. Thus, no interviews were conducted with individuals who were able to describe the developmental processes that might lead specifically to extraordinary leadership.
Summary of Microsystem Influences on Early Childhood Leadership. Many studies have established the strong influence of family dynamics on development of extraordinary abilities (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2002; Runco & Albert, 2005; VanTassel-Baska, 1989). Although some differences are noted between the family dynamics of talented academic performers vs. the family dynamics of talented creative performers, some basic tenets stand strong. Historic documents indicated more specific family attributes of leadership talent, many of which overlap with general talent or extraordinariness. Some of the family qualities possibly attributing to the development of leadership were noted and included birth order placements, parental loss at an early age, social community and professional community involvement by the family, middle class social ranking, and both private and public expression encouraged throughout childhood and adolescence.

Mesosystem Influences: The Interaction of Family, School, and Community

It is easy to erroneously think of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of development as simply a contextual model. That is, people developing as they engage in activities in different places. It is more complex than that though. Most people interact in several different contexts such as in the home, school, workplace, or church, as well as many other places. Any place where small groups of people work and/or play together consistently over a period of time, as well as interact with and feel concerned about one another is a microsystem (McMillan, 1990). Bronfenbrenner specifically encourages engagement in different places in order to enhance human development but not simply for the sake of variety. Instead, each of those places offers a different context for activities with other people, and is especially beneficial to human development if, within those different contexts, important human relationships develop. Though all relationships are important, strong bonds that develop between two people are especially relevant to development. Dombro, Jablon, and Stetson (2011) refer to these bonding experiences as "powerful interactions," encouraging adults who work with young people to be intentional in making social and emotional
connections with a child while guiding the child’s learning (p. 13). By so doing, the bonding that takes place further cements both the relationship and the skills the adult is attempting to teach. The interactions and connections between the different microsystems an individual is developing within and the influences that take place within those systems as a result of the interconnectedness of the people within the child’s different microsystems are what constitute the second level of the bioecological model, the *mesosystem* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

There are many different ways for people to connect with one another across contexts. At the simplest level, people merely exist in two different places. That is, a person interacts with others in one location and then transitions to a different location and interacts with others there. A typical example is a child who is a member of both a family in the context of his home and is a member of a classroom of age-mates in his school. The connection between contexts becomes stronger though when another individual that the child is in relationship with is also involved in the same two contexts. So, in continuing the usage of the home and school as the case in point of the two different contexts, the connection becomes stronger if, for example, father visits the school to eat lunch with the child, or the teacher visits the child’s home or the child has a play-date at his home with a friend from school. As these examples indicate, the connection between the two contexts can be initiated from either direction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The connection between contexts is stronger still if there is good two-way communication between the people within the different contexts. Although one-way communication enhances this level (notes sent home by the teacher, for example), two-way communication has greater potential for enhancing the child’s development. Parent-teacher conferences where both parents and teachers are engaged in conversation are an excellent example of two-way communication (McMillan, 1990).

It would be impossible to consider all influential aspects of many different individuals’ mesosystems, but there are three mesosystem indices that need further discussion. Social networks,
advances in electronic communication and extracurricular activities are each important mesosystem aspects to consider because of their relevance to leadership development.

**Social Networks.** Parents play a tremendous role in exposing their children to environmental influences that promote cognitive and social development. In addition to the parents’ time, energy, and effort being expended upon the child, the parent is pivotal in aiding the child in building social networks. Social networks, defined as the people within a child’s life and the interconnections of those people, provide emotional support for the child’s abilities and talent development. The size, interconnectedness, and type of people interwoven into a child’s social network are important factors associated with the degree to which the social network is psychologically and physically supportive of the child (Olzewski-Kublius & Grant, 1994). Biographies of leaders that were studied for this report noted the existence of a strong relationship between the young developing leader’s family and an institution that enabled the leader to discuss ideas, explore and research concepts, make public speeches and develop relationships with knowledgeable people who acted as mentors (Gardner & Laskin, 1995). Institutions such as schools, churches and civic clubs can potentially offer budding leaders opportunities that lone families cannot offer. The more people a family is connected with (within or outside of an institution), the more likely they will be able to utilize those connections for the good of their children. The closer the relationships are, the more likely they are to be advantageous. Teachers, mentors, friends, and companions who choose to become actively involved in a child’s talent development, regardless of what the talent is, are influential in encouraging and providing opportunities for developing extraordinariness (Subotnik & Olzewski-Kubilius, 1997).

Although social support systems are considered here as part of the mesosystem, it is also possible for social support to occur at the exosystem level. In order for that to be the case, the support would have to come from an individual or entity that never had direct contact with the
child, but gave support through a parent or mentor. An example may give clarification. A child who wins local and regional debates, thus earning the privilege to compete nationally, may not have the monetary resources to pay for travel to and accommodations at the competition site. If many people know the child and his ability level well because of long-time interactions within a shared microsystem, there is greater likelihood that many will contribute to the child’s travel fund, or perhaps they can offer their frequent flyer miles or they have a cousin who lives in the host city and will offer lodging (mesosystem). If, on the other hand, the child’s parent is singled out in the workplace and given the opportunity to work overtime specifically so that the parent can make extra income for the purpose of sending the child to the competition, then that indirect social support would be considered as occurring at the exosystem level. So, direct contact with the developing person is the mesosystem in action and indirect contact with the developing person is the exosystem at work (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Social networks are so important in the overall development of a child that some researchers consider children with poor social networks to be disadvantaged as much as children who lack other quality resources such as good schools or monetary resources (Olzewski-Kubilius & Grant, 1994). Bronfenbrenner also makes it clear that those children who do not have a significant adult in their life to help make relational connections between different contexts are at-risk. He stated that supportive links between settings enhance developmental potential and, to the contrary, that "the least favorable condition for development is one in which supplementary links are either nonsupportive or completely absent" causing the mesosystem to be "weakly linked" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 215).

**Electronic Communication.** Bronfenbrenner unmistakably indicated that person-to-person communication systems are also an important part of the mesosystem. Although modern day advances in technology that allow for a variety of different methods of electronic communication
have emerged after Bronfenbrenner’s writings, it is apparent that these tools would be conceptualized as part of the mesosystem. Within the mesosystem, Bronfenbrenner defines four general types of interconnections between a developing person’s microsystems, one of which is intersetting communication. Intersetting communication is defined within the bioecological framework as "messages transmitted from one setting to the other with the express intent of providing specific information to persons in the other setting" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 210). Examples offered in his writings include face-to-face exchanges as well as messages passed through other methods such as telephone conversations or written notes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Electronic communication such as internet social sites, personal electronic mail, cell phones and text messaging are relatively new, but widely used tools that have altered American communication strategies, as well as communication strategies of many developed countries. An individual with access to these types of electronic tools can both transfer information instantaneously to another setting and broadcast information to many settings at once. Though not widely researched yet in terms of ecological systems, electronic mail, social networking sites and cell phone communication are rapidly changing our ability to communicate with others, thus allowing the transfer of person-to-person knowledge about one setting to another setting to take place more quickly and easily.

Levels of communication are along a continuum with social isolation at one end and multiple strategies for communicating locally and long distance on the opposite end. Social isolation is considered a high-risk factor for child abuse at one extreme (Hay & Jones, 1994). Electronic communication connections with the outside world act as supportive links and protective factors against mental health issues at the other extreme (Vanderwerker & Prigerson, 2004).

The use of electronic communication tools is often referred to as social networking. As discussed previously, social networking is actually a much broader concept, but electronic communication is certainly an interesting social networking tool that has an effect upon the
interconnectedness of one’s mesosystem. As society becomes more electronically interconnected, the mesosystem becomes more interconnected, allowing for quicker links between not only geographically close contexts such as home and school, but geographically distant contexts such as the home and a grandparents’ home hundreds or thousands of miles away (Nesteruk & Marks, 2009). Such easily accessible and rapidly working communication can help to broaden the concept of community, bonding people together in new and different ways that were not possible before, thus having the potential to expand the overall social support system of the family.

**Extracurricular Activities.** Interconnectedness between home and school has been used thus far as the prime example of the mesosystem at work. There are many other connections between different microsystems that an individual develops within that make up his mesosystem though. Participation in extracurricular activities in an individual’s community provides an opportunity for interconnectedness between home, school, and community. Extracurricular activities have been identified by researchers as an important developing ground for leadership skills (Hong & Miligram, 2008; Karnes & Bean, 1996; Roach et al., 1999; Stodgill, 1974).

Almost any context where children interact with one another regularly is a potential venue for developing leadership qualities. The addition of a caring, supervising adult increases the likelihood that children will learn effective leadership skills during peer interactions (Hong & Miligram, 2008). There are multiple opportunities to develop leadership skills in small group settings both in memberships that specifically aim to do so such as 4-H and Scouting, as well as those whose main focus may be some other talent development. For example, musical ensembles must learn teamwork, communication skills, conflict management, and problem-solving—all of which are skills needed by a developing action leader (Leshnower, 2008).

Extracurricular activities play many roles in the development of talent in general, and in the development of leadership particularly. First, clubs and organizations often offer opportunities for
skills development and competencies that are not offered in the school setting or are outside of parental capabilities (Howard & Johnson, 2000) thus providing environmental support for nurturing raw ability into talent (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1997). Extracurricular activities, ranging from soccer teams to drama clubs are typically smaller than classrooms. Both size and focus are more attuned to small group dynamics, task completion, and relationship building which aid in leadership development. Second, by engaging in extracurricular activities at the early childhood level, young children broaden their repertoire of occupational possibilities and hone interests that can eventually lead to career choices and even college scholarships (Feldhusen, 1996). Third, church related activities are more likely to both engage children in community service and last a longer duration of time than other extracurricular activities, oftentimes throughout childhood and into adolescence. Such sustained and long-term engagement in community service increases the likelihood of developing close relationships as well as higher-level thinking and deeper focus on topics such as ethics, service to others, and civic responsibility (Olzewski-Kubilius & Lee, 1994). Furthermore, participation in volunteer opportunities and service to others through churches or other community involvement reinforces positive social values, often resulting in a developmental trajectory of continued adult civic activity and leadership (Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000; Olzewski-Kubilius & Lee, 1994). In addition, church-related activities and other outside of school activities build relationships between people outside of the home and school, thus expanding the child’s social network (Bland & Sowa, 1994; Olzewski-Kubilius & Lee, 1994). For disadvantaged children, the outside-of-home social network within the neighborhood and community may actually have a stronger influence on talent development than the parents (Olzewski-Kubilius & Grant, 1994). Bland and Sowa (1994) reported that children who are at-risk often use the relationships and social networks they build through extracurricular activities as a refuge from their stressful home or neighborhood environments, consequently building resilience. Resilience is defined as the use of
protective factors to alter one’s response to some environmental risk so that positive outcomes result for the individual, instead of the maladaptive outcomes that typically occur under such less-than-ideal environmental circumstances (Rutter, 1987).

Other positive outcomes of extracurricular activities were elucidated during interviews with young people (McNamara et al., 1985; Wood, Larson, & Brown, 2009). Young students pointed out the importance of the adult-child relationships in extracurricular activities with responses that indicated that because they knew that the supervising adult cared about them, they were willing to try harder, be more responsible, and be a role model to other students (Wood et al., 2009). High school students even indicated that extracurricular activities were integral in helping them to cope with negative school experiences, giving personal meaning to their lives, a sense of belonging, and the will to continue school to graduation (McNamara et al., 1985).

Moreover, even students who typically perform poorly in school have shown marked improvement in behavior, attendance, and academics when given opportunities to participate in high interest extracurricular activities (Reeves, 2008). Feldhusen (1996) adds that adults often discover children’s hidden potential, including the raw material for developing leadership talent and interpersonal skills, through extracurricular activities. These abilities might have otherwise gone unnoticed in the regular classroom. Rural communities, long noted as having schools with limited resources for electives, find that community activities and extracurricular activities can provide the experiences needed by emerging young leaders to develop their skills (Montgomery, 2004). Finally, extracurricular activities tend to build an attitude of team spirit and cooperation, hence promoting relationship-building at levels higher than experienced in other more structured group experiences (Reeves, 2008). Recalling Bronfenbrenner’s emphasis on the impact to human development that is associated with developing close relationships with a variety of others in
different contexts, it becomes clear that extracurricular activities help children to build both leadership skills and social networks.

**Summary of Mesosystem Influences on Leadership Skill Building.** As can be seen from this discussion, the strength of the mesosystem lies not only in the quantity of the connections between the Microsystems that an individual is developing within, but that the quality of those connections can be enhanced to further aid an individual in development.

Facets of both the school and community offer individuals options for potential leadership development as they interact and develop relationships with other young people, as well as influential adults. The training, practice, and experience individual’s have in developing their potential make the difference as to whether that talent will be realized or not (Hong & Miligram, 2008; Karnes & Bean, 1996; Stodgill, 1974). In-and out-of school experiences such as club memberships offer budding young leaders opportunities to interact with peers in small groups under the supervision of caring adults, thus affording them multiple occasions to hone their skills so that they can be on the road to becoming leaders. In addition, new technological advances in electronic communication make it possible to quickly and easily transfer information about one setting to another setting. Most importantly, the relationships and communication connecting multiple contexts facilitates opportunities not only for leadership development, but for overall human development.

**Exosystem Influences: Indirect Impact of the Community**

The exosystem is defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) as one or more settings that do not physically contain the developing person, but in which events occur that have a direct influence on the developing person. The developing person’s action or behaviors in the microsystem may also have an influence on a setting with which the developing person has no direct contact. Therefore, the relationship can be initiated from either direction. Of course, there are more exosystem
influences than could possibly be considered within the scope of this research paper. However, two influential factors on the exosystem, parent workplace and evaluations of intelligence, will be taken into account because of their relevance to leadership.

**Parent Workplace.** For the case in point, let’s assume that the developing person is a child in a household. Children seldom visit their parents’ workplace, but the events and policies that a parent deals with at work directly impact the child. If a parent gets a raise in income at work or has work hours that coincide nicely with the child’s school schedule, then the child likely benefits at home. If a parent’s income is inconsistent or unpredictable, their job security is threatened regularly due to circumstances beyond their control, or workplace policies are not family-friendly, then the child will feel the repercussions of those workplace situations and policies in the home (Morrissey & Warner, 2007). Though probably less frequently, the child may have an influence on the workplace despite the lack of his presence in that external setting. For instance, a single mother living in a rural area gives birth to a pre-term baby who must stay in a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for several months. These specialized units are almost always located in large metropolitan areas; therefore the mother must travel a great distance from her home to the hospital in order to both work and maintain relational contact with her baby. The mother’s co-worker’s may choose to adopt a new policy of being able to donate their sick leave time to the mother so that she can miss work to see her baby more frequently. Thus, the child influences workplace policy.

Parents’ workplace is one of the primary exosystem examples used by researchers of the bioecological system of human development not only because it affects most people’s lives but also because it so strongly influences people’s attitudes and perceptions (Keyes, 2002; Kohn, 1987; Lerner, Rothbaum, Boulos, & Castellino, 2002; Marshall, 2004; Morrissey & Warner, 2007; Seginer, 2006). In looking at leadership specifically, it was determined through biographical research that many adult leaders were strongly influenced in their childhood by family members’
occupational choices, with the young leader often choosing a related occupational field and becoming a leader within that general sphere of work (Albert, 1980; Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978).

Parent workplace may have a greater overarching influence, though, because of the attitudes and perceptions that are developed in the workplace and consistently infiltrate in-home family affairs—discussions, discipline strategies, parenting styles and such. Howe (1990) indicated that parent workplace influences how parents perceive their role in teaching their child the social and cultural norms that result in productive citizenry. Both within and across cultures, parents try to pass on the values that they believe will maximize their child’s success as adults (Kohn, 1987). Parents’ definitions of success and the necessary skills to achieve that success tend to be limited, however, to their own personal experiences. So, the parents’ workplace experiences shape the parental belief system and how values are inculcated. For example, upper and middle SES parents in the United States expect their children to achieve academically and to hold positions of leadership and professional responsibility, thus they tend to emphasize, both through words and actions, attributes such as self-reliance, independence, creativity, and curiosity. However, Hoff et al. (2002) point out that low SES families are prone to emphasize, through actions more so than directly communicated expectations, the need for obedience and conformity, values that tend to increase the chances of success in jobs that require close supervision, low self-regulation, and minimal independence. Unfortunately, the values instilled into children by low SES parents then translate into the historically low paying, low respect positions of blue collar skilled and unskilled laborers, thus sustaining a cycle of multi-generational poverty. Conversely, the children of upper and middle income families who emphasize a different set of skills and attitudes have children who are seen as successful in terms of academic achievement, lifelong love for learning, ability to problem-solve, create, and self-direct which results in typically higher-paying, more highly
respected, self-regulating professional and leadership positions which, in turn, perpetuates upper and middle income levels. Thus, once again, income levels are sustained throughout generations as parents enact their values and influence their children’s value system.

**Evaluation of Intelligence.** As has been mentioned previously, intentional efforts to teach leadership skills to young children in schools seldom occurs outside of gifted and talented classes. Thus, in order for a child to have the benefit of leadership training in the schools, he must first qualify for gifted and talented classes. This presents many problems. Even though the definition of gifted and talented in most states includes leadership talent, seldom are children considered for gifted and talented classes on the attribute of leadership alone (Karnes & Chauvin, 2000). Instead, leadership is typically considered only after a child has exhibited academic prowess. Leaders are typically of above average intelligence (Hollingsworth, 1939; Pasternak & Silvey, 1969; Silverman, 1990; Sternberg, 2005) but the ways that schools determine intelligence is sometimes flawed (Aldridge, 1992; Batey & Furnham, 2006; Elkind, 1989; Gross, 1999; Kamii & Kamii, 1990). Often times, exosystem factors play a role in determining whether a child is classified as having above average intelligence or needs the academic stimulation offered in gifted and talented classes.

First, teaching strategies and teacher values play a role in determining whether a child is considered for a gifted and talented program. Teacher training programs vary in how they teach pre-service teaching candidates to perform in the classroom. Institutions such as universities that prepare people to earn the necessary credentials for teaching may lean more heavily on one theory of human development than another. These different theoretical foundations lead to different kinds of goals and objectives for instruction, different teaching strategies, and different methods for evaluating learning outcomes (Kamii & Kamii, 1990). Some teacher training programs emphasize short-term learning, internalizing information directly from the environment, for the purpose of having children do well on achievement tests. Other teacher training programs prepare teachers to
help children construct knowledge through interaction with the environment and use
communication strategies that help children solve problems from within themselves (Elkind, 1989; Kamii & Kamii, 1990). Since referral for gifted and talented instruction usually comes from the classroom teachers who spend the most time with the child in question, the type of training that the teachers have, and therefore the skills and attitudes that the teachers value, play a significant role in determining whether a child is ever considered for a gifted and talented program in the schools (Gross, 1999). Therefore, even though a child may never have any direct contact with a teacher training institute, the events and learning episodes that take place in that institute have a direct effect on the child’s development and prospects for enrichment such as leadership opportunities.

Second, despite outcries from gifted and talented educators as to the need for more comprehensive screening strategies, many schools still rely exclusively on achievement testing or intelligence testing to determine placement in gifted and talented classes (Gross, 1999; Kamii, 1990; Silverman, 2000). Generally speaking, achievement tests and intelligence tests are psychometric measures that are standardized so that any child taking the test is compared to other children of his age to determine how the test taker compares cognitively to age-mates (usually within a particular region, such as the United States; Silverman, 2000). Based on the outcomes of the tests given to a sample population, normative data is established which reflects the percentage or proportion of an age group that are likely to achieve particular skills or ability levels (McMillan, 1990). Certainly the test development takes place in a setting that does not physically contain the child, but, more importantly, the tests have been criticized because the norms are often based on different samples than to whom the tests are administered (Ballard, 1988; McMillan, 1990). These types of testing procedures have the potential to have a direct effect on the child when the child’s scores are used to either allow or disallow access to services and resources (for the purposes of this discussion,
specifically gifted and talented education). Standardized tests and normative data can be used in a variety of ways, but when used as described, the process can be squarely placed in the exosystem.

McMillan (1990) advises educators to use, but not be ruled by, normative data, instead, focusing on individual development. Individual development can be assessed more fully through strategies such as portfolio development or biographical inventories (Gross, 1999; Piirto, 2004).

**Summary of Exosystem Influences on Leadership Skill Building.** Many exosystem factors come to bear on the attitudes and values that are developed in homes and schools. Parent work setting, which is closely related to occupational position and education, influences parental perceptions about skills and attitudes necessary for success in the world, thus influencing parenting strategies. Parenting strategies, in turn, aid in developing a child’s outlook, self-expectations, and eventual adult behavior and development in their own job setting (Kohn, 1987). The human development theories taught in teacher training institutes and the widespread acceptance of intelligence testing outcomes as the primary tool for determination of acceptance into gifted and talented classes both influence whether children have access to leadership training opportunities within the school system or not. When home environment attitudes are influenced by sources outside of the home, as they most certainly are bound to be, or when schools have a narrow vision of the ways that giftedness or intelligence is determined, children are going to be directly impacted. These exosystemic impacts can act as regulators to leadership enrichment opportunities.

**Macrosystem and Chronosystem Influences:**
**The Effects of the Sociocultural, Historical, and Political Climate**

The macrosystem is the level of the bioecological system that is an overarching level of the society that the child exists within that includes, the social, cultural, political, and historical influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Lerner, 2002). It is not separate from any of the other contexts discussed—microsystem, mesosystem or exosystem— but encapsulates all of them just as each context described thus far is embedded in the broader context.
before it. An individual develops within the child-parent relationship that, in turn, is embedded within the family context. The family shapes and is shaped by the quality of the relationships it has outside of the family and within the community-at-large. And, as the definition of the macrosystem indicates, the larger society in which the family is embedded indirectly influences the world that an individual lives and develops within (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

Bronfenbrenner studied children and their development in many different countries and cultures. His experiences led him to believe that American researchers tend to have a monoculturalistic perspective—that is, many research articles derive their conclusions from the analysis of families with middle socioeconomic status in modern, industrialized countries of the Western hemisphere, mainly the United States. Bronfenbrenner and others encouraged researchers to expand their studies and make cross-cultural comparisons, not only between cultures around the world, but also between cultures that reside within the United States (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kohn, 1987).

In more recent works, Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1999) elaborated on the importance of the element of time in the overall bioecological system. Not simply the passage of time or the effects of an individual growing older, but "the influence on the person’s development of changes (and continuities) over time in the environments in which the person is living" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 9) and "the social continuities and changes occurring over time during the historical period through which the person has lived" (Bronfenbrenner, 1999, p. 5). Time takes on many facets. For one, activities or interactions that are most influential on developmental outcomes are those that take place regularly over extended periods of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Second, the point in time that an individual experiences a major life event or transition will have an effect on how that individual responds or reacts and, thus, have different effects on human development. Examples of life events or transitions can include death of a sibling, parent or close relative, entry into marriage,
entry into the armed forces, entry into school, or dissolution of a marital relationship to name a few (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; McMillan, 1990). Third, the historical point in time that an individual lives will be a determining factor in how he behaves and responds to his environment as well as how his environment/context responds to him (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). For example, the age at which an individual experiences a broad spread societal occurrence, such as an economic crisis, can have a negative or positive impact on him depending on the age of the individual when the occurrence took place (Elder, 1999). This third aspect of time shows a close intertwining of history and culture, each influencing and affecting the other so complexly that they are almost indistinguishable from one another. Collectively, these aspects of time effects on human development are referred to as the chronosystem component of the bioecological framework. Rather than encapsulating any of the other elements of the system, the chronosystem revolves around the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Figure 1).

For the remainder of this section, the discussion will focus on ways that culture, history and socioeconomic class influence people’s attitudes and beliefs. In addition, an effort will be made to show that much of the way we construct our beliefs and organize human roles can be affected by the larger elements of society. Because the chronosystem is so complexly interwoven through both history and culture, chronosystemic influences on the development of leadership will be discussed within the macrosystemic influences. One must keep in mind, however, that even though equal rights legislation, socioeconomic class, ethnicity and other types of shared group experiences do indeed shape our perspectives and development, every individual is unique. Generalizations are made in the following discussion that may or may not apply to individuals.

Attitudes about Gender. Every society develops expectations for gender roles. Though there are certainly some overlaps, males are expected to behave one way and females are expected to behave another. Some cultures have greater variance between genders than others. Across the world there
are variances such as that between the kinship patterns and associated gender roles of the Bari culture of South America (where the society believes in multiple paternity, a social system wherein a woman claims that many men are the father of her child and each of those men are required to lend aid throughout the pregnancy) and the family arrangements and expected gender roles of the Na of Yunnan Province of China (where the society is so female centric that there is no word in their language for father; Small, 2007). Likewise, there is cultural variance within the United States such as the traditional European-American ideal of one mother married to one father with two or three children as opposed to the greater likelihood of African-American mothers parenting singly (Leaper, 2002). Whether looking at cultural variance across the world or at cultural variance within a smaller geographic region, the evidence indicated that cultural practices influence attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate gender role stereotyping (Best & Williams, 1997).

In considering attitudes about gender, time, and history come into effect in the United States when, in the 1960’s, the Women’s Rights Movement brought to light many unfair gender-related practices and, eventually, brought about policy changes intended to reform social injustice (Jones, S., 2009). In addition, the increased awareness of unfair practices directed toward females also transformed societal beliefs and attitudes. As a result of the Women’s Rights Movement, significant gains have been made toward greater gender equality though issues of concern still abound at all stages of human development, many that effect leadership opportunities (Silverman, 2000).

**Prenatal development.** Gender equality refers to both genders having equal access to power, privileges and rights. It does not mean that everyone is treated exactly the same or that everyone is expected to behave exactly the same. In contrast, we know that male and female brains are physiologically different even in utero (Jazin & Cahill, 2010; Kimura, 2002), prior to societal conditioning. With recent advances in bioimaging technology, researchers have been able to
correlate gender-specific structural differences of the brain with specific psychological functioning. For example, Wellborn et al. (2009) found a correlation between the structural differences of male and female orbitofrontal cortex volume and male and female functioning in regards to emotion regulation and affective behaviors. Specifically, females used more effective strategies to deal with negative emotions and were better able than males to express emotions. Both emotion regulation and affective expressiveness are strongly related to social perceptiveness, an ability deemed important for successful leaders to exhibit (Feldhusen & Pleiss, 1994; Landau & Milich, 1990; Trawick-Smith, 1988). As children grow and develop, the brains of girls and boys become increasingly different due both to physiological differences and sociological experiences (Halpern et al., 2007).

**Infants and children.** Sociological experiences and stereotyping children based on gender, begins at birth. Hospitals distinguish between the genders with pink nameplates on the bassinets of girls and blue nameplates on the bassinets of boys. Gifts brought by visitors to the newborn are also gender specific, with lacy pink garments and items embellished with dolls and flowers for girls and blue garments and items embellished with trucks and puppies for boys (Fagot, Rodgers, & Leinbach, 2000). Mothers and fathers treat their sons and daughters differently based on the gender of the child. For example, fathers engage in boisterous rough and tumble play with their sons but play more gently with their daughters (Grieg & Hughes, 2009). Parents tend to exhibit different expectations for their children based on gender. For example, when asked to predict how well their 11-month-old children could crawl down a ramp, mothers tended to overestimate how well their sons could perform the task and underestimate how well their daughters would perform (Mondshein, Adolph, & Tamis-LeMonda, 2000).

Treating male and female children in different ways helps to maintain constant the stereotypes of the larger society/culture. Lace and the color pink are culturally connected to both
femininity and being dainty, fragile, weak, and pretty (Rubin, Provenzano, & Luria, 1974). At the opposite end of the spectrum, trucks, boisterous rough and tumble play, and the color blue are culturally connected to masculinity as well as strength, sturdiness, and being handsome (Rubin et al., 1974). Providing gender-related gifts and other described practices are not meant to be harmful, but are merely culturally accepted traditions for distinguishing between the genders. However, harm may be done, simply because there is a human tendency to live up to the expectation one is surrounded by, a phenomena referred to by psychologists as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Halpern, 2000). If one is told constantly that they are big, strong, and capable, then they are likely to believe themselves to fit that description. In contrast, if one is told constantly that they are too dainty and weak to try new things or are incapable of certain endeavors because of their gender then they are likely to believe themselves to fit that description. Their beliefs about themselves become internalized, and consequently, they act out their own self perceptions.

Parenting practices can perpetuate gender inequality and have long-term effects on both attitudes and aptitudes of children. Take, for instance, the observational studies of Lamb (1997) that indicated that fathers spend more time with their baby boys than they do with their baby girls and that mothers tend to spend more time with their baby girls than they do with their baby boys. Most parents are probably unaware that they do this, but when combined with other studies that show how mothers and fathers parent differently, it becomes clear that girls and boys are exposed to different learning experiences that result in different learning outcomes. The results of the learning outcomes can either help or hinder a child’s potential leadership ability.

For instance, studies (Leaper, 2002) indicated that the linguistic practices of fathers are different than those of mothers such that fathers tend to ask questions that call for predictions about the future, whereas mothers tend to ask questions about the past or present. When playing with a busy box, fathers might ask "What do you think will happen if you push the red button?" or "Where
do you think the clown is hiding?" Mothers, on the other hand, might ask "What just happened?" or "Can you push the red one?" Though both linguistic practices help children learn in different ways, research indicated that the predicting questions (future oriented) help children to think as problem solvers (Leaper, 2002). Not surprisingly, since fathers spend more time with boys, they ask more questions of their boys that, in turn better prepare boys to be good problem-solvers. The ability to solve problems effectively is considered to be a characteristic of a good leader (Sankar-DeLeeuw, 2007; Sternberg, 2005; Trawick-Smith, 1988; Wolfle, 1989). Thus, we have to wonder if boys are more likely than girls to develop the problem-solving abilities needed to be a good leader.

On the other hand, mothers spend more time with their girls than they do their boys. Among other things, this has two potential outcomes that have a bearing on children’s prospective leadership skills. First, the exchanges between mothers and daughters are characterized by close, intimate, relationship building interactions much more so than the father-son, father-daughter or mother-son dyads (Clarke-Stewart & Hevey, 1981; Lindahl & Heimann, 1997). As a result, girls are more likely than boys to hone skills both in initiating and in building relationships, paying attention to the needs of others, as well as expressing their feelings verbally. Leadership research indicated that relationship building such as that seen in leading a cooperative team effort is a skill needed by strong leaders (Hanfmann, 1935; Reeves, 2008). In addition, the ability to be aware of one’s feelings and successfully express them verbally is an intrapersonal skill considered valuable for leaders to possess (Maccagnano, 2007). Second, cross-cultural studies indicated that mothers help socialize their children to express emotions and sensitivity toward others beginning in the early months of life (Harkness & Super, 1985; Malatesta, Culver, Tesman, & Shepard, 1989). Malatesta et al. (1989) specifically indicated that mothers in different cultures modulate their emotional responses toward their sons and daughters differently in accordance with the cultural norms of expectations for male and female displays of emotion and understanding. In the United States,
transferring cultural norms to the next generation of boys means that boys are taught to show little expression of emotions or responsiveness to others (Grieg & Hughes, 2009; Silverman, 2000). Conversely, the transfer of cultural norms to American girls tends to include attuning to the needs of others, expressing emotions, and communicating expressively (Silverman, 2000). Considering that one of the characteristics of leaders is sensitivity to the needs of others (Feldhusen & Pleiss, 1994; Sankar-DeLeeuw, 2007; Sternberg, 2005; Trawick-Smith, 1988; Wolfle, 1989) it appears that boys have lesser chances to develop this leadership skill to the extent that girls do.

Looking at society as a whole, rather than focusing more narrowly on parental perceptions, it was found that raters’ opinions of children’s behaviors were different depending on whether they believed the child they were observing was male or female. The exact same film was shown to a group of adults. Upon watching the same child engaging in the same behavior the trend was to describe the child viewed as inquisitive and adventurous when raters believed they were observing a boy, yet the child was described as fearful and anxious when they believed it was a girl being observed (Condry & Condry, 1976). Being inquisitive and willing to take risks are both research-based characteristics of good quality leaders (Sternberg, 2004). This study seems to indicate a cultural inclination of believing that boys exhibit these leadership attributes more frequently than girls.

Most of the customs and practices described are so ingrained into our culture that we don’t even think about them. For the most part, we don’t even consider another way to interact with babies and young children because there is no other way in our repertoire of behaviors or experiences. Yet, despite the lack of deliberate harm, this information illuminates the fact that well-meaning societal practices may have unintentional drawbacks.

**Middle childhood and adolescence.** As children grow and transition first to primary school, then middle school and into adolescence, each year brings about increasing pressure and
influence from young people’s peers and peer culture to comply with societal expectations (Collins, Madsen, & Susman-Stillman, 2002). Silverman (2000) reported that leadership skills of both genders are adversely affected by young people who consciously choose to squelch their leadership abilities in an effort to fit in with their peers. For example, the solitude required by budding young leaders for self-reflection (Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Ramey, 1991) is often traded by girls for social interaction in the pursuit of popularity (Silverman, 2000). Boys, on the other hand, are discouraged in exhibiting compassion and sensitivity and instead are encouraged to compete aggressively and achieve academically and/or athletically (Grieg & Hughes, 2009; Silverman, 2000). Ramey (1991) indicated that the quest for personal achievement in any realm is not an adequate aspiration for society’s leaders if it is not coupled with the desire to serve others as well. Instead, young leaders, both male and female, should be encouraged to be "caring, compassionate, conscientious, committed, and involved" (Ramey, 1991, p. 15) so that their goals are morally and ethically oriented rather than self-serving.

American classrooms and teachers may also be contributing to differential treatment based on gender and therefore perpetuating societal expectations that either encumber or support leadership skill development (Kerr, 1997). Studies of Sadker and Sadker (1994) indicated that teachers call on boys more frequently than girls, give boys more informative responses than girls, and are more likely to give details to a boy as to why his actions were either praised or criticized. In contrast, girls were more likely to be given excess assistance, usually in the form of giving them answers rather than explaining how to find the answers, and girls were chastised for exhibiting assertive behaviors for which boys with similar behaviors were rewarded. These adult behaviors toward young people encourage leadership skills in boys while discouraging them in girls. Kerr (1997) suggested that teachers do not engage in this type of differentiated behavior consciously, but
rather that the behaviors are the result of both a reaction to the different behaviors of boys and girls as well as a "reflection of underlying socialized attitudes" (p. 490).

**Adulthood.** Gender bifurcation, and consequently differing opportunities for leadership development, continues into adulthood. Historically, men were more likely to hold leadership positions than women. This is not surprising considering that very few women historically entered the workforce outside of the home until the Women’s Movement of the 1960’s (Jones, S. 2009). Statistics indicated that as of 2009 approximately 59% of women work outside of the home full time as compared to 68% of men (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009). Certainly there are opportunities for leadership outside of the workplace, but leadership in volunteer situations is much more difficult to track. However, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009) indicated that U.S. women comprise 24% of the chief executives of organizations and 37% of middle management positions, thus showing an increase in leadership positions being held by women in the work force. Although the leadership positions are not equal with the proportion of women employed outside of the home, the statistics indicated substantial changes in societal role expectations and attitudes, as well as an increase in available opportunities for women (Eagly, 2007).

Research suggested that both men and women are quite capable of effective leadership. However, men and women generally tend to have different leadership characteristics which find their roots in both gender socialization strategies as well as genetic predispositions that are reinforced by environmental factors (Krüger, 2008). Although these are generalizations and cannot be specifically applied to individuals, it seems that men and women deal with power and relationships differently which translates into differing leadership styles. Overall, women seem to have more communal traits such as being trustworthy, nurturant, relational, and extroverted. Men, on the other hand, tend to have traits that reflect an internal driving force, such as confidence,
aggressiveness, and self-direction as well as paying more attention to administrative tasks than relationship building (Krüger, 2008).

Different leadership styles are apt to be more or less effective dependent upon the situational context. As a result, we see women being more likely to hold positions of leadership in female dominated careers and males more likely to be leaders in male dominated fields (Eagly, 2007; Krüger, 2008). It seems that some organizations have realized that teaming a female and male in leadership promotes both relational leadership as well as administrative leadership, providing a balance that is very effectual (Krüger, 2008).

Despite the changes seen in the past 50 years in women’s opportunities for leadership acquisition, the fact of differential societal expectations for men and women in leadership positions can hardly be denied. Even at the preschool and primary grade level, Fu (1982) found that children had differing social expectations for male and female classmates’ behaviors and were more likely to follow those who displayed peer expectations for gender-specific behaviors. Likewise, in the adult world of work, when women meet the gender role expectations of their subordinates, that is, exhibit gentleness and concern for others, they are easily accepted into the workplace environment. If however, they exhibit directive or assertive qualities, they are frequently opined as being too masculine or overbearing and are not appreciated by their subordinates. However, the opposite is not true. Men may adopt behaviors that are considered to be feminine, such as individual consideration, a component often seen in athletic coaching, without negative results (Eagly, 2007). Other barriers experienced by female leaders include prejudices such as the use of leadership evaluations in the workplace that are based on typical male leadership styles and, therefore, do not apply effectively to women’s leadership styles. In addition, societal expectations may evolve at different rates for different realms of life such that women continue to feel primarily responsible for successfully running a home and taking care of children while, at the same time, successfully
conducting a leadership role in her career hence, feeling conflicting emotions in regard to dividing her time between work and family responsibilities (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

As a society, we experience fluidity in gender roles and expectations and therefore can expect to continue to see changes in attitudes about male and female leadership issues. One example of this is the current trend in college enrollment and graduation rates. According to the U.S. Bureau of Statistics, young women now outnumber young men in college attendance and college graduation rates (2009). By increasing their educational attainment levels, women are more likely to have the credentials necessary for gaining leadership positions within their chosen careers. Similarly, general societal attitudes must be evolving for such a widespread change to occur.

**Summary of attitudes about gender.** It seems that some leadership skills are more likely to be honed by one gender or the other based on genetic predispositions, gender specific cultural expectations or culturally-based parenting and teaching practices. Despite the continuation of some gender specific societal expectations that have the potential to encumber one gender or the others’ leadership opportunities, there is definitely evidence to indicate that equitability is closer than ever before and continues to move in a positive direction. For example, education journals promote classroom strategies that aid teachers in developing gender equity in schools (Eliot, 2010)

With societal perceptions continuing to change, gender role expectations continuing to evolve, and educational opportunities continuing to be more gender equitable, it seems likely that leadership opportunities for both genders will follow the trend toward continuous change, allowing for a greater likelihood of equitable opportunities for leadership development for both males and females.

**The Effects of Disadvantaged Circumstances on Leadership Development.** There is a host of multifaceted circumstances that can hinder or help a young child in having opportunities to develop their leadership skills. The circumstances and attitudes of families with young children who excel
or have a greater likelihood of becoming leaders have already been explored during our examination of the microsystem. Likewise, factors at both the mesosystem level and the exosystem levels have been discussed. In considering macrosystemic factors, poverty and culture are issues that cannot be overlooked (Harkness & Super, 2002; Hodgkinson, 2007). In addition to the regrettable circumstances that a child finds himself when born into poverty, his plight is often confounded by societal complexities associated with ethnicity or culture. Membership in a specific ethnic or cultural group is not an indicator of poverty. However, because many of the people living at or below poverty level are of ethnic minority, there is a close association between poverty and particular ethnic or cultural groups (Passow, 1986; Bryant, 2010). The numbers reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for the year 2000 indicated a gloomy outlook (Hodgkinson, 2007):

- One third of all U.S. children birth to 17 years of age lived in a low-income home.
- Of all African American children, 33% lived in poverty.
- Of all Hispanic American children, 33% lived in poverty.
- Of all European American children, 10% lived in poverty.

Two points need to be clear. One, poverty is a circumstance that a child finds himself in through no fault of his own (Ford, 1996). And two, the culture of poverty is made more complex and need-specific when the characteristics and belief systems of different ethnic or cultural groups are conjoined to it (Ford & Harris, 1995).

For the purposes of this report, the term disadvantaged will refer to children who come from low-income circumstances. Special consideration will be applied to the most frequently represented ethnic minority group in the community and the specific school that the study will be conducted, African-Americans.
Low-income is a disadvantage. As has been determined thus far, the two places that a child is most likely to receive training in leadership skills is either in the gifted and talented program of their school or in extracurricular activities such as band, 4-H, Scouting, athletics, church-related activities or other small group, task-oriented activities led by a caring adult.

Some children are more likely to be nominated for gifted and talented classes within their schools than others. A child of impoverished circumstances is not likely to be recognized for high academic achievement or nominated/enrolled in school programs designed to enrich the curriculum (Evans, 2000; Robinson, Lanzi, Weinberg, Ramey, & Ramey, 2002). Although some might argue that poor children are inherently inferior thinkers, research does not support this opinion (Frasier, 1987; Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Instead research indicated that many children of low socioeconomic status have potential to excel academically, but a host of issues stand as barriers to their accurate identification as gifted learners, as well as their recruitment and retention in gifted programs (Baldwin, 2007; Robinson et al., 2002).

A child who is embedded in the culture of poverty has different expectations of himself and his place in the world community than does an equally-abled student of more affluent circumstances. In addition, research indicated that the expectations placed on a poor child by his family, peers, teachers, and community are different than the expectations placed on middle income children by those people or groups of people (Baldwin, 2004). Attitudes and behaviors that develop over time as a result of impoverished circumstances are common to many poor people regardless of ethnicity or geographic location. Such shared attitudes and behaviors result in a group of individuals with similar sociodemographic characteristics and shared perceptions of reality, thus a shared culture. It is referred to simply as the culture of the poor (Keller, Borke, Yovsi, Lohaus, & Jensen, 2005).
Although resilience can be fostered and coping strategies taught, the culture of the poor can have detrimental effects on a child’s perception of his ability to excel in school as well as his self efficacy, both of which effect leadership opportunities. For example, chronic inability to cope with daily stressors such as dealing with transportation issues, mental or physical health issues, or job-related problems can overburden an individual’s or family’s ability to cope. Eamon (2001) asserted that this in turn creates a sense of "powerlessness, which erodes self-esteem and the sense of mastery, control, and personal efficacy," (p. 258) diminishing the likelihood that the poor person or family will engage in active problem solving and increasing the likelihood that they will suffer from clinical depression, psychological pain, marital conflict, and poor parenting practices that are inconsistent, emotionally distant, unsympathetic, and uninvolved. Unfortunately for the children reared in these families, history tells us that none of these adjectives are likely to describe the family of a leader or high-achiever.

One of the most noticeable barriers faced by poor children is the lack of resources available to them. This circumstance even affects babies in utero. Poor families do not always have access to health care, adequate nutrition, or even to telephones so that they can call for emergency services when needed (Hodgkinson, 2007). Undereducated mothers are less likely than their better educated and better paid counterparts to know how to stimulate a young child’s intellect or to have access to educational materials. The first four years of human intellectual development are the years of most cognitive growth and the learning that takes place during those years act as a foundation on which subsequent learning is built. If those opportunities for learning are missed and intervention strategies are not planned, a lower overall trajectory for learning can be anticipated (Kitano, 2007).

After four years without adequate resources available to them, children of poverty begin kindergarten in the public schools with children who are already ahead of them cognitively because of the plethora of learning experiences the wealthier parents were able to provide for their own
children (Ford, 2007). It would seem that at this point in their young life these poor children would then have the opportunity to catch up with children from wealthier families as they all entered into the public school system; a system where all children supposedly have the same access to the same resources. But, unfortunately, that is not the case. Instead, there are poor school districts and wealthy school districts—the classification dependent upon state and local funding which is dependent on existence of industry, family spending patterns, and tax bases. Thus the pattern continues as poor children enter into inadequately funded and under-resourced schools while their wealthier counterparts enter schools that have many more resources available to them (Ford, 2007).

When considering teachers as a resource available to children through the school, once again there is an imbalance. Poor school districts are more likely than wealthier school districts to have young, inexperienced teachers or uncertified teachers, further crippling their ability to provide top-quality services or level the playing field between the haves and have-nots (Worrell, 2007). Children who do not have access to school resources to aid in the development of the child’s giftedness may be "involuntary underachievers" (Reis & McCoach, 2000, p. 201). Additionally, many of the teachers the children encounter in the school system are of a middle class background and understand little about the barriers faced by indigent people just to survive, much less excel.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds face a host of inhibiting social and psychological barriers that have a bearing on their self-identity which, in turn, affects their probability for recruitment to and/or retention in a gifted program (Bernal, 2007; Ford & Harris, 1995). For example, if a poverty-stricken child does manage to do well in school, enforcement of social class lifestyle and behaviors from low-income cohorts can threaten to socially isolate the student who is seen as acting differently than is socially acceptable. The decision whether to follow ones’ own bidding or succumb to peer pressure is likely to be an internal battle that an academic achiever of low-income status will face over and over again (Reis & McCoach, 2000).
Extracurricular activities have been noted by many researchers as an important developing ground for leadership skills (Hong & Milligram, 2008; Karnes & Bean, 1996; Roach et al., 1999; Stodgill, 1974). Engagement in extracurricular activities may be especially important for low-income children because they are apt to reap greater benefits from extracurricular activities than their more economically stable counterparts. Research has shown that poor children use the relationships they develop and knowledge they acquire through extracurricular activities to build resilience and climb out of multi-generational poverty circumstances (Bland & Sowa, 1994). Sadly, though, low-income children are less likely than children from middle income or high income families to have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities for a variety of reasons. First, as alluded to before, poverty-stricken parents are not as familiar with ways to stimulate and cognitively enrich their child’s life and therefore may not pursue extracurricular activities as an avenue of enrichment (Kitano, 2007). Second, low-income parents may find extracurricular activities to be either cost prohibitive or an ineffectual use of time. Even if activities are offered for free, which is seldom the case, there is still cost involved in transportation—either in the family having its own mode of transportation or paying for public transit. Time becomes an issue as parents lose time from work to transport the child, which, of course, translates into loss of income, something they can ill-afford to lose. Evidence suggested that indigent parents are less likely than their wealthier counterparts to have a strong social network so that they do not tend to take turns with transportation or share other parental responsibilities, once again putting their children at a disadvantage (Frankel & Frankel, 2006).

Researchers warn us not to mistake all persons who currently have an income that ranks them as being below poverty level according to the United States guidelines as being members of the culture of poverty (Silverman, 2000). Multi-generational poverty lends itself to the acquisition
of shared beliefs, attitudes, and social systems that those who experience short-term poverty do not usually develop.

**Ethnicity and culture.** Opportunities for formal leadership development in the schools can be problematic for children from poor families. Likewise there are limitations placed on poor families in pursuing informal opportunities for adult supervised leadership development. These problems are compounded when combined with the characteristics, beliefs, and perceptions of different ethnic and cultural groups (Ford & Harris, 1995).

As an ethnic minority, African Americans are considered a disadvantaged population due both to unfair historical treatment by the ethnic majority and current statistics that indicate a large proportion of African Americans are at or below poverty level (Hodgkinson, 2007). In addition to the problems or opportunity barriers associated with low-income circumstances, the shared social culture or outsiders’ perceptions of the social culture of African Americans can have deleterious effects on leadership development.

It is important to grasp the meaning of social culture in order to understand how it affects different groups. Though there are many definitions, most are closely aligned with a standard definition developed by Krueber and Kluckhohn (1952) which termed social culture as patterns of behaviors that are acquired and transferred through a symbolic system so that beliefs are shared within a group and serve as a cognitive map or a blueprint for future behavior. Thus, groups of people develop a group mentality and shared perspectives about a variety of issues or actions, including ones that specifically affect leadership development opportunities.

Ethnic peers can impose social milieus that threaten to socially or culturally segregate the academically high-achieving or leadership-aspiring African American student. For example, African Americans who achieve academically will often feel pressure from other African American students not to excel in school, that by doing so they are abandoning their race and joining the
Caucasians in "their game" (Passow, 1972, p. 28) or are "acting white" (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

Highly achieving African American students often times find themselves in the position of choosing to either be popular or be smart, but not both. A popular press book intended for general audiences titled *To Be Popular or Smart: The Black Peer Group* (Kunjufu, 1989) captures the sentiment well: It is a struggle to successfully balance social, racial, and academic identities for African American students. Younger students who are less mature and have had less time to fully develop their racial identity may struggle with this more so than their older, more sophisticated same race peers.

Over thirty years ago, Cross (1971) developed a theory that attempted to categorize the hierarchal stages of racial identity that African-Americans must traverse to have a healthy racial identity. The five stages are pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. Feelings highlighted in these stages range from desiring to be like the majority to denying race as a life factor to developing a comfortable, positive image of race and personal success with a proactive stance regarding positive political changes for African-Americans (Ford & Harris, 1995).

As gifted African American students develop through various stages of racial identity, they are likely to fight internal and external battles regarding academic values and choices. For example, Harper’s (2006) research indicated that African American student leaders on college campuses felt very supported by their same race peers in their leadership activities, but qualified the support they received with comments indicating that the young leaders initiated advancements for the African American community on campus and communicated African American concerns to college administrators, thus assuring that same race peers did not see them as acting like Caucasians. Thus, older college students who have progressed through the stages of racial identity are more likely to be accepted, supported, and applauded by their same race peers for their leadership endeavors and academic abilities. Younger students in primary and secondary school who are still wading through
"racelessness" as Fordham (1988) suggested, or other early stages of racial identity, are more likely to encounter negative attitudes from their peers regarding both their academic achievement and emerging leadership attempts. As these young African American budding leaders enter into adolescence when peer acceptance is so crucial to their self esteem, research indicated that they are likely to choose popularity over appearing to be an intelligent leader by camouflaging their academic and leadership talent (Grantham & Ford, 2003; Horvat & Lewis, 2003). Though these tactics are shared by both genders, African American males are especially apt to hide their intelligence by accenting their ability to be engaged in hip-hop culture, athleticism, and romantic encounters with the opposite sex, all indicators of reaching the pinnacle of popularity in African American adolescent culture (Davis, 2003).

Unfortunately academic aptitude is not usually an indicator of popularity or "coolness" in African American high school culture, resulting in students who trade academic engagement for popularity (Davis, 2003). The long range drawbacks of academic disengagement include a low grade point average which, in turn, translates into less academic aptitude, less probability of college acceptance or college scholarships and overall lower educational attainment. Academics and higher levels of educational attainment are associated with greater opportunities for leadership positions in the adult work world (Frankel & Frankel, 2006). African American students, especially those from poverty-stricken homes who do not perceive and use education as a springboard for opportunities, are at a distinct disadvantage for workplace promotions and other leadership prospects (Frankel & Frankel, 2006; Harper, 2006).

The language aspect of the hip-hop culture can be a detriment for young African American leaders aspiring to lead beyond their own neighborhoods or generation-specific hip-hop culture followers. Likewise, the language that is representative of the history and shared community experience of African Americans sometimes referred to as ebonics, can disenfranchise young
leaders from a broader base of followers (Dowdy, 2002; Delpit, 2002; Wynne, 2002). Delpit (2002) implores educators not to think of these languages as deficit, but as different, and then to embrace the history and current interests of the school children using them. Doing so has the potential to foster a relationship that encourages children to code switch from their home language in more intimate settings to the more widely accepted Standard English when in an academic setting or a public forum (Delpit, 2002). Being capable of speaking a language that is understood and accepted by the general populace increases the number of people with which one can communicate effectively thus, building the potential for a greater number of followers.

In addition to peer pressure, gifted African American students encounter parenting strategies and teacher attitudes that can be inhibitive. In many homes of ethnic minorities, parents encourage their children to do well in school and despite the family’s lack of resources the children do achieve (Robinson et al., 2002). However, because of the subservient positions the family members have traditionally held in the workforce and the personal characteristics that have gotten them ahead in those subservient roles, they unwittingly teach their children how to be subservient instead of encouraging them to express their leadership giftedness in terms of creativity, assertiveness, and justice-seeking (Piirto, 2004).

High school guidance counselors whose role has traditionally been to smoothly transition high school students from the high school to post secondary education or on-the-job training may do a disservice to African American students as a result of a lack of understanding of multicultural issues such as cultural values, social experiences and differences in learning styles (Moore et al., 2005). Recently, counseling methods have been designed specifically for poverty stricken African Americans that include intervention strategies focusing on social network building, civic engagement, and leadership development (Frankel & Frankel, 2006). Unfortunately, such counseling strategies are few and far between, resulting in promising young African Americans who
do not meet their potential. Instead, they often do not feel academically and socially integrated into the school’s academic climate. They reported that teachers, guidance counselors and other school personnel do not seem to have high expectations of them and feelings of discrimination, isolation and lack of support result (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2003).

As a cultural group, African Americans face many potential barriers as they seek to take on leadership roles in their schools, communities, and broader contexts. Popular television shows, movies and other media frequently portray African Americans as having different life-ways from the mainstream culture—life-ways that are portrayed as deficit, indicators of ignorance and lack of intelligence, as well as an overall undesirability---certainly not descriptors of people we think of as leaders (Delpit, 2002). The wide-ranging national perspective, as well as the more locally enacted belief systems about different cultures can not only be misguided and ill-fitting, but can be obstructive for young people with great potential for leadership endeavors.

Summary of the effects of disadvantaged circumstances on leadership development

Opportunities. Giftedness is evident across all ethnic and cultural groups (Bonner & Jenning, 2007; Delpit, 1995; Sternberg, 2007). It is one of the responsibilities of parents, teachers, and school systems to identify gifted learners, as well as promote and cultivate opportunities for enriched learning for them. Because leadership has been identified as a form of giftedness, it is also incumbent upon all types of educators to provide unbiased opportunities for leadership development and to help eliminate barriers to leadership development so that young people can meet their potential. Likewise, adult leaders of extracurricular activities need to take into consideration possible biases of their programs, making every effort to make those enriching, extracurricular activities fertile ground for leadership development potential for all young people regardless of gender, ethnicity, income level, or cultural background. In conclusion, the remarks of Lerner (2002) regarding our responsibilities as adults in a democratic nation reaching out to disadvantaged
families sums up this section, "Given the enormous, and arguably historically unprecedented, challenges facing the families of America and the world, perhaps especially as they strive to rear healthy and successful children capable of leading civil society productively, responsibly, and morally across the 21st century there is no time to lose in the development of …a commitment by the scholarly community" (p. 251).

**Summary and Critique**

A thorough investigation of research rendered many definitions of leadership but only one seemed most applicable to the early childhood years (Foster, 1981; Kitano & Tafoya, 1982). Early childhood leadership is defined in this paper as the process through which young children demonstrate an ability to make changes that either improve the efficiency of solving a problem or advance the level of thinking in a group. These changes may occur as the result of interactions within a large social following or a smaller group dynamic, but either way, strong communication skills and ethical/moral consideration of others are at work (Foster, 1981; Kitano & Tafoya, 1982; Sternberg, 2005). Research cited throughout this literature review did not necessarily follow this same definition, therefore one problem becomes evident—education professionals have not agreed upon a definition of leadership and therefore are possibly measuring, comparing, and discussing different constructs. In other words, we may very well not be comparing apples to apples.

However, research also indicated that even without specific training, classroom teachers are able to determine the leaders in their classes as well as instruments specifically designed to do so (Edwards, 1994; Kitano & Tafoya, 1984; Lee & Recchia, 2008; Nath & Seriven, 1981; Scharf & Mayseless, 2009; Schneider et al., 2002). So it seems that we can also say that there is a general understanding of leadership even if there is not complete agreement about specific aspects of how young people influence their peers.
Another professional quandary seems to be the question of whether leadership skills should be taught at all. Some educators believe that teaching leadership skills to some and not all students results in educational elitism (Howley et al., 1995). Others make a strong argument for especially teaching gifted and talented youth leadership skills because they are most likely to be the leaders of the future and should be prepared for the task (Dabrowski, 1972; Passow, 1988; Ramey, 1991; Silverman, 2000). The general consensus, however, seems to be that wherever young people gather and interact, a director or team of directors will emerge. It is also generally accepted that young children who have the supervision and support of caring adults are more likely to develop leadership skills that result in moral and ethical decision-making and that lack of a caring adult to oversee interaction is more likely to result in people who direct others into actions and thoughts that are illegal, immoral, or socially unacceptable (Hong & Milligram, 2008; Pettit et al., 1997; Silverman, 2000; VanTassel-Baska, Patton, & Prillaman, 1989). Examples of the difference between the two would be a group of inner city high school males on a basketball team under the tutelage of a caring basketball coach as opposed to a group of inner city high school age males who come together in their neighborhood to form a gang. Therefore, despite the questions of some, it seems that as responsible adults, we would want to create opportunities for supervised group interaction and the teaching of leadership skills tempered with moral and ethical consideration of others (Ramey, 1991; Sternberg, 2005). As U.S. society currently stands, those who are most likely to receive leadership training are those who exhibit high intelligence and are placed in gifted and talented classes at their school (Karnes & Chauvin, 2000; Silverman, 1990; Sternberg, 2005) or those who join adult led groups such as the Girls and Boys Club, band, baseball team, church youth groups, and other extracurricular activities (Hong & Milligram, 2008; Karnes & Bean, 1996; Roach et al., 1999; Stodgill, 1974).
The literature review made it clear that there have been several instruments designed to measure differences in how children manage, influence, and socialize others. As is the case with adults, these instruments, along with observational data, show that the leadership behaviors exhibited by young children can be organized into categories delineating different styles, utilization of strategies, and levels of effectiveness. Qualitative studies added depth to the existing quantitative studies. Qualitative studies added an in-depth look at particular leaders and showed that variables such as mental and chronological age, sense of belonging, classroom social dynamics, and level of verbal abilities could all make a difference in how or when a child might enact their skills to lead a group (Adcock & Segal, 1983; Lee et al., 2005; Roedell, 1985; Segal et al., 1987; Shin et al., 2004).

Despite all of the answers provided by both the quantitative and the qualitative studies, there are some holes that might be better studied in a less structured environment than the school. Yet simply looking at a less structured environment, the home for instance, raises more questions than it answers because different homes are influenced by so many different realms of life. A theoretical framework that shows promise as a tool through which to view and make sense of the many different levels of influence on human development is Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Lerner, 2002).

In Bronfenbrenner’s framework, human development is studied as five inter-related levels-the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. As Figure 1 indicates, each smaller system is embedded within and influenced by each of the larger contexts surrounding it. The microsystem is the smallest system consisting of the individual and his family, neighborhood, school, church, and other contexts within which the child regularly has face-to-face interaction with significant others. The mesosystem is the interconnectedness between all of the microsystems that an individual develops within. Mesosystemic factors deemed important to the study of early childhood leadership development include connections between the family, school,
and community. The exosystem is a layer of society that the developing person has no direct contact with but, the events that occur within it are influential to his development. The overarching societal influences such as culture, values, laws and customs surround and influence each of the smaller systems and is referred to as the macrosystem. Last is the chronosystem which revolves around each of the previously described systems. The chronosystem refers to the importance of time within an individual’s life development. Time is considered important because those events that occur most frequently will have the most influence on the development. Likewise time is an important factor because the point in time that an event occurs during the life span will have differing effects on human development. Additionally, the historical point in time that an individual lives will have an influential effect on how he responds and interacts with his environment as well as how the world responds to him in kind (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Cross & Frazier, 2010; Lerner, 2002).

As has been the case with other researchers, by considering each of the levels of the bioecological model of human development and considering the interrelated influences on young children’s development, a better overall picture is likely to emerge. For example, after many years of studying the effect of the authoritative parenting style on healthy adolescent adjustment, one team of researchers turned to the bioecological model of development and made new discoveries (Steinberg, Darling, Fletcher, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1995). They determined that the family’s embeddedness in a broader context was more influential in their adolescent’s adjustment than parenting style alone could predict. "The impact of parenting practices on youngsters’ behavior and development is moderated to a large extent by the social milieu young people encounter in their peer crowd, among their close friends, within their social network, and in their neighborhood" (Steinberg et al., 1995, p. 460).
The review of literature indicated that research conducted in an effort to learn more about young children’s leadership behaviors is both sparse and disconnected. Though the topic of leadership has been the subject of many research investigations, most have been about adults and relatively few have been about children’s leadership or emerging leadership (Trawick-Smith, 1988). Those research studies conducted with both leadership and children as the focus have been somewhat disparate as they looked at many different aspects of children’s leadership but few related to another. What does leadership look like as enacted by young children? Is leadership related to birth order? Is leadership related to creativity? Is leadership the same as popularity? What are the characteristics of a young leader? What are the different styles of leadership used by young leaders? How do young people perceive leadership and leadership roles? How do educators teach leadership skills? How are the dynamics of the classroom influenced by differing childhood leadership styles?

Though existing studies are interesting and add pieces of information to the whole body of work, there is a disconnection derived from the lack of consistency in defining childhood leadership as well as identification processes. In addition, there is a lack of replication of existing studies thus providing interested researchers with very little information to substantiate the primary studies. Furthermore, emerging leadership skills are generally looked at in relationship to just one or two potential variables, thus narrowing the range of possibilities.

The proposed research is intended to fill some gaps in the current body of research. First, rather than trying to determine if leadership is related to specific characteristics, the use of the bioecological systems perspective allows the researcher to look at young children’s leadership development as a complex, interrelated system of events and relationships. Thus, unexplored avenues and relational configurations of potential leadership development are likely to be revealed. In addition, not only are relationships between attributes to be explored, so too are relationships
between leadership and more abstract influences such as culture, gender, ethnicity, social class, and economic class. Second, by interviewing parents, one can get an intimate adult perspective of an emerging skill. Most leadership studies have been of an observational nature within the structure of an academic setting. Though initial leadership abilities will be identified through reputational case sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) by professionals within the schools, details from everyday life in a variety of settings will provide a more complete picture of emerging leadership development in its many facets. Furthermore, by exploring the interconnected spheres of the bioecological system of development--microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems—the influences on parental attitudes, beliefs, and parenting practices can be better understood. With a greater understanding of influential factors on parenting practices, researchers and teachers may gain greater insights into children’s leadership development.

After data collection and analysis of parent interviews, the information, connections, and interrelationships discovered have the potential to help teachers personally construct concepts and perceptions about young children’s emerging leadership development. It is hoped that having been exposed to the interrelated levels of the bioecological framework of development as it relates to leadership development, teachers will develop greater open-mindedness and flexibility in organizing human roles, thus providing a base from which they can explore their own biases and therefore empower them to adjust their teaching strategies. By learning about influential factors on young children’s leadership development such as time, verbal messages, social roles, interpersonal relationships, and social organization, both parents and teachers can develop a better understanding and increased awareness of the influences on their own perceptions thereby allowing them to modify their perceptions for the betterment of children’s developmental outcomes. Furthermore, a greater valuing of the differences between children’s life experiences and histories can enable
teachers to increase their sensitivity to the situations that their students face in their leadership development (Bennett, 1999).
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study was to explore beliefs, contextual relationships, and practices of parents who have a young child that exhibits leadership skills in the early childhood years. The multiple case study focused on four families whose children attended first grade at a magnet school in North Louisiana. The four participating families represented both gender diversity of children, as well as the ethnic diversity that corresponded with the parish demographics. Several methods of data collection were employed: three rounds of one-on-one structured and unstructured interviews (for mothers), one in-depth interview (for fathers), content analysis of parent journals (mothers and fathers), transcript checking of reports (mothers), and cross-case analysis (mothers and fathers). Immersion in the data to identify patterns and themes were used as both an organizational strategy and technique to guide data analysis. Data obtained in the interviews was initially organized into categories of beliefs, practices, context factors, limitations, and supports with subsets determined and labeled as patterns emerged and categories evolved. Each family was considered as a bound case, and then commonalities and differences between families acted as guiding forces behind the cross-case analysis between families. This multiple case study of four families is intended to produce knowledge relevant to the understanding of parents’ perceptions about young children’s emerging leadership qualities, as well as both the mother and/or father’s roles in supporting their young leader. In addition, parents’ thoughts about social, historical, and contextual factors that they find to be either limiting or supportive in their efforts to encourage childhood leadership were explored.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research design and methods used in this dissertation research and study. Major topics to be addressed in this section include the rationale for using a qualitative approach, the research design, the questions that guided the study, the many roles the researcher played, the strategies utilized in data management, the techniques for data analysis,
the trustworthiness features utilized, as well as the ethical and political matters that were considered.

**Rationale for the Qualitative Method Approach**

Given that the focus of the study was on parents’ beliefs, practices, and context factors, it stands to reason that a qualitative method and, more particularly, a case study approach, was best suited to the research. Qualitative methodology is an inquiry process that is most informative for researchers and their intended audience when the goal is to explore a social or human issue. Generally speaking, programs, practices, or settings of individuals or groups are described in-depth. This is accomplished through observing, studying, and analyzing the words and actions of participants (Creswell, 2012). Through the use of qualitative methods, the researcher attempts to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Mertens, 2005). The individual or group of persons studying the phenomenon is a vital research tool because the observations of the workings of the case, objective recordings of what is happening, as well as the examinations and constant refinements of how those meanings are interpreted are seen through individual eyes. Interpretation is a very distinctive characteristic of qualitative inquiry (Stake, 1995). Qualitative researchers use an emerging approach to inquiry, collect data in a natural setting while being sensitive to the needs of the people being studied, and use data analysis techniques that are inductive so as to ascertain patterns and themes (Creswell, 2012). The final presentation of information includes the voices of participants’, a complex description of the issue in both time and place, and either an extension of the literature or a call for action. Additionally, reflexivity of the researcher is made known in the report by way of explicitly stating in the text the biases, values, and experiences of the researcher that might tint the lens through which the issue is being studied. Overall, the goals of qualitative research are not to provide explanations so much as to promote understanding through a search for happenings that help to make sense of complex
interrelationships (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research is based on a distinct methodological tradition of empirical inquiry (Creswell, 2012).

There are many reasons one might choose to engage in research using qualitative methods ranging from fitting well with the researcher’s style, to considering the preference of his intended audience, (Merseth, 1999) to adding a more humanistic view to an existing body of quantitative research (Mertens, 2005). However, the qualitative route was traveled for this project for philosophical and practical reasons.

First, I position myself philosophically within what Lincoln and Guba (2000) call the constructivist paradigm. One of the basic assumptions of constructivism as it relates to society and social networks is that reality is not absolute, but is, instead, classified as a consequence or result of a community consensus. Thus, multiple realities exist depending on the time and context in which the phenomena are studied (Creswell, 2012). It is my goal to better understand the attitudes and practices of a select group of parents, therefore, it behooves me to choose qualitative methods as the preferred study methodology because doing so will enhance the chances of gaining an understanding of the constructions held by participants who share a common issue and live in a specific geographical location at a specific point in time.

Second, I believe that the nature of the research question I am asking lends itself practically to qualitative methods. Patton (2002) distinguishes several types of research questions for which qualitative methods are most suitable and those that are pertinent to this study are listed below:

1. The focus of the research is on the processes used by its participants.

2. Value is placed on individualization and elucidation of desired outcomes that are difficult to quantify.

3. A focus on diversity among participants or unique qualities displayed by individuals is needed.
4. There is an intention to understand how participants are agents of change or how their behavior brings about desired outcomes.

5. There is a need for comprehensive, in-depth information about participants and/or their activities.

This study fit well with Patton’s criteria. One of the goals of this research was to better understand the parenting practices of families whose first grader exhibited strong leadership skills in the school setting. Therefore, the individual courses of action or processes practiced by parents that each parent perceived as being vital components in helping their child to develop leadership, or the desired outcome, have been studied. Furthermore, there was a comparison of the practices and beliefs of the four study families to one another for a cross-case study of patterns that helped to build a collective voice of the participants and at the same time develop an understanding of the unique qualities of each family. In addition, individual perceptions of supportive and non-supportive socio-cultural entities and attitudes were explored. Either three structured and unstructured interviews (for mothers) or one in-depth interview (with fathers), along with information garnered from personal journals, were methods used for gathering in-depth, detailed information about participants and their perceptions. The overall design for developing a better understanding of how parents’ behaviors and beliefs impact the development of their young children’s emerging leadership skills fit well with Patton’s criterion of seeking to better understand how participants beliefs and actions led to desired outcomes.

**Research Design**

There are many strategies for designing a qualitative research project, each constructed with particular data collection and analysis plans. Though the list is not exhaustive, Creswell (2012) delineated five broad approaches that encompass most qualitative strategies. He suggested that a
Because I wanted to gain a greater understanding of how parents believe they influence their children to develop leadership skills through an exploration of the parents’ beliefs and parenting practices, I decided that the tactic best suited to my research is a case study approach. In considering the case study approach, one finds that there are differences of opinion within the field of qualitative research as to exactly how to define a case study. For instance, Yin (2009) insists that case study is a strategy to be utilized in the examination of research following a set of pre-specified procedures. Stake (1995), on the other hand, defines case study not by the procedures used as much as the object to be studied. Yin’s definition implies that case study is a methodology whereas Stake’s implies that it is a tool. Despite differences between researchers’ concepts of a case study, the commonalities of focusing on a particular issue, object, or occurrence within a complex context and striving for greater understanding of the workings of the case seem to be the general concept shared by most (Mertens, 2005).

I am choosing to study my research problem as a collective case study (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2012). Each family studied was considered as a case or bounded system and used to help develop an awareness of the family practices that aid and support young children in becoming strong leaders among their peers. In addition, each family was considered within the larger context of time, place, and culture. By studying the practices of several families, rather than just one, the study becomes more robust and is considered to be a collective case study (Stake, 1995). After determining within-case themes, themes across all of the cases were compared in a cross-case analysis.
Site and Sample Selection

In order to study the perceptions of parents of young leaders, it is necessary to first identify the young leaders. Emerging leadership behaviors can take place in almost any location where young children gather and interact and is not constrained by either setting or population. Teachers are trained to observe children’s interactions and there is empirical evidence to indicate that even without specific training to do so, teachers recognize the leaders within their classrooms (Kitano & Tafoya, 1984; Lee & Recchia, 2008; Schneider et al., 2002). However, to further clarify leadership as a set of skills separate from popularity, prosocial skills, dominance, or other easily confused constructs, it was determined that the Leadership subscale of the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students-III (Renzulli et al., 2010) could be administered by elementary public school classroom teachers to aid in the identification of the leaders in their classrooms. The teachers could subsequently act as gatekeepers, along with their building principal, to access the parents of identified children. Choosing study participants based on the recommendation of knowledgeable experts is referred to as reputational case sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

In determining the specific school group from which to access parents, the practical limitations of time, transportation, and money suggested limiting the selection of study participants to the region in which my home is located. An exploration of local resources and impediments to helping develop leadership skills in young children from the perspective of a diverse group of parents with differing social and cultural backgrounds was desired. Private schools and university lab schools both require tuition fees and, consequently, cater to families with a higher income than is typical in the community. By limiting participation to a public school, I hoped to study a pool of participants that more closely resemble the socioeconomic makeup of the community. In addition, it seemed that many variables could be eliminated if all of the children observed by teachers had at
least one year of experience interacting with age mates in a structured classroom setting. Even though many children have structured peer group settings in preschool, many families do not choose to send their child to preschool. So, considering that most children do attend kindergarten, first graders were the youngest children selected for this study and preferred over second graders. However, just in case there were not first graders who qualified as classroom leaders according to their teachers, second graders were also considered. Therefore, I set three criteria for site selection: (a) a school within 30 miles of my home, (b) a school that contains a socioeconomic and ethnic population that reflects the ratios of the community, and (c) a non-tuition based elementary school that has at least two first grade and two second grade classrooms.

The socioeconomic and ethnic diversity of the local population was obtained through public records and reflects the information gathered for the 2010 census (U.S. Census Bureau). Roughly half of the parish residents live close to the parish seat such that 18,323 live within the city limits and 21,243 live in the outlying rural areas. The ethnic breakdown of the parish is approximately 54% Caucasian, 41% African American, 2% Creole, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Native American. The average household income is $40,076 with the majority of these households headed by a white collar wage earner. The major employers are educational institutions, health services, and manufacturing. About 20% of the families in this parish reported incomes indicating that they are living below the poverty line. As might be anticipated considering that educational institutions are one of the major employers in the area, the educational attainment levels are higher than average for the state. Those having a high school degree are about 33% and those having a college degree make up an additional 21% (North Louisiana Economic Partnership, 2013). All of the families interviewed live in the parish seat of Riverdale.

Riverdale Magnet School was created within the last decade and within that short span of time established a reputation for challenging students to excel in academics. It has a limited
enrollment, with only two classes per grade level and currently serves 320 students from first to eighth grade. Students from across the parish are eligible to apply to attend, but must maintain the following requirements for admission: (a) have and maintain a 2.5 or better grade point average; (b) have and maintain acceptable behavior; (c) have and maintain a good attendance record; and (d) score "Basic" or above on the state mandated test/50% or higher on other standardized tests (Riverdale Magnet School Principal, personal communication, April 11, 2012).

The Louisiana Department of Education publishes a School Report Card for Parents annually, giving all schools a ranking of 1-5 stars based on a combination of academic performance, meeting academic achievement growth goals, and maintaining a healthy school climate (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012). Riverdale Magnet School consistently scores four stars and has higher academic growth than targeted. This school reflects the ethnic makeup of the parish better than any other school in the parish with approximately 149 Caucasian students, 152 African American students, 9 Creole students, 4 Asian students, and 2 American Indian students. More specifically to this study, the ethnic makeup of the first grade is 19 Caucasian students, 20 African American students, and 1 Asian student. The principal said that the school’s goals are to "provide a caring learning environment where all students have the opportunity to explore the world at their fingertips, discover new ideas, and develop as lifelong learners" (Riverdale Magnet School Principal, personal communication, April 11, 2012).

Riverdale Magnet School not only fit the established criteria but complemented the predetermined criteria with additional bonuses. For instance, in addition to having a socioeconomic and ethnic population that reflects the ratios of the community, children are bused in from all over the parish so that different living circumstances are represented—rural and suburban. In addition, the magnet school only accepts children who have a school record of good behavior and good grades. In order to have accumulated that kind of school record, a child must have already attended
kindergarten prior to acceptance and entry into the magnet school. For the purposes of this study, the lack of a kindergarten on the campus is beneficial. In instances where a campus has both a kindergarten and a first grade it is likely that the majority of first graders would have attended kindergarten together and, quite possibly, have established relationships and reputations that followed them from one grade level to the next. In contrast, the first graders at Riverdale Magnet School have all experienced a structured academic setting while attending kindergarten at various schools, but did not have many prior developed relationships with their first grade magnet school classmates before the current school year, thus eliminating many presupposed relationships or reputations.

A personal visit with the building principal of Riverdale Magnet School was met with enthusiasm. The beneficial outcome of the visit was a tentative agreement to participate and act as gatekeeper pending the approval of both the district superintendent and the Louisiana State University Institutional Review Board (Appendices H and A, respectively). Once both of those approvals were received (Institutional Review Board #E5840), the principal was helpful and cooperative, setting a tone that influenced the teachers to be excited and cooperative as well.

**Research Tools**

Participants in this study were the parents of identified classroom leaders attending first grade at the selected site. In order to identify the young leaders so that their parents could subsequently be interviewed, a three-step identification process was planned. First, teachers participated in a training exercise designed to familiarize them with the definition of leadership being used for this research as well as the usage of the Leadership subscale of the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students--Third Edition (SRBCSS-III; Renzulli et al., 2010). For this training, the school principal and four classroom teachers gathered in the school cafeteria immediately after children were dismissed from school to listen to a brief 5-minute
presentation that consisted of an overview of research plans and confidentiality plans. The second portion of the meeting covered an outline of the use of the Leadership subscale which led into a discussion of key leadership concepts such as directing, facilitating, and collaborating. Next, teachers were paired by grade level to complete and discuss the SRBCSS-III Teacher Training Exercise (Appendix C). After paired discussions, there was a question and answer session. Most questions were about logistics such as deadlines, but we also talked about subjects such as children who were leaders of peers, but not necessarily teacher pleasers and aggressive versus assertive behaviors. The entire training took approximately 40 minutes. The training was followed by two days of observation that allowed teachers to both watch for leadership enactment and have any concerns or questions addressed about the usage of the research instrument. Last, teachers acting as trained observers of children’s interactions, completed a Leadership subscale of the SBRCSS-III on the students who had a classroom history of acting as a leader or who had been recognized as leaders by the teacher as the result of the teacher training and student observations.

Renzulli et al. (1976) designed the initial SRBCSS as a scale to be used by teachers to determine the specific strengths of students so that the school curriculum could be individualized to cultivate those strengths. The specific talents targeted by the scales were learning, creativity, motivation, and leadership. Since that time, the SRBCSS has been revised twice. There are several changes that have been made and included in the third edition. First, language changes were made that eliminated some gender-biased language and syntax issues. Second, additional talent categories such as art, music, communication, language, technology, and more were added. Third, the response format was expanded from a 4-point response scale to a 6-point response scale. The response format change provided greater balance and more evenly spaced intervals between scale options. The third edition gives users the options of choosing "never," "very rarely," "rarely,"
"occasionally," "frequently," or "always" to statements such as "The student demonstrates self-confidence when interacting with peers" (Renzulli et al., 2010, p. 41).

The SRBCSS-III is a structured and standardized instrument that provides information from teachers about specific types of behaviors exhibited by young children in a natural environment. In its’ entirety, the SRBCSS-III consists of 14 subscales, one of which specifically identifies leadership behaviors. As is outlined in the Technical and Administration Manual (Renzulli et al., 2010), the separate scales or dimensions of giftedness are designed to be used independent of one another. Doing so will "provide teachers and administrators with the opportunity to focus on specific student strengths" and "teachers can gather additional insights into student abilities and characteristics by analyzing student ratings on individual scale items" (Renzulli et al., 2010, p. 23). Therefore it is not outside of the intended usage of the scale to select only one subscale for identification purposes. Furthermore, selecting one subscale for this research project does not compromise the reliability or validity ratings of the SBRCSS-III.

The overall interrater reliability for the SRBCSS-III showed a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r=.50$ (p<.01; Renzulli et al., 2010). To improve the reliability of the instrument, the designers recommended that teachers complete a training exercise to facilitate discussions about specific student characteristics and skills. This recommendation was followed for this research project as part of the three-step identification process discussed earlier in this section. (See Appendix C for Teacher Training Exercise). Because of the specificity of this research project, it was determined that only the Leadership subscale would be used (See Appendix D for Leadership Characteristics Rating Scale). Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for the Leadership subscale was $r=.87$, thus providing strong support for the internal consistency of this portion of the instrument (Renzulli, et al., 2010). Experts in the field of gifted and talented education compared the SBRCSS-III to other validated instruments used in identifying gifted students, thus establishing
criterion-related evidence of validity (Renzulli, et al., 2010). In particular "the SRBCSS-III ratings were a significant predictor of success in a gifted program as measured by the Rating Student Performance in a Gifted Program" (Renzulli et al., 2010, p. 13). The SBRCSS has been used extensively by researchers in the area of gifted and talented education (Jolly & Kettler, 2004; Kim & VanTassel-Baska, 2010; Pfeiffer, Petscher, & Kumtepe, 2008).

Permission to use the Leadership subscale of the SRBCSS-III was granted for this research project by Creative Learning Press (see Appendix E). Using the instrument as described in the SRBCSS-III Technical and Administration Manual (Renzulli et al., 2010), teachers were instructed to respond to a 7-item, six-point Likert scale by simply marking an "X" in the column that best described the frequency of the behavior the child demonstrated. As the researcher, I then added column totals using the assigned weights to each level of frequency and added the weighted column totals for each individual’s subscale total as per the instructions in the SRBCSS-III Technical and Administration Manual (Renzulli et al., 2010). Participating teachers who rated childhood behaviors on the Leadership subscale did not see any numeric implications (See Appendix F for sample of Leadership Characteristics Rating Scale with Scoring Weights). With formulaic weights distributed evenly from 1 for "Never" to 6 for "Always," the possible range of scores was 7 to 42. A leadership ranking from highest to lowest was determined for the entire set of students for which a SRBCSS-III was completed.

In order to learn more about the perceptions of a diverse group of parents representing four families who shared both similarities and differences, selection criteria within the parent group was established. It seemed reasonable to believe that gender and ethnic diversity could be maintained while holding socioeconomic status constant so that a limited number of variables would influence parent responses. The gatekeepers, i.e. the participating teachers and site principal, provided information that lent aid in determining the parents that fit the selection criteria. Based on the
population represented at the selected site, the following sample selection descriptions were developed:

1. A parent or set of parents of an African American male 1st or 2nd grader
2. A parent or set of parents of a Caucasian male 1st or 2nd grader
3. A parent or set of parents of an African American female 1st or 2nd grader
4. A parent or set of parents of a Caucasian female 1st or 2nd grader

The leadership identification and ranking process determined the order in which parents were contacted about volunteering to participate in the interview portion of this research project. The parent(s) of highest ranking first grade leaders in each sample selection category were contacted first. If parent(s) agreed to participate, then that sample selection category was closed. In this study, each parent that was called agreed to participate, thus a total of four phone calls were made. If parent(s) who were called had chosen not to participate, the next highest ranking leader’s parent(s) would have been contacted and so on in descending order until each sample selection category was filled. One family group was selected to represent each of the sample selection descriptions.

**Guiding Questions**

This study was guided by a central question: Are there certain practices, beliefs, or contextual relationships within the family of a young child who has been identified as a leader in the academic setting that will contribute to an in-depth understanding of how parenting performance influences the development of a young leader? In order to gain a greater understanding of the beliefs and practices, as well as contextual influences, of four families, interviews were set up and one-on-one interviews conducted. An initial pilot study (Hailey, 2008) revealed that parents often think of additional information that they feel needs to be shared only after an interview has concluded and they have had additional time to mentally process the questions and their responses.
Three separate 45-minute interviews allowed mothers the additional processing time that has the potential to give the interview sessions greater depth. However, fathers participating in the study opted to engage in only one in-depth interview. These interviews with fathers lasted from 1-2 hours.

The parent interview questions were designed to elucidate both the central question and these three sub-questions.

1. How do parents conceptualize leadership?
2. How do parents believe their own parenting skills contribute to or support their child’s leadership development?
3. What contextual factors do parents perceive as being supportive of early childhood leadership skill development?

The interview process began with an introduction question designed to establish a comfortable rapport between myself, as the researcher-interviewer, and the parents. From that point, I organized the first set of questions around the central theme of considering one’s own child as a leader as is indicated by sub-question 1. A pilot study (Hailey, 2008) revealed that parents seem to observe and analyze their children’s social interactions, but do not necessarily think in terms of leading or following.

1. Tell me about your child and your family. What are some things your child enjoys doing? What kinds of things does your family enjoy doing together?
2. I am interested in studying leadership. Do you see your child as a leader? Why or why not?
3. What kinds of skills do you think a person needs to be a good leader?
4. Can you think of examples of your child leading others? What skills do you think he was using in that episode?

5. What other attributes would you say a child needs to lead others effectively?

A growing body of research revealed that parents have a central place in shaping the skills and talents of their children (Bloom, 1985; Olzewski et al., 1987; Olzewski-Kubilius, 2002; Piirto, 2004). Because I wanted to know how parents perceived their role in supporting young children’s leadership skills, five questions were designed to aid in gathering that information.

1. How do you think your own parenting skills have contributed to your child’s leadership skills?

2. Do you think you encourage your child’s leadership? If so, how?

3. Are there other important people in your child’s life that you believe are encouraging your child’s leadership development? Tell me about them and their influences on your child.

4. Are there any community resources that you rely on to help you with supporting your child’s leadership skills?

5. The last time we were together, I gave you a question to consider and asked you to write about it in your journal. Did you have the opportunity to do that? Is there anything that you’d like to share with me now about your own experiences as an adult that may have helped shape your ideas about leadership?

Several researchers have identified the broader contexts outside of, but in relation to, the family home as influential in talent development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1989; Olzewski-Kubilius, 2002; Olzewski-Kubilius & Grant, 1994). The bioecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1986) indicated that physical contexts surrounding children’s development (such as school and community) are connected, and, moreover, are part of a larger system in which all contexts
influence each other and are influenced by the larger, more abstract social, historical and cultural contexts. As indicated by sub-question 3, parents’ perceptions of supports and limitations in their efforts to aid their child in developing leadership skills within these many contexts were explored. In addition, the last question, global in nature, was designed to give participants opportunities to talk about relevant information that was not discussed during the course of the interviews (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

The following questions were developed for the third interview.

11. (An information card will be used with this multi-layered question.)

   Just imagine for a minute that someone similar to you, same age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, and salary range moved in next door to you. This person has a child much like yours, but a little younger. If they asked you about the opportunities for their child to develop leadership skills, what might you tell them?
   …about schools?
   …about extracurricular activities?
   …about your community?
   …about ethnic relations?
   …about socioeconomic status?
   …about boys and girls?

12. The last time we were together I asked you to journal about how you think your child’s opportunities for leadership development are different than the opportunities you had at his/her age. Did you have the opportunity to do that? Is there anything you want to add to that story now?
13. My goal during these interviews was to get a parental perspective about young children’s leadership development. Is there anything else about your child as a leader, parenting a leader, or community influences on leadership development that you would like to talk about?

I tried to be flexible and adaptable to change as was warranted by the interests and enthusiasm of the parent being interviewed. Though I asked each parent the questions outlined, the trajectory of the questions led each parent interview in a different direction that is reflected in the individual interviews. Each interview shows fluidity as it evolved.

As alluded to in the planned oral interview, participants were asked to write in a journal about some of their perspectives concerning parenting a young leader. During the first interview I introduced the journal and explained to participants their responsibility in preserving the confidentiality of their respective journals until the journals were returned to my hands at which point I would maintain their confidentiality. Then, for each journal entry, I asked individual parents to describe a specific situation that relates to a childhood leadership question. In so doing, personal stories were created.

For the first journal entry, parents were asked to describe a personal experience when they believed that their own concept of leadership was being shaped or influenced. I encouraged them to write in a story form by suggesting they begin their writing with "I remember one time when…"

For the second journal entry, parents were asked to describe a situation when they saw a difference in the availability of opportunities for leadership development. This was accomplished by posing the question "How do you think your child’s opportunities for developing leadership skills are different than the opportunities you had at his/her age? Describe a specific situation or experience when you saw this happening."
The personal stories created in the journals served as an additional way to gain parents’ perspectives, to aid in better understanding their point of view, and to triangulate the data collected. In addition, these entries tell stories that "capture a complete idea" (Creswell, 2007, p. 207) that is integrated into the qualitative narrative.

There was a dearth of peer-reviewed research that focused on young children’s leadership skill development. That which was uncovered during the review of literature focused on observations or teacher/adult director perceptions of children’s leadership as it was enacted in either a classroom setting or extracurricular activity. It is my hypothesis that the understanding of leadership development in young children can be expanded upon by studying parents’ perceptions of their child’s leadership development as it is enacted in the home and other contexts within which the family engages. Furthermore, in-depth interviews with parents seemed to be the most productive qualitative methodology for gathering and analyzing parental perceptions.

**Researcher’s Role**

In qualitative studies, the role of the researcher is recognized and affirmed as a major research tool (Seidman, 1991). This study takes an in-depth look into parents’ perceptions of their own roles in the development of their young child’s leadership skills and interviewing of the parents by the researcher was the central method of data collection. Integral to that process was the human interviewer as a tool that responded to the situation at hand with sensitivity, proficiency, adaptability, and understanding (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the interviewer, I focused my attention, listened intently to the participant, and expressed interest in what was being said, and therefore, as one might expect, a relationship developed between the parent being interviewed and me. Although a question guide was used, the trajectory of the questions was a reflection of the relationship that was built and, therefore, was subject to slight changes during the course of events (Seidman, 1991).
From a technical perspective, my role as the interviewer was that of one who expressed a genuine interest in the person being interviewed and gained information that will lead to greater understanding of parents’ perceptions regarding leadership development in young children. In addition, I provided clear explanations of the questions, adapted and changed questioning strategies as I felt necessary, helped parents feel at ease, respected the family’s time, and operated the digital recorder for data collection.

Another form of data, participant journaling (Creswell, 2012), was also used. Each parent participant was given a spiral bound notebook. Prior to the interviews, the researcher gave participants a specific discussion question about which to write and give a personal account of a relevant experience. This gave the parent ample time and opportunity to reflect on the discussion topic prior to our next interview session. My participation in this document creation was minimal. My role was to give participants directions for usage, focus attention to particular topics, retrieve the journals at the end of the study for data analysis, transcribe the information using Microsoft Word software, and maintain confidentiality.

Part of my role as researcher also entails knowing who I am and where I stand on the topic under discussion. I am a parent of a child growing up in the same community but my child is eight years older than the children in the study. I am a preschool and kindergarten teacher and have taught children in this community for 13 years. I have observed children in different contexts such as school, community events, vacation bible school, library story hours, and baseball fields. In so doing, I have noted that some child behaviors are present regardless of the environment while other child behaviors are more noticeable in one context as compared to another context. Thus, I have a belief that children respond to their environments and the people in those environments in different ways in such a way that the child’s leadership behaviors are sometimes appreciated by the adults and sometimes the child’s leadership behaviors are unappreciated. Also, I entered into this research
realizing that I believed that a small town such as Riverdale is lacking in opportunities for kids as compared to larger cities where there is a greater variety of extracurricular activities and more of an adult talent pool to draw from for teaching children skills and abilities. By maintaining an awareness of these biases in my thinking, I can bracket out my biases, being careful not to react or respond to parents’ responses to my questions in a way that could lead them down a path of agreeing with my opinions. Instead, I endeavored to bracket out my own personal and professional biases so that a greater understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of the parents could tell the story of early childhood leadership development as they see it, not as I might see it. I listened carefully to parents’ words with every attempt to fully understand their meaning.

A researcher cannot consider working so closely with a group of individuals without also considering ethicality. An important role, therefore, was that of one who maintains and constantly considers ethical behavior. It was my intent to always treat participants with respect and dignity. In addition, I will incorporate what I have learned into my professional conduct and continue to professionally share what I learn with others (Creswell, 2012; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

**Data Management**

I planned for the data to be recorded efficiently and managed such that retrieval would be straightforward and uncomplicated. After gaining consent from each participant to do so, I recorded the one-on-one interviews using an Olympus digital voice recorder with lapel mikes. I used Audacity and Microsoft Word software to transcribe the recordings into a written form. Each interview was transcribed prior to conducting an additional interview both to prevent being overwhelmed with transcribing after interviews were conducted and to make steady progress in the data analysis process. By transcribing, reading, and rereading interviews, patterns and themes emerged that further guided or rerouted the research.
Each participant was given a plain journal and asked to write down their personal stories about specific topics of relevance to the research topic. Each individual was responsible for maintaining the privacy of their own journal while it was in their possession.

During each phase of the research—compilation, organization, data reduction, documentation, and storage—information remained confidential. Personal information about participants, as well as written and audio-recorded interview information will continue to be kept confidential and safe through the use of researcher discretion, password protected computer files, and a locking file cabinet. Lastly, as decisions were made and/or changed during the research process, notations were made to keep track of that process.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

According to Stake (1995), the character of the research, the study focus and related questions, as well as the propensities of the researcher, all combine to determine the analytical strategies needed for a particular case study.

The primary data collected was face-to-face interviews, thus, interpretation of participants’ perspectives were the primary concern during data analysis. The interpretation of perspectives combined with the form of case study being undertaken, collective, necessitated a greater need for categorical aggregation than might be necessary for other types of case studies (Stake, 1995).

Qualitative researchers generally make every effort to set aside preconceived notions about gender, cultural, class, and ethnic biases. As part of the initial process of data analysis, I, as the qualitative researcher, remained open to the perceptions and understandings of the parents being interviewed for this study with the realization that the lived experiences of the parent participants tint the lens through which they view the world, thus their truth had the potential to be quite different than my own (Creswell, 2012). Though I know it is impossible to enter into the interview process as a blank slate, I intended to not only put aside any personal biases but to put aside
professional biases as well. For example, because of my teaching experience and extensive reading on the topic of early childhood leadership development, I may have particular ideas about best practices of parents and teachers in the optimal development of early childhood leadership skills. On the other hand, I have also read accounts that indicated that there are differences between cultures of both what is appreciated and what attributes a leader might exhibit that others consider worthy of following. With that in mind, I can hardly claim that I understand best practices for all peoples and situations and therefore must continue to remain open to parental perceptions in order to gain a better understanding of best practices in a variety of situations. This is another part of the bracketing process (Creswell, 2012).

During the within-case analysis of each family, I coded the data collected from each family separately, considering each family as a bounded system. Although each interview session was organized around particular topics and, not surprisingly, was influenced by the initial topics of interest and themes of categorization, I continuously looked for emerging, unexpected themes and collections of instances that could be grouped together because they had a similar meaning for the participant(s). As I looked for both specific and emerging themes, I gathered together clusters of ideas and constructed visual displays, providing quotes and details that supported the themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I made every effort to create a profile of each family interviewed.

After carefully analyzing the themes that emerged from each individual family profile, I explored and commented on the salient issues, themes, and topics of interest that connected the families’ perspectives in a cross-case analysis. I looked for repetition of an aspect of experience and connections to my literature review as beginning points of comparisons between cases. In addition, contradictions and inconsistencies between families stood out as data that needed further exploration, for as Miles and Huberman (1994) explain, such inconsistencies can be important in
gaining greater understanding of the other data collected. When information gathered from families was compared to one another, new themes, topics, and issue-relevant meanings emerged.

By reading and rereading interview transcripts, closely examining journals, cross-checking reports, and seeking out evidence that might conflict with my initial findings, I was able to search for emerging patterns and typologies of data both within families and across families.

**Trustworthiness Features**

In order for qualitative research to be deemed valid or credible by the academy, it must show evidence of trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is a facet of qualitative research akin to validity in quantitative research in that it is a set of processes deemed acceptable by the research community that give credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to a research report (Creswell, 2007). Seidman (1991) convincingly argued that a series of three in-depth interviews over the course of weeks does, in and of itself, contain substantial indicators of trustworthiness. However, to be on the safe side, I employed strategies that have historically been deemed acceptable validation strategies. I chose to triangulate my evidence. Triangulation is the use of multiple sources of data, multiple observers, or multiple methods to enhance the probability that interpretations are credible (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Triangulation methods of oral interviews and personal journals along with participant transcript checking were used in this study to provide a greater understanding of the beliefs, context factors, and practices of parents whose first grade child was identified as a leader in his public school classroom. Additionally, since both within-case analysis and cross-case analysis were used, an additional degree of robustness and trustworthiness were added to the research project.

To enhance the dependability of the study, I maintained an audit trail whereby the daily decisions regarding the research were documented: what was done, when and why. It was written in a journal form and mostly expresses those events that I considered to be trials and tribulations. I
maintained the raw data gathered while interviewing as both paper documents and in computer software. My committee members had the option of reading transcribed interviews and notes to corroborate or dispute the assertions I made in the end.

**Ethical and Political Considerations**

My 13 years as a preschool teacher and parent educator in this community help to define my role as interviewer. As a resident of the community and parent of a child within the community school system, I am familiar with some of the barriers and support systems available to parents in helping to parent a young leader. However, my child is much older than the participants’ children and continues to attend a different school; therefore I have had no previous experience in relation to the school used in this study. Thus, I believe I was considered by most to be an outsider and had no status with the study group other than as a researcher who resides in the local community.

However, sometimes parents learn that I have experience as a parent educator and seek advice from me. With this in mind, I had to be prepared to explain to participants that such interaction would be outside the scope of this study and could affect their responses, thus skewing the results of the entire research project. Qualitative researchers often refer to reciprocity, the act of participants receiving something from the researcher in return for the time, energy, and information they have contributed to the research project. In considering ways to reimburse participants, two possibilities came to mind. One, a printed copy of an article in a research publication based on my research could provide for better insights into how the research progressed and concluded. Or, a second option that I considered was to provide the advice they sought with the understanding that said advice could only be rendered after the research project was completed.

Just as individuality is a consideration in the face-to-face interaction and write-up of the research, so too is individuality a factor to consider in the justice of research. Therefore, individual rights and confidentiality were duly considered at each stage of the research process. Before
beginning interviews, informed consent was discussed and signed by participants. Appointments were made and time limits adhered to. All research was approved by the L.S.U. Institutional Review Board and appropriate documentation filed prior to any fieldwork.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

This case study investigation of parental perceptions of supportive and non-supportive influences on the development of early childhood leadership began in January 2012 and was completed in March of 2013. I was guided by a central question: Are there certain beliefs, practices, and contextual relationships within the family of a young child who has been identified as a leader in the academic setting that will contribute to an in-depth understanding of how parenting performance influences the development of a young leader? With the use of teacher observation instruments, a series of in-depth interviews with mothers and fathers, parent journals, and member transcript-checking, I collected and examined an abundance of data for my study.

Interview questions used to investigate parent perceptions regarding leadership development included:

1st interview

1. Tell me about your child and your family. What are some things your child enjoys doing? What kinds of things does your family enjoy doing together?
2. I am interested in studying leadership. Do you see your child as a leader? Why or why not?
3. What kinds of skills do you think a person needs to be a good leader?
4. Can you think of examples of your child leading others? What skills do you think he was using in that episode?
5. What other attributes would you say a child needs to lead others effectively?

2nd interview

1. How do you think your own parenting skills have contributed to your child’s leadership skills?
2. Do you think you encourage your child’s leadership? If so, how?
3. Are there other important people in your child’s life that you believe are encouraging your child’s leadership development? Tell me about them and their influences on your child.

4. Are there any community resources that you rely on to help you with supporting your child’s leadership skills?

5. The last time we were together, I gave you a question to consider and asked you to write about it in your journal. Did you have the opportunity to do that? Is there anything that you’d like to share with me now about your own experiences as an adult that may have helped shape your ideas about leadership?

3rd interview

1. (An information card was used with this multi-layered question.)

Just imagine for a minute that someone similar to you, same age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, and salary range moved in next door to you. This person has a child much like yours, but a little younger. If they asked you about the opportunities for their child to develop leadership skills, what might you tell them?

…about schools?

…about extracurricular activities?

…about your community?

…about ethnic relations?

…about socioeconomic status?

…about boys and girls?

2. The last time we were together I asked you to journal about how you think your child’s opportunities for leadership development are different than the
opportunities you had at his/her age. Did you have the opportunity to do that? Is there anything you want to add to that story now?

3. My goal during these interviews was to get a parental perspective about young children’s leadership development. Is there anything else about your child as a leader, parenting a leader, or community influences on leadership development that you would like to talk about?

Immersion in the data to determine patterns of behavior and cultural themes guided the data analysis. To do this, I began by coding individual case reports and organizing chunks of data into categories specified in the central research question: beliefs, practices, and context factors. Then I organized beliefs and practices into groups of information guided by the data received from the interview questions. I coded practices into broad categories, using quotes to bring detail and life to the categories. Using the Bronfenbrenner lens to study relationships, I further categorized contexts into microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. In so doing, I discovered many cultural themes running through the cases and completed a cross-case analysis on the data.

The Community

A brief description of the parish and specific school used will define the parameters of the setting as well as provide a back drop for data interpretation. Riverdale is located in Big River Parish in North Louisiana. It is one of the oldest parishes in the state having been created from the Act of April 10, 1805 that divided the territory of Orleans into twelve parishes. The area has a well-preserved history of plantations, southern hospitality, and historic battlefields. People of European decent migrated here from the more heavily populated eastern United States. Other families also migrated from various places creating the population mix of Caucasians, African Americans,
Creoles, Native Americans, and Hispanics (Stephen F. Austin State University, Center for Regional Heritage Research, 2013).

The population of this parish is approximately 39,566 residents and is comprised of an area covering 1,300 square miles. Roughly half of the parish residents live close to the parish seat such that 18,323 live within the city limits and 21,243 live in the outlying rural areas. All of the parents interviewed live within the city limits of the town of Riverdale. The current demographics show a population consisting of 54% Caucasian, 41% African American, 2% Creole, 2% Hispanic, and 1% Native American. The average household income is $40,076 with the majority of these households headed by a white collar wage earner. The major employers are educational institutions, health services, and manufacturing. About 20% of the families in this parish reported incomes indicating that they are living below the poverty line. As might be anticipated considering that educational institutions are one of the major employers in the area, the educational attainment levels are higher than average for the state. Those having a high school degree are about 33% and those having a college degree make up an additional 21% (North Louisiana Economic Partnership, 2013).

Riverdale Magnet School was created within the last decade and within that short span of time established a reputation for challenging students to excel in academics. It has a limited enrollment, with only two classes per grade level and currently serves 320 students from first to eighth grade. Students from across the parish are eligible to apply to attend but must maintain the following requirements for admission: (a) have and maintain a 2.5 or better grade point average, (b) have and maintain acceptable behavior, (c) have and maintain a good attendance record, and (d) score "Basic" or above on the state mandated test/50% or higher on other standardized tests (Riverdale Magnet School principal, personal communication, April 11, 2012).

The Louisiana Department of Education publishes a School Report Card for Parents annually, giving all schools a ranking of 1-5 stars based on a combination of academic performance,
meeting academic achievement growth goals, and maintaining a healthy school climate. Riverdale Magnet School consistently scores four stars and has higher academic growth than targeted (Louisiana Department of Education, 2012). This school reflects the ethnic makeup of the parish better than any other school in the parish with approximately 149 Caucasian students, 152 African American students, 9 Creole students, 4 Asian students and 2 American Indian students. More specifically to this study, the ethnic makeup of first grade is 19 Caucasian students, 20 African American students, and 1 Asian student. The principal said that the school’s goals are to "provide a caring learning environment where all students have the opportunity to explore the world at their fingertips, discover new ideas, and develop as lifelong learners" (Riverdale Magnet School principal, personal communication, April 11, 2012).

Participants, Informants, and Gatekeepers

In order to study the perceptions of parents of young leaders, it is necessary to first identify the young leaders. First and second grade teachers at Riverdale Magnet School were trained in the usage of the Leadership subscale of the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students-III (Renzulli et al., 2010) and then completed the scales for their students. Teachers turned these documents in to me with only student codes identifying the students. After weighting items to determine scores, I was able to establish the highest ranking students in each class. The school principal, acting as gatekeeper, used the student codes to provide the names as well as contact and general socioeconomic information for the families meeting the criteria for the study. My preference was to focus on first graders. The reasoning behind that preference was that the research site does not have a kindergarten; therefore the first graders at the magnet school have experienced a structured academic setting for at least one year, but are not likely to have many prior developed relationships with their magnet school classmates, thus eliminating many presupposed relationships or reputations.
There was only one African American male and one Caucasian male recommended by first grade teachers, so I began by calling the parents of those two children. Had either of those two families chosen not to participate, I would have gone to my second grade roster in order to keep grade level consistent. Fortunately, each of the mothers of the selected first grade males agreed to participate. With that hurdle cleared, I had many females to choose from and began by calling the parents of the highest scoring Caucasian female and highest scoring African American female. Each, in turn, agreed to participate. I made a total of four phone calls and received four affirmative responses to participate from mothers. This allowed for ethnic and gender diversity while holding grade level and socioeconomic status constant, thus limiting the number of variables that might influence parent responses.

All of the families interviewed had a first grader attending Riverdale Magnet School. There were four families interviewed: (a) Mr. and Mrs. Sawyer, parents of Justin, Caucasian male; (b) Ms. Bigsby, parent of Brad, African American male; (c) Dr. and Mrs. Pillsbury, parents of Brianna, Caucasian female; and (d) Mr. and Mrs. Flowers, parents of Talia, African American female. The names used for the individuals, the school, and the specific parish within the state are pseudonyms. Figure 2 is a representation that shows descriptions of participants.

Initially, I spoke with mothers of students who agreed both to participate as well as ask their spouses if they were also willing to participate. The mothers agreed to three 45-minute interviews, the checking of their own transcribed interviews, and completing a parent journal. The fathers agreed to participate by being interviewed once and completing a parent journal. The Bigsby parents are divorced and I was unable to interview the father. On average, the one consolidated interview with each father took as much time and yielded as much information as the three interviews for each mother. There was an equipment failure realized at the beginning of one parent’s interview triggering me to ask if we could reschedule the interview. The parent agreed, but
I was unable to ever get in touch with her again, therefore I do not have a third interview or journal from that parent. Although life events occurred that occasionally caused parents to reschedule an interview session, all other parents were able to complete the interviews and journals.

![Diagram of Participants with Pertinent Descriptors]

Figure 2. Representation of Participants with Pertinent Descriptors

Each parent was given a consent form that explained the study (Appendix G). The parents were informed that pseudonyms would be used in all written documentation so that their names and the name of the school would remain anonymous. The mothers were given the opportunity to read, correct, and make comments on transcribed interviews. No changes were made. Fathers declined the opportunity to read over their transcripts.
Data Collection

Initially, the school principal wanted to present my letter to the Superintendent of Schools requesting permission for teachers to observe students and complete the observation instrument. However, that did not work out in a timely manner and so, with the principal’s permission, I eventually had a face-to-face meeting with the superintendent who showed enthusiasm for the project and wished me well (Appendix H).

The data collection methods included observation instruments completed by teachers, one-on-one interviews with parents, and parent journals. Table 2 presents a timeline of data collection. Interviews took place at a time and location that was convenient for the participating parent. Some were conducted in a private space at their workplace, some in a local coffee shop that offered private alcoves, some in individual homes, some in an unused church classroom, and one at the unused meeting quarters of a civic organization. Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim by me.

Case Study #1
The Sawyer Family

The Sawyer family is a middle income two-parent family with three children. Their oldest daughter is a freshman in a local college majoring in psychology. Their second eldest daughter is in a special high school for gifted and talented students and loves science, math, and soccer. The third of their children was their oldest son but, he passed away when he was 5-years-old as a result of cancer. Their youngest son, Justin, was identified by his current first grade teacher as being a classroom leader. He loves sports and reading and is very talkative.

Both of Justin’s parents agreed to be interviewed for this study and did so separately. Both gave detailed descriptions of Justin’s personality, likes and dislikes and were in accord on much of their descriptions.
Table 2. Timeline of Data Collection

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sent e-mail to school principal</td>
<td>Reiterated our plan of action</td>
<td>January 15, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gave school principal formal letter of request to conduct study</td>
<td>Attempted to gain permission from superintendent</td>
<td>January 17, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with school principal</td>
<td>Discussed timeline for study</td>
<td>February 17, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with school principal</td>
<td>Gained permission to contact superintendent personally</td>
<td>March 26, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with superintendent</td>
<td>Gained permission to conduct study</td>
<td>March 27, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with school principal</td>
<td>Reviewed documents</td>
<td>April 11, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with 1st and 2nd grade teachers</td>
<td>Trained in use of SRBCSS-III rating scale</td>
<td>April 18, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with school principal</td>
<td>Received completed rating scales</td>
<td>April 23, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with school principal</td>
<td>Received parent contact information</td>
<td>April 30, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mrs. Sawyer</td>
<td>Completed 1st interview</td>
<td>May 23, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mrs. Sawyer</td>
<td>Completed 2nd interview</td>
<td>May 30, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mrs. Sawyer</td>
<td>Completed 3rd interview</td>
<td>June 5, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mr. Sawyer</td>
<td>Completed only interview</td>
<td>June 6, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Mrs. Sawyer</td>
<td>Retrieved mother’s journal</td>
<td>June 5, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received e-mail from Mr. Sawyer</td>
<td>Retrieved father’s journal</td>
<td>August 9, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Ms. Bigsby</td>
<td>Completed 1st interview</td>
<td>June 7, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Ms. Bigsby</td>
<td>Completed 2nd interview</td>
<td>June 29, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with Ms. Bigsby</td>
<td>Equipment failure-no interview</td>
<td>July 13, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempted to contact Ms. Bigsby</td>
<td>Unable to contact mother by phone, e-mail, text message, or U.S. post</td>
<td>July 16-August 30, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mrs. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Completed 1st interview</td>
<td>June 1, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mrs. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Completed 2nd interview</td>
<td>June 8, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Dr. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Completed 3rd interview</td>
<td>June 26, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with Mrs. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Retrieved mother’s journal</td>
<td>August 13, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received e-mail from Dr. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Retrieved father’s journal</td>
<td>August 13, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mrs. Flowers</td>
<td>Completed 1st interview</td>
<td>May 25, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mrs. Flowers</td>
<td>Completed 2nd interview</td>
<td>June 2, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mrs. Flowers</td>
<td>Completed 3rd interview</td>
<td>July 20, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewed Mr. Flowers</td>
<td>Completed only interview</td>
<td>July 18, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with Mrs. Flowers</td>
<td>Retrieved mother’s journal</td>
<td>July 20, 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met with Mr. Flowers</td>
<td>Retrieved father’s journal</td>
<td>August 13, 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Justin is a first grader at Riverdale Magnet School. He was the only first grade Caucasian male recommended by teachers as a leader in the classroom. Justin’s teacher reported that he has a "tendency to be respected by his classmates, has the ability to articulate ideas and communicate well with others, and has cooperative behavior when working with others."
Justin is a year older than typical first graders because his parents wanted him to repeat kindergarten, not because of any academic issues, but due to emotional growth and development concerns associated with the death of his older brother. His mother explained,

It was hard approaching that fifth birthday because that is how old his brother was when he died. So he had a lot of emotional issues with the idea of turning 5[-years-old]. He thought for quite a long time that when he turned 5 [-years-old], he would die. So we had quite a lot of that to deal with.

As a family, the Sawyers enjoy sports, cuddling on the couch and watching movies together, playing board games, going to local places of interest and special events, and traveling. Justin enjoys interacting with his sisters by playing video games, reading books aloud, and practicing soccer skills in the back yard. Justin’s favorite pastimes are building with Legos and other construction sets, reading chapter books, playing video games, looking at parent-approved web sites, and playing sports.

Although Mr. and Mrs. Sawyer do not have the opportunity to see Justin interact with his classmates at school very often, they were not surprised that his teacher recognized him as an emerging leader because they had noticed his leadership qualities out of school as well. Many of the examples they cited of Justin leading occurred in soccer practices and games. For example: "He’ll tell his teammates, you know, tell them when to move, tell them how to take position on the soccer field. He is very encouraging about it." An excellent story that his mother shared showcases Justin’s leadership abilities well:

They did a play in his class. It was a short skit. None of the kids had a lot of lines, but Justin played one of the main characters. He was active, overacting and things like that. He did good. When it was over [mother stands to demonstrate] he came up to do the bowing part, but nobody came up, so he did like this [summoning motion with hands] to encourage his friends on both sides of him to join him in bowing. All with no prompting from his teachers. She didn’t say "Kids bow" or anything like that. He was leading and directing everything.
When asked what leadership skills Justin was using in that episode his mother’s perception was that he was encouraging others, took the initiative and

he was trying to have everybody come forward, get recognized by everybody. I think it was more emotional. You need to feel good about yourself and you’ve accomplished something. He does have a really good feel for other people’s emotions.

**Mr. Sawyer’s Beliefs.** Mr. Sawyer is the manager of a large manufacturing plant and supervises hundreds of employees. These employees come from a wide variety of backgrounds and educational attainments levels. The umbrella company that Mr. Sawyer works for stresses promotion from within the company and specifically teaches on-going leadership skills at national conferences to help employees build the skills they need to supervise others. Mr. Sawyer has attended many of these conferences and feels that he has learned from them and uses the skills in his job successfully. Mrs. Sawyer commented that she not only believes her husband uses the leadership skills he has learned to modify his parenting skills, but that she also believes his leadership example has been a big influence on their children. Mr. Sawyer said,

> I have several hundred employees and dozens of engineers working for me, so I know about leadership and organization with adults—I mean *that* is what I do for a living, but I’ve never really thought about it in terms of kids.

However, he did acknowledge that his workplace leadership training and usage has enhanced his abilities as a soccer coach when he coaches both his son’s and his daughters’ soccer teams. In addition, as our conversation progressed, I asked him if he thought that he purposefully encouraged leadership and he said,

> I think a lot of the things that you need to be a good leader are good life skills, period. I think I am probably more aware of those little individual things because of my [job]…you know I have to go to leadership seminars…

An excerpt from his parent journal also illuminated a connection between Mr. Sawyer’s work and his beliefs about leadership,
I remember one time when it was the first time I was given a significant promotion at work. I was taking a risk in moving from an engineering position into a management position, so I was nervous about how I was going to handle things and also now managing people who had been my peers...the general manager...came down to the plant to make the job offer to me and to talk to me. The conversation started with him explaining why they decided to give me the job even though I did not have experience doing this before. There were several "technical" reasons why but what stuck with me is a sense of confidence he gave me that he believed I was the right person for the job. He was very encouraging and positive throughout and never once mentioned the concerns he had. I came out of that session excited and confident that I could live up to his expectations...and succeed.

Many of the qualities that Mr. Sawyer appreciated about this exchange show up again in his description of either leadership in general or in his description of Justin as a leader.

In general, Mr. Sawyer believes that leaders should have "high expectations of themselves" and "demand high performance from others." In order to demand high performance and have reasonable expectations, he also believes that it is imperative that leaders have a "reasonable knowledge of the task at hand" and "good decision-making skills." A leader can only lead successfully if he/she knows where they are going, so Mr. Sawyer believes that all leaders should have a vision. "I think it is important to have a vision of what you want to do. You can’t just come out and demand more without any kind of goal or objective." He also believes it is important to have good communication skills. These skills should support a leader in being empathetic and communicating that concern for others, having the ability to sincerely encourage others to achieve, and developing skills for dealing with individuals at different levels. He elaborated,

You’ve got all of these different personality types and then you have to deal with them and how they react to different situations. How to deal with all of those individuals at different levels? You’ve got to have an understanding...you can’t treat everybody the same way. Everybody is not the same person. Everybody reacts differently, so when you are trying to treat everybody the same way---it is going to work great for some people, generally the people who are just like you! If that is what you’ve got to work with, that is fine, but if it is not, then you’ve got to learn how to deal with other personalities.
In the beginning of the interviewing process, Mr. Sawyer did not feel that he had an adequate understanding of young children’s leadership skills. But, by discussing adult leadership first and then moving on to questions about how his son, Justin, used similar skills as the adults discussed, Mr. Sawyer began to list Justin’s leadership qualities and give examples of Justin using those attributes. A chart lists the characteristics Mr. Sawyer believes Justin uses in leading others and some examples of those characteristics in usage (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Gives best effort/gives 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can focus on topic or task for extended period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demanding of self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Sense of right and wrong/stands up for what he believes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of learning</td>
<td>Smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Picks up new ideas/concepts quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loves to learn new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-biased</td>
<td>Doesn’t notice skin color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t judge others’ school abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows awareness of differences in people</td>
<td>Individualizes communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences others’ behavior</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages others toward goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulates emotions</td>
<td>Not a hitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional self-control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Handles social problems in socially acceptable way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is socially active</td>
<td>Gets along well with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shows enjoyment of group interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not aggressive or submissive, but assertive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays physical competence</td>
<td>Physically energetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Displays athletic prowess/coordination/strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays self-confidence</td>
<td>Willing to challenge others to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sticks up for himself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Takes initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits linguistic competence</td>
<td>Good communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grasps and converses about abstract concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to peers</td>
<td>Doesn’t impose his ideas on play, just wants to interact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In describing Justin’s self-confidence, Mr. Sawyer said "He seems to get along with new kids very well. He watches other kids play, drinks it in, and then just starts talking to them like he has already been playing with them for a while." Justin’s father was the only parent in the study to make note of their child’s ability to smoothly become a member of an existing play group. This is a skill that many teachers and researchers note as being an important leadership trait in young children. Classroom observers believe that skilled communication and self-confidence are the primary reasons for leaders effectively entering into an existing play episode. Successful entrance into an existing play episode was described by researchers similarly to the way Mr. Sawyer described Justin’s tactics. Researchers describe the process as observing the play, determining a role or action that would advance or complement the existing play, then stepping in with a relevant suggestion (Kemple, et al., 1992; Trawick-Smith, 1988).

Although our conversation was about Justin’s leadership characteristics, Mr. Sawyer recognized that good leaders also have to be able to follow sometimes. He said about Justin,

He is not shy---it doesn’t matter who the kid is. Some kids want to impose what they want to do on the game, but he is not like that. He just really kind of wants to get involved with them and interact with them.

Fu (1979) developed an instrument for observing leaders in the early childhood classroom and after 10 years of using it in many different classrooms, concluded that leading and following are both prosocial behaviors and that children from middle income homes were more likely to engage in following as a way to maintain cooperation for the sake of the group process than were children from low-income homes.

Mr. Sawyer went on to proudly describe an episode where Justin sticks up for himself and is assertive without resorting to physical violence. Justin was playing basketball down the street from his home with an older boy who lived in the neighborhood, Archie. Archie has been accustomed to playing with an even older boy who likes to play keep away and the game usually results
in a wrestling match thing that boils down to the fact that he is enjoying being the bigger one. Archie was doing the same kind of thing with Justin. Justin’s response was to say "Hey, if you don’t want to play right, then I am going home." Justin picked up his ball and came home. He didn’t argue or cry or anything else. He just had the attitude that if you are not going to be nice to me then I am just not going to play with you.

Most of the examples Mr. Sawyer attributed to Justin’s leadership fit neatly into categories previously determined to be typical leadership characteristics as per the literature review of characteristics of young leaders witnessed in the classroom by teachers and observers—shows awareness of differences in people, influences others behaviors, regulates emotions, is socially active, displays physical competence, displays self-confidence, exhibits linguistic competence, and listens to peers. Three of the new categories denoted—determination, morality, and love of learning—came up over and over in interviewing the parents in this study. These themes will be explored more fully in the cross-case analysis.

Even though the broad categories or characteristics of emerging leadership were very similar, the examples parents note in the home setting are sometimes different than what teachers and researchers observe in the school setting. This is understandable considering the different structure and atmosphere of the home compared to the classroom. For example, Mr. Sawyer is a strong proponent of competition and in the following section gives many reasons why he believes that competition helps young people develop life skills and leadership abilities. Competition in early childhood classrooms is generally frowned upon (Pianta, 2006).

**Mr. Sawyer’s Practices.** When asked how he believed his own parenting skills had contributed to Justin’s leadership abilities, he indicated that parenting is teamwork and that he and his wife have jointly come to parenting decisions thus making it difficult to separate his parenting role from her parenting role. In general, he sees his roles as encourager, counselor, teacher, supporter, and values
keeper. Table 4 shows the roles Mr. Sawyer believes he fills and broad examples of ways he fulfills them.

**Table 4. Roles Justin’s Father Plays in His Leadership Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent roles</th>
<th>Enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Encourager** | Encourages trying new activities  
Encourages independence  
Encourages self-reliance  
Encourages risk-taking within reason  
Challenges child to improve skills |
| **Teacher** | Teaches situational awareness  
Teaches life skills  
Teaches problem solving  
Teaches person-to-person interaction skills  
Provides decision-making opportunities |
| **Supporter** | Supports involvement in extracurricular activities  
Supports opportunities for competition  
Makes sure child has transportation to sports practices  
Forces child into new situations outside of his comfort zone for a short period of time and then lets child decide if he wishes to continue |
| **Values keeper** | Values fairness |

In counseling his children, Mr. Sawyer said,

> I like to talk through a situation with them; when there are problems with friends in particular. I’m not going to….I see some parents that just want to fix everything for their kids. You know “you’ve got a problem with a grade; I am going to call the teacher and fix it.” Uh-uh. It is your problem, but I will be happy to help you with it, give advice, walk through your thought process with you, but I am not going to fix it for you.

He believes this parenting practice has built a foundation for problem solving for all of his children.

In his role as supporter, Mr. Sawyer provides opportunities for Justin to engage in competition. Mr. Sawyer said that by engaging in competitive activities one learns how to assess one’s own performance so that self-reflection will lead to self-improvement. In Mr. Sawyer's opinion, competitive sports are an excellent way to encourage competition, as well as learn from winning and losing. He said, "I think competition is a healthy mechanism to improve yourself." He expounded,
It is good for them. They need to lose. No one wins every game. No one wins at everything in life and if you don’t learn how to lose a game, you are going to be in for a world of problems later on in life….the other life lesson you learn is "You know what? If you are not as good as you want to be, there is a path to get to there.

One improves their skills sets by "messing up" a few times, figuring out what to do to improve, and then practicing the necessary techniques in an effort toward that improvement. Games are a good place for learning "how to react and respond to adversity. And losing is adversity."

Mr. Sawyer does not believe that he purposefully teaches leadership skills but rather that leadership skills stem from "good life skills." He went on to say that although he does not parent with the intention of helping Justin develop strong leadership skills, that his workplace environment probably influences him in that direction whether it is at the forefront of his thoughts or not. The example he gave of a good life skill that is also a good leadership skill is decision-making skills. The parents give Justin many opportunities to make age-appropriate decisions. Mr. Sawyer offered an example:

There are things like, you can only have a certain amount of TV or computer, you have this much free time to do whatever you want and things like that allow him to have some control over his decisions and think about what he wants to do and how he wants to use it. How he wants to use that time. "Do you want to save some for later? Do you want to use it all right now because if you use it all right now then tonight when you want to watch a movie….nope." So we do some little things like that.

Mrs. Sawyer’s Beliefs. Mrs. Sawyer is a certified teacher specializing in Special Education. She chose to step out of the work force and be a stay-at-home mom while her children were young. Within the last few months she has re-entered the workforce in a part-time position outside of her field of expertise. She is active in the community and has found "niches" that allow her "to serve people." It was indicated several times throughout our conversations that her parenting has been influenced by her education/work experiences as well as her childhood in a military family. She stated,
I wanted to build those critical thinking skills. I guess it comes from being a teacher. I wanted my students to be independent thinkers and independent learners. Working in Special Ed that was kind of the goal...So I think, you know, that all of my own children are more independent because of that.

In discussing the military’s influence on her thinking she said,

There is no skin color in the military. Everyone was khaki. That’s what the uniform was. I learned early, early on not to judge anyone by the color of their skin, by what religion they were, who they voted for president. It didn’t make any difference as long as they got the job done. They can do their job? Great! They can’t do their job? Then you’ve got a problem….I come from a family of white middle class folks. I come from very work-oriented people, people with a strong work ethic. You worked hard, period. Nobody gave you anything. You didn’t ask for hand-outs. You didn’t ask for help. You worked really hard and that is how you became a better person and improved your lot in life.

Generally speaking, Mrs. Sawyer believes that strong leaders have a good moral compass, are decisive, have above average intelligence, set an example for others, and have the ability to encourage their team without being insulting. Regarding above average intelligence she said,

I certainly don’t think that to be a leader you have to know how to do everything. But if you know most of what you need to know to do in whatever field that you are trying to lead others in, then they feel comfortable that you are competent in your skills and you know what you are talking about. So intelligence certainly helps.

It was obvious as we began the interviewing process that Mrs. Sawyer had given some consideration to her son as a leader. One of the first questions I asked was "Do you see your child as a leader?" and she quickly responded "I do and let me give you an example." She went on to list many attributes that Justin exhibits that she feels lend themselves to his being considered a leader both in and out of the classroom. Table 5 depicts the skills Mrs. Sawyer has witnessed Justin using as he leads other, as well as examples of those skills in usage.

Mrs. Sawyer believes that Justin is a very determined person. She discussed an example of this in her parent journal, "Justin is very curious and he enjoys going on-line and playing puzzle
games. He plays and he plays until he wins and he doesn’t like to give up.” She sees that same kind of determination on the soccer field during practices and games.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Characteristics Exhibited in Home/Community by Very Young Leader, Justin Sawyer, According to His Mother</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Love of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-biased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows awareness of differences in people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences others’ behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulates emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is socially active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays physical competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits linguistic competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to peers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

She is impressed by how much Justin’s school peers admire him and go to him for class work assistance. She related this story:
His teacher sent home a packet with letters. Each of the students wrote letters to their classmates. Most of it was remembrances about reading and people leaving school. At least half of the letters said either "you are my best friend in the class" or "you are so smart" or "I love how you do this" or "I love how you help me with my math." All comments of things that they are seeing in him in the classroom.

As an example of his linguistic competence, his mother noted his diplomacy:

Like if somebody had a lot of spelling errors on their paper, he is always kind of careful to compliment all of the good things they did in the paper instead of only pointing out the things they did wrong….He would be really careful of their feelings.

In relation to Justin’s diplomacy and his ability to individualize his verbal messages to his listener, Mrs. Sawyer also talked about Justin’s awareness of people’s feelings. She said that he has a "good feel for other people’s emotions." In addition to the school play example shared earlier in this case study, she gave this example:

If you were to ask him, like if you read a passage from something and you asked him, ‘How did the author feel about this’ or ‘How would you feel about that?’ he has a very good understanding of how someone in that situation would be feeling in that passage.

She went on to explain that he also has a good understanding of things that people might be sensitive about and words things "carefully" because he doesn’t "want them to get upset." Gardner (1983) wrote about different types of intelligences in which people may develop giftedness. Justin appears to have many of the characteristics that Gardner referred to as having "interpersonal intelligence." Gardner proposed that children like Justin who have a strong connection to people’s emotional needs and the ability to communicate sensitively with them, are likely to be able to promote group cohesiveness while working on a group project or goal and can make everyone feel like an important and involved member of the process. Strong interpersonal communication is required by leaders as they "understand other people…motivate them, listen to them, and respond to their needs and aspirations" (Gardner, 2004, p. 108).
Most of the broad categories of young leadership characteristics described by Justin’s mother are fairly typical of the characteristics observed by classroom teachers as per the literature review of characteristics of young leaders witnessed in the classroom—shows awareness of differences in people, influences others behaviors, regulates emotions, is socially active, displays physical competence, displays self-confidence, and exhibits linguistic competence. The four new categories denoted---determination, morality, love of learning, and non-biased attitude---came up over and over in interviewing the parents in this study. These themes will be explored more fully in the cross-case analysis.

Even though the broad categories or characteristics of emerging leadership that were noted by classroom observers were very similar to the ones noted by parents in the home setting, the examples of leadership in action that parents describe are somewhat different than the examples described by classroom observers. This is understandable considering the different structure and atmosphere of the classroom compared to the home. For example, at home Mrs. Sawyer sees Justin spend a long time on one goal or skill until he has reached what he feels is an acceptable level of expertise. This was the case with the determination she witnessed as Justin played puzzle games on the computer. Typically in a classroom setting there is a fairly rigid schedule and time slots designated for particular activities which may not allow time for a student to become wholly involved in completing a goal.

**Mrs. Sawyer’s Practices.** As we discussed her influence on Justin’s leadership development, I noticed that Mrs. Sawyer often said "we do this" or "we do that" instead of "I do this" or "I do that." This should not be surprising since Mr. Sawyer indicated that parenting was definitely a two-parent team effort in their household.

Many of the roles that Mrs. Sawyer described playing in helping to mold her son into a young leader can be put into the same categories as the roles her husband plays, with one exception.
In addition to being an encourager, counselor, teacher, supporter, and values keeper, she is also an organizer. Table 6 shows the roles that Mrs. Sawyer believes she fills and broad examples of ways she fulfills them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Roles Justin’s Mother Plays in His Leadership Development</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent roles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages independent thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaches critical thinking skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sets an example</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides opportunities for selected outside of family influences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values keeper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values serving others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintains a family schedule</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In relating an instance of her setting an example, she said,

I am pretty decisive about things. When I make a decision, I look at the facts first, but once I make a decision, I make a decision. And they’ve seen examples of the opposite of that—of someone who takes maybe 5 or 6 months to decide on wallpaper and they realize ‘that’s a really long time to make a decision!’ We try to get the kids to think over the facts and make a decision and not waffle back and forth on something. So I think that is something I have taught them, from myself.

Both parents talked about being active in the community and being civic leaders. Mrs. Sawyer is involved in several community service organizations and is an officer in those organizations. She doesn’t believe that seeing her or her husband do those kinds of things is really a big influence on Justin now, but believes that it will be in the future, basing that prediction on the impact it has had on her older daughters.

It is usually Mrs. Sawyer’s responsibility to keep up with where everyone is, what time they have to be somewhere, and who is getting picked up by whom. The first personal attribute Mrs.
Sawyer lists as being a parenting skill that might be influential on Justin’s leadership development is "organization" and "liking to have things scheduled."

**Contextual Factors for the Sawyer Family.** There are many contextual factors that the Sawyers believe are influential in Justin’s leadership development both from within the home/family and from within the community. Direct contextual factor is the term being used to describe those factors in the environment that Justin comes face-to-face with on a regular basis. Direct contextual factors for Justin include home/family, school, sports organizations, and his neighborhood.

Both parents made several comments about the influence of Justin’s sister (second born) who is about seven years his senior. Mr. Sawyer said that the two siblings are very close to one another and especially so since the death of their brother.

> I think they will always be close. She has been quite an influence on him. She taught him to read when he was three. She teaches him math. They do puzzles and just kind of play together all of the time. So she is his best friend, without a doubt.

He went on to say that she is very patient with Justin and "dotes on him quite a bit." Mrs. Sawyer commented that Justin really listens to his sister and drinks in what she says and does. Mrs. Sawyer said,

> [His sister] is an excellent student. He sees her reading books, doing homework. She sets priorities. She makes sure her responsibilities are taken care of before she just goes and plays. And he sees that. And she comes home with that report card and they are all A’s and she says ‘Look, I got all A’s. Remember when you wanted me to come play and I said I gotta finish this first?’ So he sees that from her.

Mrs. Sawyer also credited this sister with being an excellent role model for talking to others with respect and consideration. "She’s always been very careful about how she says things to people...so she has always been kind of a diplomat." Mrs. Sawyer believes that her son has watched and emulated his sister’s behavior. In regard to siblings, both parents also pointed out that even though Justin was only about 3-years-old when his brother passed away, that his brother left an indelible
mark on Justin’s life. Mr. Sawyer discloses, "They really only had about a year together where they could actually play together. But he still had a big influence because I think Justin just really wants that big brother relationship."

Other family members who have influenced Justin’s leadership abilities are his paternal grandmother and a paternal aunt. They are both teachers and Mrs. Sawyer credits both of them for contributing to Justin’s understanding of school culture and expectations.

From the community, the Sawyer family gives credit to teachers and coaches, peers, schools, organized sports, and their neighborhood as influencing their son’s leadership development. More specifically, they believe that Justin has had well-trained, competent, nurturing teachers who, along with his school peers, have created a school climate that emphasizes and embraces high achievement. Justin has played basketball and soccer under caring coaches (one being his father). Mr. Sawyer believes that well-organized extracurricular activities of any type help build leadership skills. He explained,

They get involved socially, meet other kids. I think all of them are things that help build confidence, help you get along well with others in a variety of situations and just an opportunity to try new things and learn what you like and what you are strong in, then have the opportunity to get stronger in that area.

In addition to the face-to-face or direct contextual factors, the Sawyers acknowledge many indirect contextual factors that are a part of their sociocultural, historical, or political climate. Each of these was mentioned as having a bearing on Justin’s leadership development—family history, parent workplace, school board, local government, local university, size and location of town, internet, culture, values, laws, and economics. Many themes across families were recognized in this domain and will be elucidated during the cross-case analysis.

**Summary of the Sawyer Family.** As shown in Figure 3, beliefs, practices, and context factors that have helped this family to influence the leadership development of their first grade son have been
Figure 3. Representation of the Interconnected Factors that Influenced Justin’s Leadership Development
identified. The interconnected factors of the model illustrate the many bidirectional relationships. Looking at human development from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems theory, these bidirectional relationships are easily discernible. Both parents believe that their son exhibits leadership skills in a variety of situational contexts—home, school, school-related activities, and on the soccer field. They gave many examples of him leading or directing others and pinpointed the leadership skills they believe he was using in the episode that was described. In addition, Mr. and Mrs. Sawyer noted their parenting practices as well as other people’s influence on Justin’s leadership development. Their beliefs impact their parenting practices and their parenting practices influence Justin’s behavior and mindset. The bi-directional activity can be seen as Justin’s behaviors and attitudes also effect his parents’ beliefs and practices.

Family, coaches, teachers, and peers come face-to-face with Justin in the home, neighborhood, school, and sports organizations to influence his behavioral outcomes. The family’s beliefs influence the direct contexts that Justin has the opportunity to participate in. Justin’s parents’ perspective concerning the sociocultural, historical, and political climate is impacted by their beliefs as well as the physical contexts in which they spend time, and ultimately have an indirect impact on Justin.

Case Study #2
The Bigsby Family

The Bigsby family is a middle income single parent family with three children. The oldest child is a 17-year-old daughter who has recently moved next door to live with her grandmother and plans to continue living there until she has finished high school. The second born child in the family, a boy, passed away as an infant. Brad, the third born child, is a first grader who is considered by his teacher to be a leader in the classroom. The fourth born child is also a boy. He is a few years younger than Brad and, though Brad may play rough with his brother, his mother said that Brad will protect his brother from others in all circumstances. Brad’s mother described him as
"all boy" and lists activities like basketball, soccer, horse-back riding, four-wheeler riding, bicycle riding, video game playing, and reading as things he loves to do.

Although Brad’s father spends a lot of time with him on weekends and during the summer, he was not interviewed for this study. Brad’s mother gave detailed descriptions of her son that included the activities he enjoys, how he gets along with others, the ways that she has seen his leadership skills enacted, and much more.

Brad is a first grader at Riverdale Magnet School. He was the only first grade African American male recognized by his teachers as a leader in the classroom setting for this study. Brad makes good grades, gets his homework completed nightly, and is generally well-behaved in the classroom. In addition, his teacher reported that he is "very self-confident when interacting with classroom peers and has a tendency to direct an activity when involved in small group activities" at school.

As a family, the Bigsbys just like to have fun together. When he is with his dad, the family activities tend to revolve around horses and four-wheelers. When he is with his mom, the kinds of fun things they enjoy doing together include watching TV, playing video or computer games, playing basketball, and visiting with others. Whether at his mother’s or his father’s house, Brad interacts with his younger brother frequently.

Ms. Bigsby was very resolute in her belief in her son’s leadership abilities. This was a topic that she had thought through over a period of time, not just in anticipation of these interviews. She said that she thinks about leadership behaviors on a daily basis and was immediately able to list many of Brad’s behaviors that she categorized as emerging leadership abilities. She said that he knows what he wants and can be very determined in getting it. She went on to say,

He gets along well with others. If he sets his mind to do something, he does usually achieve it. Very flexible, for the most part. You can reason with him. If you explain to him why it is what it is and what’s going on, you can expect 100% cooperation. He may not be happy about something, but if you explain things to him, he usually is very understanding.
One story that Brad’s mother shared showcases his leadership skills in action very well. Although the Bigslys are homeowners, there is a low-income housing development in the neighborhood. Often times the boys in the neighborhood come to the Bigsby home to play basketball because it is one of the only basketball goals available in the neighborhood. Ms. Bigsby said, "Brad is a lot younger than them, but he is going to get out there and do his thing." She went on to express that she has taught her son not to hit others and has also taught him right from wrong. "And as long as you are behaving and acting and doing the way that I taught you to do or not to do, then you are exhibiting your leadership skills." Sometimes the neighborhood guys behave in ways that are not in accord with what Ms. Bigsby has taught Brad.

Then he may come to me and say "Well, Mama, they are doing something or saying something." Then I say, "Well it is time for them to go." He goes outside and says "My mama says you have to leave." Some kids would have a problem "Mama, I don’t want to tell them that." But this one is going to tell it, no problem. "Mama said that you’ve got to go!"

When asked what leadership skills she believed he was demonstrating in that episode, she named standing up for himself, knowing right from wrong, making his own decisions, assertiveness, and exhibiting good character.

**Ms. Bigsby’s Beliefs.** Ms. Bigsby is a certified teacher who spent many years as an educator in public school classrooms. Within the last few years, she made a career move that took her from educating children to educating incarcerated adults. Ms. Bigsby said that she thinks about leadership and learns from both positive and negative examples, as well as just thinking about the way she wants to live her life and set an example for her children.

Leadership skills are decision-making, dedication, determination, flexibility, and planning. There are quite a few things that go with leading and leadership skills. Just in my daily tasks, I try to kind of think about what all makes a good leader.
She mentioned many times that working in a correctional facility influences her attitudes. For example, in discussing reasons why extracurricular activities are helpful in building leadership skills she said that structured, adult-led activities help kids to build those skills that "make a good leader, good citizen, and a good person." She thinks that not having those kinds of opportunities is 

…why you have people out there who are not good citizens. They can’t just get what they want when they want it. So you’ve got to learn. You’ve got to learn to accept failure gracefully. You can’t just go out there and rob a bank just because the jobs that are available aren’t paying what you need right now. You’ve got to learn and that [extracurricular activities] is one place to learn it.

Later, she very specifically stated that she is probably harder on her boys and has higher expectations of them because of what she has seen in the correctional facility.

In addition to decision-making, dedication, determination, flexibility, and planning, Ms. Bigsby believes that leaders should be good listeners, good communicators, problem-solvers, assertive, and strong-willed. In expounding on flexibility as a leadership skill she noted, "You know as a leader you’ve got to kind of be able to go with the flow. Things don’t always go as planned and you’ve got to be ready to shift to another plan." She went on to say "Sometimes you are going strong in one direction and you realize things aren’t working as they should and you’ve got to back up and try another way."

Ms. Bigsby had no difficulty listing skills that she believes her son exhibits that may have led to his teacher giving him high scores in leadership in the classroom. In addition to her initial list, she went on to give many more examples of Brad leading others and skills that she believes he was using. Table 7 lists characteristics that Ms. Bigsby believes Brad uses in leading others and some examples of those characteristics in usage.

Brad’s mother had a lot to say about character development,

It does mean moral development but it means more than just that. Character development means doing the right thing even if no one is watching. It doesn’t matter if it is in the religious aspect or just basic morals or just feeling the need to do right by people. It is just doing
right when nobody is looking. So character development is teaching your children to make good decisions. So once a decision is made and whoever comes around later to judge or evaluate that decision can see that the intentions behind the decision were good. Even if they don’t necessarily agree with the decision, it is obvious that it was well-thought out and the intentions were good. His thought processes were clear…I want others to say "That child made a good decision based on what he knew and the choices he had."

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<thead>
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<th>Table 7. Characteristics Exhibited in Home/Community by Very Young Leader, Brad Bigsby, According to His Mother</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristic</strong></td>
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<td>Determination</td>
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<td>Morality</td>
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<td>Love of learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-biased</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shows awareness of differences in people</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Influences others’ behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regulates emotions</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Is socially active</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Displays physical competence</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Displays self-confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhibits linguistic competence</td>
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In talking about Brad’s communication skills, his mother said that she is pleased with the way he can "break things down" to teach his little brother new skills. She went on to say that he is "an intelligent kid" and "he likes to show his knowledge." She also noted that she sometimes
worries that as he gets older, he will be more concerned about being seen as "cool" than as being seen as "smart." She said that she is "definitely going to keep on Brad" about achievement in school because she does not want him to be "categorized as just another African American male whose parents don’t think or whose parents don’t care enough or weren’t intelligent enough to help their kids achieve." In considering Ms. Bigsby’s concerns about people having a misconception about her son’s abilities or her parenting skills, the literature review for this study substantiates some of those concerns. Popular televisions shows, movies, and media frequently portray African Americans as having different life-ways than mainstream culture. These life-ways are portrayed as deficit, indicators of ignorance, and lack of intelligence—certainly not descriptors of people typically thought of as leaders (Delpit, 2002).

Brad’s mother also gave descriptions of him that she sees as being leadership skills, but are in direct contrast to leadership research in regard to both child and adult behaviors. She said,

It does have to do with leadership. I don’t know that it is a positive thing, but it is helping to make him who he is. Brad is very verbal. He is going to tell you what he wants. A lot of that is from being spoiled, not necessarily in a good way...when he is with his paternal grandmother, he gets what he wants...But that definitely does play into his leadership skills because he feels like if he says something, it is supposed to happen. If he does something or wants to do something, it is supposed to happen simply because he is King Brad. That does play into his leadership development because he feels like “I am the one in charge. I am the leader. If I say I want this or I want to do that, [then] that is what is supposed to happen.” I can’t necessarily say that I agree with or that I like it, but it is what it is.

There are other observations and comments his mother made such as he might not share unless "prompted and that is because he wants to maintain control. He wants to be in charge" that indicate that Brad does not listen to other children to determine their needs. She talked about additional instances,

He has a cousin that lives not too far from us. The cousin comes over. If Brad wants to play something or if he gets tired of playing outside, he may just say, "I want to play with my Nintendo. I am going in the
There are some leadership attributes in play here. His mother said that he is showing his determination, ability to make his own decisions, and assertiveness. I could add to that and list emotional regulation and standing up for himself. However, there is also a consistent string of only doing what he wants to do without considering the needs of others, a behavior that is inconsistent with leadership. His teacher reported that he "always demonstrates a tendency to direct [emphasis added] an activity when he is involved with others" but that he only "occasionally demonstrates cooperative [emphasis added] behavior when working with others." The teacher statements adjoin Brad’s mother’s observations to paint a picture of a child who is always willing to lead, but not so inclined to follow. Four possible explanations are offered for this behavior. One, given that his mother reminds him constantly not to follow the lead of the neighborhood kids or his step-siblings, but to instead use good judgment and go his own way, it may simply be a matter of having been taught not to follow. Fu (1970) asserts that Western civilization tends to not appreciate the follower role, but that it is a relevant interactional process within group relations. Furthermore, being able to sometimes follow is necessary to effectively function as a leader. The second possibility is that Brad regularly interacts with low-income playmates. Fu (1979) concluded from her long-term study of early childhood classroom leadership that children from middle income homes were more likely to engage in following as a way to maintain cooperation for the sake of the group process than were children from low-income homes. The second suggestion for a possible explanation for Brad’s "I’m always in charge" attitude is that he is learning much of his group process strategies from interactions with low-income children and in that context, followership may not be an effectual strategy. The third possibility is that there are instances when Brad listens to his peers in order to see their perspective or to accept others’ ideas, but his mother didn’t mention them. This is a very fair assessment considering that all of the parents in this study did not mention that their
child listens to his/her peers, sometimes it was only mentioned by one parent or the other. A fourth possibility is that his mother sees the problem and recognizes it for what it is: an attitude that has been perpetuated by his paternal grandmother.

Even though Ms. Bigsby said that she thinks about leadership daily, she does not believe that she purposely teaches her son to be a leader. Instead she said that she teaches basic good citizenship and leadership just kind of gets rolled up in there. It is just the way I was reared. My mother did not necessarily raise me to be a leader, but she reared me to be a good citizen and make good decisions and through that I became a good leader.

Most of the examples Ms. Bigsby attributed to Brad’s leadership are in-line with what teachers and classroom observers cite in research articles—shows awareness of differences in people, influences others’ behaviors, regulates emotions, is socially active, displays physical competence, displays self-confidence, and exhibits linguistic competence. The four new categories denoted—determination, morality, love of learning, and non-biased attitude—came up over and over in the interviewing of parents. These themes will be explored more fully in the cross-case analysis.

Some of the examples that Ms. Bigsby gives are rather specific to the home setting and, as such, are not the types of things that teachers generally have the opportunity to witness due to the constraints of the classroom—time, structure, number of children, adult to child ratio, and other differences. For example, Brad’s mother said that he is "protective" over both his younger brother and his older sister which is not an example that a teacher might see in a classroom setting where all of the children are about the same age and have very similar ability levels, as is the case at the magnet school that Brad attends.

**Ms. Bigsby’s Practices.** When asked how she believed her own parenting skills had contributed to Brad’s leadership skills, she discussed many of the things that she does that she believes are helping
him in that domain, but went on to discuss at length the influence that her mother (Brad’s maternal grandmother) has both on her as a parent, as well as the influence the grandmother has on Brad.

In general, Ms. Bigsby sees her parenting roles as encourager, counselor, teacher, supporter, values keeper, organizer, protector, and tour guide of life. Table 8 shows the roles that Ms. Bigsby believes she fills and broad examples of ways she fulfills them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent roles</th>
<th>Enactment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourager</td>
<td>Encourages good decision-making</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nurtures his abilities in different endeavors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Helps him turn bad decision-making episodes into learning situations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discusses and walks through decision-making process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Discusses potential consequences of actions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Explains his limits</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Listens to him</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Disciplines him</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Provides decision-making opportunities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teaches critical thinking skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Acts as a role model</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teaches him to weigh options</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporter</td>
<td>Physically stands behind him in difficult social situations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Is the family breadwinner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values keeper</td>
<td>Teaches moral decision-making</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teaches character development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Values education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizer</td>
<td>Plans summer activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Keeps family schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protector</td>
<td>Watches out window when he is playing with neighborhood kids</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Limits his activities to those that either she can supervise or another</td>
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<td></td>
<td>trustworthy adult can supervise</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintains his childhood innocence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tour guide of life</td>
<td>Clarifies the &quot;real world&quot; by helping child learn from other’s mistakes</td>
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Ms. Bigsby talked about disciplining her son,

When he is with his paternal grandmother, she loves him to death, don’t get me wrong, but when he is with her King Brad gets what King Brad wants. I don’t necessarily agree with that. That is a cycle that I am trying to break because that is not real life…..But on my side [of the family] he is King Brad with a limit. On the other side, he is King Brad with no limits! And that is what we are trying to kind of curtail
because King Brad does have limits...When he comes back home, the limit is still there and I intend for him to live and to operate within the confines of the rules and regulations of the house.

Brad’s mother is a teacher by career, so it is not surprising that she is a teacher at home as well. She explained,

I feel that my parenting skills have contributed to his leadership skills because I force him to make choices. I don’t always spoon feed him or give him the right answers. I want him to use better judgment, to think, to use some critical thinking skills to make decisions. If there is something that he wants, I might say "Well, Brad you may have one of those two toys you’ve picked." Then we discuss cost-wise and make comparisons. So a lot of times we will go into the store now and he will say, "Well, Mama, I will get this one now and I’ll wait and get the other one for my birthday." So quite often I force him to use critical thinking. If I get this, what is the upside? What is the downside? Will I be able to get anything else anytime soon? Just those kinds of things and I try to do it in a non-offensive way.

As the tour guide of life, Ms. Bigsby looks at situations in the home, neighborhood, and community and rather than trying to hide things that she might find distasteful, she uses those situations to teach her child about her expectations for his behavior. She said,

He knows what my expectations are. I will explain situations when we see things together. I am like "that is not how you would treat your little brother" or whatever. "If I see you doing that, there is going to be a price to pay." So a lot of it is upbringing. There are a lot of things that he knows. And he has seen examples. Because when I see them, or we are together and we see them, I let him know "No, that is not acceptable." So a lot of it has been on somebody else’s back, per se, but I don’t try to hide. Now I protect him as a child, but I don’t try to hide the real world from him because he needs to understand, you know, when this goes on and that goes on, that is not right. That’s not what I want. Even when he is not with me, you know, I want him to have good character.

In describing her role as her son’s protector, Ms. Bigsby talked about her neighborhood and said,

So, if something is not going right, that is what I am here for. I am always watching out of the window. I say watching out of the window.
because anything can happen. A lot of these kids are older. Their economic status may not be, you know, what ours is. Not that we have a lot, but we have a little bit more. Some of them may not have some of the, you know, little things. So I kind of have to watch a little more carefully than I normally would.

On another day of interviewing she observed,

Kids are just different now. And it is not just kids, its other people in the community too. You know, you may think you are safe but you never really know…But now I won’t let my son go too many places. Groups get together at our house and play by our rules. So it is still…he is still in his own world. I don’t give him a chance to explore too much, with the exception of school, because I am not there and these other kids are not my kids and I can’t rear other people’s children. I can’t teach you in 2 minutes what I have been teaching my boys in 5 and 7 years. So I am really protective on that aspect.

**Contextual Factors for the Bigsby Family.** There are many contextual factors that Ms. Bigsby believes are influential in Brad’s leadership development both from within the home and family and from within the community. Direct contextual factor is the term being used to describe those factors in the environment that Brad comes face-to-face with on a regular basis. Direct contextual factors for Brad include siblings, grandparents, school, his after school program, and his neighborhood.

In addition to herself, Ms. Bigsby credits other family members, namely Brad’s siblings and grandparents, as influencing his leadership abilities. His older sister has a somewhat submissive personality and Brad has picked up on that. It seems that he possibly sees that as a weakness, sometimes feeling it necessary to protect his older sister and sometimes being somewhat domineering toward her. Brad’s brother that is two years younger than him, is a constant companion in the home environment. Brad often manages his brother’s affairs and behaviors. Brad teaches his brother new skills, helps him follow the rules, helps him to understand his position as the younger brother, and watches over him.
Brad’s paternal grandmother is a master licensed social worker and owns her own counseling service. Brad loves to go to work with his grandmother and enjoys all of the attention and social interaction he gets while there. Ms. Bigsby recognizes that Brad’s paternal grandmother is helping to build his social networks, "There are a lot of things that she is involved in, does, and goes to so he is very well known [in the community]." Brad’s mother also sees his paternal grandmother’s influence in the development of his attitude that "I am the one in charge. I am the leader. If I say I want this or I want to do that, then that is what is supposed to happen."

Brad’s maternal grandmother has been very influential in his life as well. Not only does Ms. Bigsby praise her as a parenting role model, but also as a tremendous "reinforcement." Ms. Bigsby stated,

She is a big asset to his development. She is of great assistance to me. Mom is full-force reinforcement. Her influence is so good. Knowing what her influence was on me, she will never step on my parenting toes, but I give her that kind of free rein because I know that she is not going to instruct him on anything wrong. Any negatives that there may be, well, the positives are going to far outweigh the negatives all over the place. I don’t have any problem with the reinforcement and assistance she gives.

Brad’s grandmother is retired from a long-time career as an educator and speech pathologist. She lives next door to the Bigsby family. Brad goes to her house every afternoon, where he not only gets his homework completed, but learns about school culture and expectations. "She is going to go through his book sack and I mean literally go through his backpack and look at everything." His grandmother asks lots of questions like "What happened at school today?" and "Did you get in trouble?" and "What happened in class?"

Direct contextual factors from the community for Brad are school, his after school program, and his neighborhood. Ms. Bigsby is pleased with the school that Brad attends and takes full advantage of the after school program as well. She trusts his teachers to not only educate him and give him opportunities to develop leadership skills, but also to keep him safe. Even though she
thinks that, generally speaking, extracurricular activities are an important venue for developing leadership abilities, she has been hesitant to enroll Brad in widespread community offerings like Boy Scouts or Little League baseball. Her hesitation stems from her inability to be on site during practices or games and from her mistrust of others to supervise effectively. However, the after school program offers sports such as gymnastics and she feels confident that the children are being adequately supervised in that setting, therefore takes advantage of the after school program’s offerings. She believes that Brad is gaining leadership skills in that venue.

Although Ms. Bigsby has some complaints about her neighborhood, she believes that one can learn from both positive and negative examples. She often uses examples from within the neighborhood to teach her children important life lessons that she feels build on their leadership abilities. She gave an example of neighborhood children coming into the yard to use the basketball goal even though they have been told that they are not allowed to play on the goal without permission. Ms. Bigsby told the offenders to go home and she told their parents,

"I don’t mind them playing if they get permission, but without my permission, they don’t have any business in my yard." If something happens, that is my homeowner’s insurance that is going to have to pay. I intend to watch and see who is there…so I told them that they were not welcome to come back until they learn to follow the rules.

Ms. Bigsby used this episode to teach Brad and his siblings about right and wrong as well as good decision-making.

In comparing neighborhood activities to Brad’s after school program, she said that the big difference between the two is structure.

He needs an outlet. We all do. We all need people outside of our normal circle to socialize with and learn different things from. But it needs to be structured. I can’t just turn him lose and let him run wild and whatever he picks up, he picks up. So that is why I say structured. He needs discipline. He needs to learn how to accept failure gracefully. He needs to learn how to improve a situation. Like if he is not getting a turn, he needs to learn how to practice and improve those things…Even though he can be with his friends outside, it is not
structured. And that is a big difference. If somebody doesn’t pass the ball, then there’s an argument or a fight. Well, then who is going to be out there to break it up? Nobody. Nobody, except maybe me.

Research supports Ms. Bigsby’s views about the need for adult supervision. Almost any context where children interact with one another regularly is a potential venue for developing leadership qualities. The addition of a caring, supervising adult increases the likelihood that children will learn effective leadership skills during peer interactions (Hong & Milligram, 2008). It is also generally accepted that young children who have the supervision and support of caring adults are more likely to develop leadership skills that result in moral and ethical decision-making and that lack of a caring adult to oversee interaction is more likely to result in people who direct others into actions and thoughts that are illegal, immoral, or socially unacceptable (Hong & Milligram, 2008; Pettit et al., 1997; Silverman, 2000; VanTassel-Baska, Patton, & Prillaman, 1989).

In addition to the face-to-face or direct contextual factors that influence Brad’s leadership development, Ms. Bigsby acknowledges many indirect contextual factors that are a part of her family’s sociocultural, historical, or political climate as also being influential on Brad. Each of these was mentioned as having a bearing on Brad’s leadership development—family history, parent workplace, social networking, internet, values, laws, economics, and culture. Many themes across families were recognized in this domain and will be elucidated during the cross case analysis.

**Summary of the Bigsby Family.** As shown in Figure 4, beliefs, practices, and context factors that have helped the Bigsby family to influence the leadership development of Brad, the first grade male in that home, have been identified. The interconnected factors of the model illustrate the many bidirectional relationships. The way that each of these factors impacts the others is obvious and exemplifies Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological systems theory in action. Ms. Bigsby believes that her son exhibits leadership skills in a variety of situational contexts—home, school, after school program, and neighborhood. She gave many examples of him leading others and isolated the
Figure 4. Representation of the Interconnected Factors that Influenced Brad’s Leadership Development
leadership skills she believes he was using in the episode that was described. In addition, Ms.
Bigsby noted her parenting practices as well as other people’s influence on Brad’s leadership
development. Her beliefs impact her parenting practices and her parenting practices influence
Brad’s behavior and mindset. Reciprocally, Brad’s behaviors influence his mother’s parenting
practices and further develop her beliefs.

Family, teachers, and peers come face-to-face with Brad in the home, neighborhood, school,
and after school program to influence his behavioral outcomes. His mother’s beliefs influence the
direct contexts that Brad has the opportunity to participate in. Brad’s mother’s perspective
concerning the sociocultural, historical, and political climate is impacted by her beliefs as well as
the physical contexts in which they spend time, and ultimately have an indirect impact on Brad.

Case Study #3
The Pillsbury Family

The Pillsbury family is a middle income two-parent family with four children. Their oldest
daughter is 15-years-old and excels in sports and academics at the public high school that she
attends. The second born daughter is 14-years-old, does well in school and recently became a
member of the school cheerleading squad. The third born child is a 12-year-old son who enjoys
sports and adventures. The youngest child, Brianna, is 7-years-old and was identified by her 1st
grade teacher as being a classroom leader. She plays piano, likes arts and crafts, participates in
soccer, basketball, and gymnastics, enjoys the outdoors, and is an academic high achiever.

Dr. and Mrs. Pillsbury both agreed to be interviewed for this study but interviewed at different
times and different places. Discussions with each of them yielded valuable information about
Brianna and ways that their family is supportive of her leadership development. Their accounts
were in concurrence with one another on much of the information.

Brianna is a first grader at Riverdale Magnet School. Of all of the first grade Caucasian
females at her school, her scores on the Leadership subscale of the Scales for Rating the Behavioral
Characteristics of Superior Students-III (Renzulli et al., 2010) were the highest. Her teacher was especially impressed with Brianna’s "responsible behavior, ability to articulate ideas and communicate well with others and ability to organize things, people, and situations."

As a family, the Pillsburys enjoy traveling. Within the last 6 months they have been to Washington, D.C., Dallas, Texas, and Branson, Missouri. They also enjoy participating in a wide variety of extracurricular activities. Mrs. Pillsbury commented that she has three older active children and that "Brianna has kind of been dragged around to all of these different things that they were active in." Brianna enjoys spending time with her siblings, especially outdoors playing sports. She is also fond of playing with her older brother doing things like building with Legos or creating an imaginary country complete with a fort, unique flag, and pulley systems for moving objects and people. When left to her own devices, Brianna is likely to be found reading, making arts or crafts, picking flowers, or choosing a fashionable outfit to wear.

Although both of the Pillsbury parents commented that they had not had much opportunity to see Brianna interact with her peers at school, they were not terribly surprised that her teachers had identified her as a classroom leader. They both have noticed that Brianna is very verbal, argues well, and stands her ground even with her older siblings. When Brianna brings friends home from school for a play date or sleep over, she generally chooses friends that are about 2 years older than her and, in those instances, Brianna does not let her friends "dictate" over her. Brianna "holds her own" with those older children as well.

Brianna’s parents had difficulty thinking of specific instances of Brianna leading others, but mostly gave generalities like "being persuasive" and "has a definite opinion and expresses it well." Most of the stories that her mother related are about instances that occurred at home with Brianna’s siblings. Mrs. Pillsbury said,

I might be trying to explain to her…how she needs to move on and forget about whatever happened. She wants to repeat what happened
over and over and over again. She doesn’t want me to get her off-track and think about these other things. So, if I lead her in another direction, she is going to keep telling me. So while I am trying to re-direct her or do all this other stuff, she won’t let go. "But, Mama, he hurt my arm," "But, Mama, he hurt my arm right here," "But, Mama, do you see the red mark on my arm?"

Brianna’s mother believes that this story demonstrates Brianna’s determination and tenacity, as well as her daughter’s belief that she can use her verbal skills to "control the situation" and possibly change the outcome.

**Dr. Pillsbury’s Beliefs.** Dr. Pillsbury is one of two partners in a local dental firm. He was a member of a large dental firm in a metropolitan area, but decided a few years ago to move his family to a smaller community and start his own dentistry business. Since moving to Riverdale, he has been very active in his church and was recently elected by the congregation to be this year's lay bishop (the religious leader and primary speaker for the church congregation). Looking back at his own life, he does not see himself as a leader either as a child or as a young man, but "would classify myself as more of a leader now in life than I was earlier."

In general, Dr. Pillsbury believes that leaders should be good communicators, persuasive, respectable, charismatic, honest, intelligent, confident, moral, and able to make good decisions. He said, "I don’t think a leader is someone who just comes in and tries to take charge. People see them, respect them, go to them, and they end up being in a leadership role." He developed these ideas further in one of the comments he made in his parent journal,

I started paying attention to leadership qualities later in life it seems. I remember a man who was a leader at church. I noticed everyone not only liked him, but respected him. I wanted these same qualities so I started paying attention to how he conducted himself. I noticed he was able to get people unified and willing to do things. I think he was able to do this because he considered the ideas other people suggested and when conflict arose he was able to use humor to explain his point of view and cite others who had successfully overcome similar conflicts or obstacles.
Having given considerable thought to the concept of leadership in his own life gave Dr. Pillsbury a foundation for considering the leadership skills his daughter exhibits. Table 9 lists the characteristics Dr. Pillsbury believes that Brianna uses in leading others and some examples of those characteristics in usage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Stands her ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Stands up for what she believes is right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong sense of fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of learning</td>
<td>Does well academically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoys reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows awareness of differences in people</td>
<td>Serves others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences others’ behavior</td>
<td>Persuasive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is socially active</td>
<td>Not shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likes to get involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays physical competence</td>
<td>Enjoys outdoor activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physically energetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays self-confidence</td>
<td>Is very confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Makes own decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sticks up for herself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent in her thought processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doesn’t just follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comfortable in front of groups--singing, speaking or doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits linguistic competence</td>
<td>Comfortable with public speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very verbal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to peers</td>
<td>Listens and learns from siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sees others’ perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is highly organized</td>
<td>Plans ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thinks through things before making a decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thinks of many ways to accomplish a goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to Dr. Pillsbury listing academic achievement as a leadership attribute, he was asked how academics or intelligence play into leadership. Dr. Pillsbury replied,

When a person gets done playing sports, whether it is in high school, or college, or even professionally, if you are raising a family, you have to have other skills. And that is what you fall back on is your academics and what you’ve studied. And you can be a leader in sports, but that is only going to carry you so far. Eventually you are
going to get too old or whatever... but you are going to need other skills, other than those leadership skills that are used in sports.

Most of the broad categories or characteristics that Dr. Pillsbury attributed to Brianna’s leadership fit neatly into previously determined categories that teachers used to describe children’s leadership in the classroom as cited in research articles—Shows awareness of differences in people, influences others’ behaviors, is socially active, displays self-confidence, exhibits linguistic competence and listens to peers. Three of the new categories denoted—determination, morality, and love of learning—came up over and over in interviewing the parents in this study. These themes will be explored more fully in the cross-case analysis.

Even though the broad categories or characteristics of emerging leadership were very similar, the examples parents note in the home setting are sometimes different than what teachers observe in the classroom. This is understandable considering the different structure and atmosphere of the home compared to the classroom. For example, because of the way Dr. Pillsbury talked about Brianna serving others, that behavior was coded as an example of realizing that different people have different needs. Being of service to others or noting that there are some people in greater need of assistance than others is not generally part of the regular school curriculum.

**Dr. Pillsbury’s Practices.** Although Dr. Pillsbury recognizes that he is an active father and really believes in taking time to teach his children, he also acknowledges that his wife and her family’s parenting strategies have been very influential in how he parents. He noted, "My parents were ‘This is the way it is and you follow and step in line’" but Mrs. Pillsbury’s parents were more likely to "ask questions and get their thoughts, so I have kind of picked up on that.” In breaking down his parenting roles, he perceives himself as encourager, counselor, teacher, and supporter. Table 10 outlines the roles Dr. Pillsbury believes he fills and examples of ways that he performs them.

Dr. Pillsbury talked about being a good role model,
I think kids see their parents and how they interact with people and the kids will kind of mimic that a lot. If you are confident, then I think that they will be more confident. If you are not, same thing, a lot of it. That doesn’t mean that they are always going to be a cookie cutter pattern of it, but I think that they pick up on a lot of that.

Table 10. Roles Brianna’s Father Plays in Her Leadership Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent roles</th>
<th>Enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourager</td>
<td>Encourages academic achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages participation in extracurricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spends quality time with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Makes concerted effort not to &quot;pick&quot; on kids about normal childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>activities such as having a boyfriend or singing in front of a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Talks through decision-making processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teaches decision making skills, models ways of interacting with people,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>models public speaking, teaches life lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporter</td>
<td>Researches best school options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values keeper</td>
<td>Teaches and discusses Biblical scriptures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches consideration of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches serving others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values quality education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an effort to support his children and help them to get a quality education, he and his wife researched the local schools before making their final decision to move to Riverdale from the Dallas/ Ft. Worth area.

We researched—from private schools to public. Riverdale Magnet School had the best performance rating. I knew the principal. I had heard lots of good things about her…I know she tries to select good teachers….I think it is important to have teachers that really work with the kids so that the kids feel comfortable.

He went on to say that the facilities of the local schools paled in comparison to the schools their children had been enrolled in while living in Texas and the older children especially balked at the appearance of the local schools compared to what they were accustomed. But he and his wife were satisfied that their children could get a quality education in Riverdale and told them,

Well, you know, it doesn’t matter where you go to school; you are going to get out of it what you put into it. People have come out of schools from wherever that may have been lacking, but those people were successful….You just need to learn what you can and get the most out of it.
Dr. Pillsbury wanted his children to know that he is supportive of them in wanting a good quality education but also wanted them to own part of that responsibility.

This quote from Dr. Pillsbury is an example that was coded as being a parent in the values keeper role: Dr. Pillsbury discusses the importance of religious teachings in his home and their relevance to leadership development,

We tend to read the scriptures and discuss them and talk about them after and I would think that would help them because it gives them the opportunity to express themselves and voice their opinions. You know, not everybody is going to be right all of the time, but you talk about it.

In addition, part of his values keeper role includes teaching his children to be considerate of others’ and serving others. Dr. Pillsbury said,

At home it is talking about helping brothers and sisters and putting yourself in that person’s place, asking "What would you like to see happen?" At church it is that and helping other people that are not necessarily in your family. They will have in Primary, which is the little kids’ group, as a Sunday School group they will have an opportunity to go help somebody that needs yard work or something that they can’t do for themselves physically. As far as how that affects leadership, I don’t know. I think it is probably just teaching them some qualities other people view and admire so it is an attraction. If you are self-absorbed, I don’t think people are attracted to that.

Evidence from the literature review indicated that researchers see "serving others" as important. It seems that having many opportunities to serve others often leads to the development of more mature skills that enable one to implement ideas that help many even if it requires some self-sacrifice. Furthermore, participation in service to others through churches or other community involvement reinforces positive social values, often resulting in a developmental trajectory of continued adult civic activity and leadership (Fletcher et al., 2000; Olszewski-Kubilius & Lee, 1994; Sternberg, 2005).
Though he feels he has encouraged her leadership, Brianna’s father does not believe that he intentionally teaches leadership skills but that it is an "inadvertent" outcome of "just going about normal routine." He said that it is "not anything that I am trying to push."

**Mrs. Pillsbury’s Beliefs.** Mrs. Pillsbury works as a receptionist in her husband’s dental firm. Her background and training is in law. She is credentialed and has practiced as a licensed attorney in both Louisiana and Texas. When the family made the decision to leave the big city and move to a smaller town, she decided that it would be in the family’s best interest if both adults in the family initially put all of their efforts into building the family dentistry business rather than being divided trying to develop two different careers in a new town simultaneously.

Mrs. Pillsbury’s family has been a strong influence on her parenting and her concept of leadership. She said,

> The women in my family take care of their business. My great grandmother, my grandmother, my mother, her sisters, they all ran their households. Not to say that the men weren’t good providers; they were. But the women, they are strong and they run a tight ship. The women in my family historically are the ones who get business done.

She went on to say that her husband is a very involved dad, but that she "runs things" at home.

Mrs. Pillsbury indicated several times that her work experiences and church experiences also influenced her ideas about leadership. But this excerpt from her parent journal shows a melding of experiences through time.

> What I remember understanding about leadership as a child and teenager was that those who appeared to be leaders had the power of persuasion. First, they had ideas and schemes; second, they had a strong desire to have others participate in and go along with those ideas and schemes; and third, they possessed the skills to convince them to do so---good or bad. Of course, as an adult, you begin to better recognize true leadership and realize it is about inspiring others, not persuading them. A good leader is also not afraid to assemble, organize, and motivate others with greater talents and abilities than themselves.
In addition to giving a glimpse into how her concept of leadership has developed through time, this excerpt also begins to distinguish those characteristics she sees as being leadership qualities in adults.

Generally speaking, Mrs. Pillsbury believes that strong leaders inspire and motivate others. For example, she said "I think sometimes we confuse doing for other people when sometimes people are leaders when they inspire people to do it themselves. I think sometimes that might be better for people in the long run." In addition, she believes adult leaders should be organized, confident, good communicators, trustworthy, calm, goal-oriented, and creative problem-solvers that others look to for ideas.

Mrs. Pillsbury decided that conceivably Brianna’s teachers had identified her as being a leader because Brianna is "vocal," "has definite opinions," and "voices her opinions at school." Like the teacher, Mrs. Pillsbury also sees her youngest daughter as a leader. Mrs. Pillsbury believes that her daughter exhibits leadership skills both in and out of the classroom. During the course of our three interviews, Mrs. Pillsbury was able to list many leadership characteristics that she has seen Brianna exhibit, as well as examples of those leadership qualities in action (Table 11).

Brianna’s mother talked about another quality that Brianna has that may or may not play into her leadership---Brianna frequently "takes her time" or "takes forever" doing things such as getting dressed, cleaning her room, and taking her bath. Her mother sees this behavior as an indication that Brianna is easily distracted. However, the other descriptions of Brianna’s determination indicate that she is, as a general rule, not easily distracted. As discussed in the literature review, Gardner and Laskin (1995) indicated that young leaders need time to reflect on their ideas. Perhaps young Brianna is simply using the dull times of everyday drudgery to reflect and learn from her experiences as she processes them. Or, perhaps, she is, as her mother said, simply distracted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Stubborn, Persistent, Sticks with topic for long time, Won’t easily be re-directed, Attacks problem head-on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Sense of right and wrong, Stands up for what she believes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of learning</td>
<td>Loves to read, High academic achiever, Loves to explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows awareness of differences in people</td>
<td>Individualizes communication per age of child, Plays different roles with different children, &quot;Motherly&quot; to younger children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences others’ behavior</td>
<td>Persuasive, Argues well, Expresses her opinion to sway others’ opinion, Uses verbal skills to influence others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is socially active</td>
<td>Gets along well with others, Not shy, Shows enjoyment of group activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expresses creativity</td>
<td>Dramatic flair used as part of her persuasion strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is highly organized</td>
<td>Thinks of many ways to accomplish a goal, Creative problem solver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays physical competence</td>
<td>Physically energetic, Displays athletic coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays self-confidence</td>
<td>Adjusts easily to new situations, Stands up for self, Not afraid to express her opinion in a variety of contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits linguistic competence</td>
<td>Good communication skills, Very verbal from a very young age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to peers</td>
<td>Listens and learns from siblings, Sees others’ perspective, Negotiates/compromises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Completes household chores, Understands that everyone has to do their share</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brianna’s mother shared a story that she believes illustrates Brianna’s willingness to voice her opinion about what she believes is right and wrong. “She will come home from school and just be appalled that some child across the row did not do their homework. ‘How could they do that?’ asked Mrs. Pillsbury as she mimicked her daughter’s outrage. She went on to say "I expect
them to get their homework done every night and I guess she just can’t imagine a household where that is not the case."

Mrs. Pillsbury spoke about Brianna using a creative flair as a persuasion strategy. She said, 

She’ll even resort to exaggeration to try to get what she wants or for them [the siblings] to do what she wants. Even me. This doesn’t happen all the time, but if she is trying to get me to do something...she might exaggerate the story to get more of an immediate reaction. She knows that the exaggeration will be more likely to propel me to act.

Mrs. Pillsbury clarified by stating that Brianna is not a "liar" or a "fake," she just uses histrionics to her benefit. Feldhussen and Pleiss (1994) proposed that leadership could possibly be defined basically as a combination of social skills, creativity, and histrionics. Realizing what will "propel" her audience into action and playing on that with exaggeration and drama shows social perceptiveness, an ability deemed important for successful leaders to exhibit.

Most of the leadership characteristics described by Mrs. Pillsbury are representative of the leadership characteristics often seen by teachers and observers in the early childhood classroom— shows awareness of differences in people, influences others’ behaviors, is socially active, expresses creativity, is highly organized, displays physical competence, displays self-confidence, and exhibits linguistic competence. Three of the new categories denoted---determination, morality, and love of learning---came up over and over in interviewing the parents in the study. Three of the characteristics listed---expresses creativity, is highly organized, and responsible---were exclusive to the females. Each of these 6 categories will be explored more fully in the cross-case analysis.

Some of the behaviors that Mrs. Pillsbury gave as examples of Brianna’s leadership in action are not the types of things that teachers generally have the opportunity to witness due to the constraints of the classroom---time, structure, number of children, and adult to child ratio. For example, Brianna’s mother said that her daughter individualizes communication per age of the child she is interacting with, tends to play a motherly role when interacting with younger children, and
especially enjoys older children as playmates. Because all of the children in a classroom are typically about the same age and since Brianna attends a magnet school where all of the children are fairly high achievers, her teachers are not as likely to see those differentiated behaviors as the parents who see her with different age groups and in a wider variety of contexts and social situations.

Mrs. Pillsbury’s Practices. As stated earlier, Mrs. Pillsbury depends on her husband to be an involved parent but sees herself as primarily responsible for household decisions. In many ways Mrs. Pillsbury plays similar parenting roles as her husband-encourager, counselor, teacher, supporter, and values keeper. Additionally, she sees herself as organizer and family historian. The roles Mrs. Pillsbury believes she fills and broad examples of ways she carries out those roles are listed in Table 12.

Brianna’s mother sees herself as an encourager in many ways. One example follows:

With Brianna specifically, I think we talk a lot about freedom of expression. With her being the little one, it may be a little easier for the older ones to out-speak her, but I try to make sure that she has a say-so also.

Counseling is a role that Mrs. Pillsbury places herself in as well. "I want Brianna to set reasonable goals and achieve them. She also needs to fail sometimes and it is part of my job to help her through those failures and learn from them."

Mrs. Pillsbury was very concise in her description of how she thought her own parenting skills have contributed to Brianna’s leadership development, "I think I instill values in my children." In this role as values keeper, some of the values she listed were honesty, respect, moral decision-making, and responsibility. Specifically in regard to responsibility, she added,

When you have four kids, everyone has to pitch in. Now when she was younger she could get away with a lot and the other kids just gushed over her and thought everything she did was so cute. But as she got older, they expected her to pull her part too.
### Table 12. Roles Brianna’s Mother Plays in Her Leadership Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent roles</th>
<th>Enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Encourager   | Encourages freedom of expression  
|              | Encourages child to achieve goals |
| Counselor    | Helps child think through decision-making  
|              | Helps child learn from failures  
|              | Disciplinarian |
| Teacher      | Models role of strong women in family  
|              | Teaches problem solving  
|              | Teaches child to set |
| Supporter    | Supports efforts at home, school, and extracurricular activities  
|              | Attends events  
|              | Purchases equipment for extracurricular equipment  
|              | Supports public speaking  
|              | Gives child foundation for developing independent thinking skills |
| Values keeper| Teaches moral decision-making  
|              | Instills values such as responsibility, honesty, and respect for others  
|              | Values education  
|              | Upholds family and church teachings of right and wrong  
|              | Teaches virtues such as helping the less fortunate |
| Organizer    | Completes documents  
|              | Creates structure in household  
|              | Sets expectations and follows through on homework, behavior, and chores |
| Family Historian | Teaches family legacy  
|                | Teaches Mormon church history |

Family and church history are important to the Pillsbury family. Mrs. Pillsbury reported,

> I read somewhere recently that we should make a point of telling our children that "in this family we XYZ’ and you can fill in the blank about what it is that are your family expectations. I thought that was a good idea and I have been trying to do that more.

The idea is that "there are certain things" that your family is "known for and that the children should carry on those traditions." Some of the family traditions that she would like her children to carry on include being hard workers, valuing education, attaining a higher education, being independent thinkers, not depending on the government for help, continuing their membership in the Mormon Church, and taking "the reins" from forefathers to continue improving the community during their own generation.
Contextual Factors for the Pillsbury Family. There are many contextual factors that the Pillsburys believe are influential in Brianna’s leadership development both from within the home and family and from within the community. Some of those are more direct, that is Brianna comes face-to-face with them on a regular basis. Others are more indirect, that is, influential but somewhat abstract or further removed from Brianna’s conscious awareness.

As direct contextual factors in the home and family, Brianna’s siblings and grandmothers have been helpful in molding her leadership abilities. Both parents made several comments about the influences her siblings have had on Brianna’s leadership development. Mrs. Pillsbury said,

Her older siblings are definitely an influence on her. I am still the mom. I am in charge, so to speak. I don’t expect my older kids to raise my younger ones. That is not their job. But it is okay that they are influential and help with guidance to some extent.

Though her brother is influential, Brianna probably looks more to her sisters as role models. The older sisters are excellent role models for high achievement and responsibility. They also help Brianna to understand teachers’ expectations and how to do exemplary work for school. However, Mrs. Pillsbury felt that in some ways having such high standards to live up to could be somewhat "unfair." Certainly she would like all of her children to be high achievers, but with the age gap between the three oldest children and Brianna, there are times when she wonders if the bar may seem too high for her youngest child. Dr. Pillsbury asserted that the many family outings revolving around the older children’s extracurricular activities expose Brianna to a wide variety of competitions and performances. In addition, she is also exposed to the social interactions of older kids and often gets involved in those interactions. Her father felt that those kinds of experiences with her older siblings expanded her knowledge and experiential base, helping her to be more confident.

Brianna’s grandmothers, both paternal and maternal, have a strong influence on her development. Her paternal grandmother lives further away, so Brianna does not get to spend as
much time with her as she does her maternal grandmother, who is geographically closer. Both
grandmothers help instill values, teach virtues, and uphold church and family teachings. Mrs.
Pillsbury said that Brianna’s maternal grandmother was a school principal for many years and is just
"geared" to "encourage, inspire, and teach."

Within the community, Brianna is directly influenced by peers, teachers, and church
members. Not only do her teachers at school provide academic guidance and inspiration, but her
mother gave an example of Brianna’s teacher providing an opportunity to develop leadership. In
describing a school play the children produced and performed in, she said,

I don’t think anyone who had gone to school here the whole time
would have recognized this, but I saw that those kids did everything.
The teachers definitely gave them guidance and kind of an outline of
what they expected, but then the kids ran with it.

The results were somewhat "tacky" and certainly not as "pretty and polished" as it would
have been had adults had greater involvement. But Brianna and her classmates "took ownership
and pride in it. That is an opportunity for leadership development."

Brianna’s parents feel that her peers are influential because the children spend time together
in small groups working toward a goal. Whether it is as part of a casual play group, a soccer team,
church presentation, school play, or classroom activities, those kinds of interactions help kids learn
how to get along with one another, how to work well together, and "to be a good sport whether you
win or lose."

In a face-to-face kind of way, Brianna interacts with other church members at least weekly.
Brianna, like other children her age in that church, is expected to take on increasingly higher level
church responsibilities as she grows and develops. Brianna’s Sunday School teachers help her and
her age mates to give prayers, scripture, and musical presentations to the congregation. In addition,
the children are responsible for one in-depth presentation per year. Brianna’s parents recognize that
these many opportunities for public speaking are helping Brianna’s confidence and leadership
abilities. As mentioned earlier, Brianna’s father is the lay leader of the church this year. Two considerations are especially interesting pertaining to the church context. First, Gardner and Laskin (1995) asserted that children who are in a position to watch a parent who publicly persuades others, especially the children of politicians and religious leaders, are likely to grow up to be in leadership positions. Second, the Gardner and Laskin (1995) research also indicated that children who grow up in close relationship to an institution or organization that provides a springboard of sorts for the young leaders to communicate their messages have a propensity for growing into strong leaders with eloquent speaking skills, audience persuasion skills, and an ability to be tuned in to their audience’s needs.

**Summary of the Pillsbury Family.** As shown in Figure 5, beliefs, practices, and context factors that have helped this family to influence the leadership development of their 7-year-old daughter have been identified. The interconnected factors of the model illustrate the many bidirectional relationships. Seeing these bidirectional relationships lends itself to viewing leadership development through a Bronfenbrenner lens, that is, from the bioecological systems theory perspective of human development. Both parents see their daughter exhibiting leadership in a variety of contexts--home, school, church, and extracurricular activities. They gave some situational examples as well as behaviors that they believe demonstrate their daughter’s budding leadership. Additionally, Dr. and Mrs. Pillsbury discussed their parenting practices as well as other influences on their child’s leadership development. Their beliefs impact their parenting practices and their parenting practices influence Brianna’s behaviors and attitudes. Reciprocally, Brianna’s behaviors influence her mother and father’s parenting practices and further develop their beliefs. Close and extended family members, plus teachers, peers, and church members come face-to-face with Brianna in the home, school, church, and extracurricular activities to influence her behavioral outcomes. The family’s beliefs influence the direct contexts that Brianna has the opportunity to
Figure 5. Representation of the Interconnected Factors that Influenced Brianna’s Leadership Development
participate in. Brianna’s parents’ perspective concerning the sociocultural, historical, and political climate is impacted by their beliefs as well as the physical contexts in which they spend time, and ultimately have an indirect impact on Brianna.

Case Study #4
The Flowers Family

The Flowers family is a middle income two-parent family with four children. Their oldest son is 22-years-old and was a good student who was classified as gifted and talented and qualified for college scholarships. As an adult, he no longer lives with his parents, works in a supervisory position, and has a goal of entering college to become a trained pharmacist. The second born son is 20-years-old and, despite high abilities, chose to take a general high school equivalency exam rather than work toward a traditional high school diploma. He has a job and no longer lives with his parents. Their third child is Talia, a first grade female whose teacher identified her as a leader in the classroom. She loves school, enjoys social interaction, and is very protective over her little sister. The youngest child, also a female, is in kindergarten and loves to learn from her big sister.

Mr. and Mrs. Flowers both agreed to be interviewed for this study but interviewed at different times and different places. Discussions with each of them generated important information about Talia and ways that their family is supportive of her emerging leadership. Their accounts were in accord on much of the information.

Talia is a first grader at Riverdale Magnet School. Of all of the first grade African American females at her school, her scores on the Leadership subscale of the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students-III (Renzulli et al., 2010) were the highest. Her teacher was especially impressed with Talia’s "tendency to be respected by her classmates, ability to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations" as well as her "cooperative behavior when working with others."
As a family, the Flowers enjoy playing educational games, going out to eat, going on picnics at local parks, and taking advantage of regional resources such as festivals, museums, and tourist attractions. Talia enjoys spending time with her siblings. Her oldest brother comes by to visit and play with her at least once a week, engaging her in educational games and activities as well as sports and social interactions with people outside of the family. Talia and her younger sister spend a lot of time together. In addition to free play, Talia enjoys teaching her younger sister lessons in academics, basketball and other outdoor games, expected behaviors, and life skills. When Talia is alone she likes to dance, read, and occasionally play a video game.

Talia’s mother regrets that she does not have more time to volunteer at Talia’s school and her father often works out of town so, he is unable to have a school presence either. Even though they have not seen Talia interact much with her classmates, they have had the opportunity to watch her interact with family members and neighborhood children. Mr. Flowers was the first to recognize his daughter’s leadership abilities and as he discussed this with his wife, she became more aware of them as well. Both parents noted Talia’s abilities to communicate well, teach others effectively, enjoy social interactions, and have a keen awareness of other people’s needs.

In relating examples of Talia leading others, Mrs. Flowers said that her daughter came home from school one day very excited because her teacher had let her "teach the class." Although Mrs. Flowers realized that this was probably just a snippet of well-supervised time, she was proud that her daughter had been given that kind of responsibility and leadership opportunity at school. Because Mrs. Flowers believes that honesty is an important leadership skill, she also shared this story:

Well, she asked for some money to go buy something at school and I gave her a $10 bill. She bought what she asked for and brought the change back. I thought that was a good example of being honest. You know, most kids would not have brought the right amount of change back to you.
Mr. Flowers’s Beliefs. Mr. Flowers has a Bachelor’s degree in business management and marketing. For many years he worked in that field managing the food production and marketing on a university campus. He moved on to use the supervisory skills he learned in that field to train and supervise work groups on production lines of other industries. Looking back at his own life, he sees himself as a leader from a young age. Being the oldest male of his generation on both sides of his family, he was looked up to by siblings and cousins and had a lot of responsibilities that he gladly and efficiently fulfilled. His life experiences, work experiences, and military experience have all played a part in the development of his attitudes and general beliefs about leadership. Mr. Flowers enjoys telling detailed stories to characterize his thoughts. Many of his stories are situated in his workplace or in the area of sports.

Mr. Flowers began by sharing his perception of leadership, "My definition is very simple. A leader has to be someone who can lead others to get the job done. That is the military definition." Mr. Flowers believes that strong leaders are organized, intelligent, good communicators, aware of other people’s feelings, trustworthy, and caring. In addition, he believes that they are capable of regulating their emotions and inspiring others. He elaborated on intelligence, "You have to be intelligent, but you also have to be wise to know that your intelligence can’t overwhelm the people that you are trying to lead." When discussing good communication skills more fully he said, "You have to be able to communicate on their level and not try to overwhelm them or try to make them feel inferior." He went on to say that the way a leader communicates should be a "confidence booster" and "convey high expectations."

Mr. Flowers has been trained to lead others both in the workplace and in the military; therefore it is somewhat predictable that he has noted his own daughter’s leadership abilities. During the course of interviews, Mr. Flowers named the characteristics he believes that Talia uses in leading others and some examples of those characteristics in action (Table 13).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Strong work ethic&lt;br&gt;Gives her best every day&lt;br&gt;Highly motivated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Studies Bible alone and with family&lt;br&gt;Asks questions about and tries to practice Christian values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of learning</td>
<td>Does well academically&lt;br&gt;Was an early reader&lt;br&gt;Enjoys reading for information and pleasure&lt;br&gt;Intelligent&lt;br&gt;Everyday attitude of &quot;What do I want to learn today?&quot;&lt;br&gt;Loves to learn new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows awareness of differences in people</td>
<td>Nurtures younger children/protective&lt;br&gt;Monitors younger children and sees that others treat them in age-appropriate manner&lt;br&gt;Communicates differently with people of different ages&lt;br&gt; Watches for others’ needs to arise and provides for those needs&lt;br&gt;Quick to assist others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences others’ behavior</td>
<td>Teaches others&lt;br&gt;Influences others through modeling&lt;br&gt;Influences others through verbal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulates emotions</td>
<td>Is very patient with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is socially active</td>
<td>Not shy&lt;br&gt;Likes to get involved&lt;br&gt;Enjoys social interaction&lt;br&gt;Outgoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expresses creativity</td>
<td>Thinks of creative ways to organize information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is highly organized</td>
<td>Plans ahead&lt;br&gt;Makes checklists&lt;br&gt;Gets necessary materials together for projects&lt;br&gt;Assesses everyone’s needs and follows through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays physical competence</td>
<td>Displays athletic prowess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays self-confidence</td>
<td>Believes in her ability to succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits linguistic competence</td>
<td>Good communication skills&lt;br&gt;Loves sharing information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to peers</td>
<td>Listens to people to verify their needs and wants&lt;br&gt;Listen to determine how to teach a skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Verifies expectations and fulfills them to the best of her ability&lt;br&gt;Does what she says she will do</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr. Flowers talked about determination being an important leadership skill. He said, "One of the amazing things about being a leader is that you have to be a leader every day. So, as a parent, you have to be a parent every day." Mrs. Flowers believes that every work day requires that over 5 or 6 days, whether I feel like it or not, I have to get up and go to work. There is a purpose for that work. There is a time for that work. It does not matter what the weather is. For her, she wants to go to school.

He described instances when others might have been hesitant to go to school like when Talia had a black eye as the result of allergies or she just didn’t feel great. But, regardless, she never asked to stay home. Her father described her as "highly motivated."

Talia’s father is also impressed with her creativity and organizational skills. Talia comes up with many different organizational strategies for managing her own affairs as well as managing her younger sister’s. He said,

Sometimes she will write down tasks for her sister to do. And they’ll check off this, this, and this. A leader has to be organized—either they have to do it on paper or forever account for it in their mind, and she does that already.

She also talks to her sister and tries to motivate her into action. According to her father she says things like, "We have to get things done--this, this and this. Do you understand? If we want to go to the movies, then we have to fold our clothes." He went on to say that she understands behavioral consequences. She understands that if "we don’t do our work, then we don’t get our reward." Mr. Flowers believes that is an important lesson in life to learn and further stated, "If we don’t work, then we are not going to get the rewards of those who do work."

Observations conducted in this study were done by teachers, so I did not observe children as part of this study. However, I did have the opportunity to see Talia exhibit her self-confidence during the course of interviewing her father. The interview was conducted in a local coffee shop that was void of any other customers during our time there. Talia sat within eyesight of us in an
adjoining room playing games on her father’s cell phone. At one point, I became very thirsty. I said,

Excuse me. Talia, would you do me a favor? Would you go over to that counter and talk to those ladies and ask them if you can get a bottle of water for Mrs. Debra Jo? Just point this way and they will know who you are talking about. Tell them that I will come pay for it in a few minutes. Can you do that?

She nodded and away she went returning shortly with the bottle of water. Her father had complete confidence in her ability to carry out the request despite the facts that she had never been to that place of business or met the employees. With a smile, he stated, "She can do that. No problem."

Most of the broad categories or characteristics that Mr. Flowers attributed to Talia’s leadership fit neatly into previously determined categories that teachers used to describe children’s leadership in the classroom as cited in research articles—shows awareness of differences in people, influences playmates’ behavior, regulates emotions, is socially active, expresses creativity, is highly organized, displays physical competence, displays self-confidence, exhibits linguistic competence, and listens to peers.

Other characteristics stand out however. For example, observers in early childhood classrooms did not typically mention responsibility as a leadership characteristic, though Talia’s father clearly indicated that he believes it is an important skill and that his daughter exemplifies that through different behaviors. It is interesting to note that Renzulli et al. that designed the instrument used to identify classroom leaders for this study determined through methodical research that a student who demonstrates "responsible behavior, can be counted on to follow through on activities/projects" is exhibiting strong leadership qualities (2010, p. 41). One possible explanation for the difference between the Renzulli et al. research and early childhood classroom observations is a difference in the age ranges considered. The research that is cited in creating the "Characteristics of Very Young Children According to Early Childhood Professional Literature" is based on
classroom observations of children 3-8 years of age. In contrast, Renzulli’s Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students-III are designed to be used with students in grades K-12 or an age range of 5-18 years (Renzulli et al., 2010). It is possible that being a very responsible person is something that is more likely to be noticed in older students than in younger students. If this is the case, it also indicates that Talia is exceptionally mature in this domain of behavior.

Three of the new categories denoted---determination, morality, and love of learning---came up over and over in interviewing the parents in the study. Three of the characteristics listed---expresses creativity, is highly organized, and responsible---were exclusive to the females. Each of these 6 categories will be explored more fully in the cross-case analysis.

Even though the broad categories or characteristics of emerging leadership were very similar between parents and teachers, the examples of those characteristics in action were different in the home and community setting as observed by parents as compared to the classroom setting as observed by teachers and researchers. This is understandable considering that classroom structure and activities are very different than home structure and activities. An example that Mr. Flowers observed in the home is Talia’s ability to communicate at different levels with people of different ages. Classroom teachers are less likely to see that behavior because typically all of the children interacting in the classroom are about the same age. More particular to the case being examined, Talia attends a magnet school where all students in attendance are required to be fairly high achievers and well-behaved. The magnet school setting lends itself to a greater likelihood of a more homogeneous grouping than even a typical class might experience, thus creating less of a need for differentiating communication per ability level of the listener.

**Mr. Flowers’s Practices.** Mr. Flowers is an active father and said that he is "more outgoing" than his wife. He credits his wife with not only having excellent leadership skills but being the educator
of the family. He works out of town frequently and does not get to spend as much time with his children as his wife does. It is obvious in talking to the two of them that they converse frequently about the children and make joint decisions about parenting strategies.

Mr. Flowers had some difficulty listing his own parenting skills that he feels have influenced Talia’s leadership development, but instead told stories that illustrated his roles. In reviewing those stories, it was determined that his roles could be categorized as encourager, counselor, teacher, supporter, values keeper, and organizer. Table 14 outlines the roles Mr. Flowers believes he fills and examples of ways that he performs them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent roles</th>
<th>Enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourager</td>
<td>Encourages preparing for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helps child to be motivated and have a positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Points out and expresses approval of caring attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Discusses importance of daily consistency and strong work ethic, points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>out rewards and consequences of behaviors, compares responsible behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vs. irresponsible behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teaches good decision-making skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models training others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches methods for working efficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models leadership role of supervising underlings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches organizational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporter</td>
<td>Provides opportunities for outside of family interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values keeper</td>
<td>Values education and makes that clear to child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instills values such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discusses application of Bible teachings to daily life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches virtues such as displaying caring attitude toward others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizer</td>
<td>Helps child to think about organization, preparation, and time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helps run an efficient household</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the skills that Talia’s father encourages is organization and he sees preparation as an organizational strategy. He said,

If you should live to see another day, you should make some preparations….Make sure you put your stuff so that it can get washed.
If you are going to get pictures made at school, then you need to make
sure that we have already bought the outfit or there is one in the closet that you want to wear.

He believes that wherever you are going, there are preparations to be made and that includes preparing for the long-range future. He said,

Education is supposed to prepare us for the rest of our lives. We are supposed to be ever-learning. If you are ever-learning, then that is the way it is supposed to be—ever learning. Because you have to evolve because everything changes.

Some of the details of Mr. Flowers’ stories that were categorized as a parent in the teacher role were his descriptions of how he trains others and teaches them to work efficiently. He explained,

My daughter has watched me train others. She has watched me train my sons on exactly how to mow the yard. She has listened and learned as I trained them on simple ways of being more efficient. For example, when you change the trash bag, always put two bags in there. Because if you don’t, well, it seems like every time one of my sons took the trash bag out and left the trash can empty for a minute, someone came behind them and threw some food in there.

Mr. Flowers believes that leaders are caring people. He said,

It may not seem like many leaders are caring. They may seem sometimes to be kind of hard. But if someone were looking in the window without the leader knowing and just watched them make decisions, they would see that the decisions that they make are based on not just what is best for making dollars, but what is best for the people and what will keep them working and getting food on their table. So leaders have to be caring.

He went on to apply this characteristic to Talia and emphasized that he feels that part of his job as a parent is to help her develop the virtue of caring for others. An example includes Talia’s tendency to notice people’s needs and take care of those needs, as her father related in these episodes, "If we are going on a trip and we have an extra guest, she makes sure that the guest is provided for…a little snack or a drink" and "She was an early reader" who was always willing to "assist others" in the
class who were struggling with reading. In addition, "She gets on to her little sister or anyone else who plays too rough" with the younger kids in the neighborhood.

In addition to teaching his daughter virtues, Mr. Flowers is a strong believer in Christian principles and wants his daughter to live her life by those principles.

We always read the Bible together. It is extremely important. You know, the Bible has so many lessons and it is an inspiration and, of course, we talk about the ability to be a Christian.....We talk about how through the years you read, you are serious, you experience, and then you grow. So we are into that.

Mr. Flowers is the only father who pointed out his role in household organization. He talked many times of teaching and modeling efficiency and helping his child to think ahead in order to better manage time and be prepared for the next day.

Mrs. Flowers's Beliefs. Mrs. Flowers is a manager at a national fast food restaurant chain. She regrets that she did not complete high school and feels that not doing so has encumbered her ability to find work where her skills are more greatly appreciated. She is rather quiet and humble. For example, she never talked about herself as a model for leadership. Yet, in a separate interview with her husband, he described his wife as follows:

There are always learning materials around at an early age. Education is stressed. That is important and my wife is the leader on that because she is the one that sees the children from the time they get out of school. Even on weekends, she will have them doing stuff, if necessary.

In further describing his wife’s leadership abilities, he stated that his wife "doesn’t see herself that way, but she is. She is the first person to identify a family problem" and determine the best ways of solving the problem. She also delegates responsibilities to those involved to get the job done. "As far as leadership, she is a manager" at a fast food restaurant where the employees call her "Auntie" because they think she treats them "like family." Her employees are people who "have different educational backgrounds and different skills and different levels of understanding" but she always
finds a way to train them to do something that they can be successful doing. "She has managed different cooks and worked with different managers." She has to have good planning skills because she has to take "care of floating inventory."

In addition to the influence that her workplace has on her leadership perceptions, Mrs. Flowers credits her family with shaping a lot of her attitudes. However, she said that rather than learning from their model, she has learned that she wants her children to have a very different upbringing than she did.

Pretty much I think about the way I was raised and I want Talia to be raised differently. I want her to go to school and get an education. Like I told her, I didn’t finish high school and without an education you cannot make it in life. You know, you cannot get a good job and stuff like that. You can’t go to college, if you decide at some time that you’d like to do that, unless you have that high school diploma. So I just keep putting it in her ear to finish high school because I don’t want her to be like I was.

She went on to say that leadership and opportunities are closely linked. The kinds of skills that one uses to lead others are the same kinds of skills that help one to get promotions and take advantage of opportunities. Furthermore, getting a high school degree "opens doors" and gives one "more opportunities."

In general, Mrs. Flowers believes that strong adult leaders have a positive attitude, want to help others, have good communication skills, are honest, and treat others with respect. As far as communication skills, she elaborated by saying that leaders "should speak correctly" and be able to get people to "understand" what they are trying to teach them.

One of the factors that Talia’s mother believes led her teacher to recommend Talia as a child who exhibits strong leadership skills in the classroom is that Talia is a good teacher. Talia teaches her sister and has always enjoyed acting as the teacher’s helper in assisting other children who did not work as quickly as Talia. During the course of our interviews, Mrs. Flowers was able to list
several characteristics that she has seen Talia exhibit, as well as examples of those leadership qualities in action (Table 15).

Table 15. Characteristics Exhibited in Home/Community by Very Young Leader, Talia Flowers, According to Her Mother

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Strong work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Is honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treats others the way she wants to be treated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of learning</td>
<td>Does well academically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was an early reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loves to share what she has learned and teach others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows awareness of differences in people</td>
<td>Nurtures younger children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Takes special care with people with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helps people that she sees in need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences others’ behavior</td>
<td>Teaches others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influences others through verbal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulates emotions</td>
<td>Is even tempered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is socially active</td>
<td>Not shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Likes to get involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outgoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is highly organized</td>
<td>Plans ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assesses everyone’s needs and follows through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays physical competence</td>
<td>Displays athletic prowess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displays self-confidence</td>
<td>Not afraid to talk to groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willing to take risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits linguistic competence</td>
<td>Good communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uses correct English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corrects other peoples’ grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens to peers</td>
<td>Listens and responds appropriately to children and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listens to determine how to teach a skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Verifies expectations and fulfills them to the best of her ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does what she says she will do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Takes responsibility for younger sister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is stressed in the Flowers household that everyone is worthy of respect and there are different ways of showing that respect. Talia’s social perceptiveness allows her to recognize others’ needs so that she can treat others the way she would like to be treated. Talia also displays respect by
being courteous. She can always be counted on to remember to say "Yes, ma’am" and "No, ma’am" and that is very important to her mother.

In addition to the story related earlier about Talia coming home with the right amount of change from a school expenditure, her mother related another story about her daughter’s honesty. Mrs. Flowers said that her daughter is not perfect, and like all of us, she makes mistakes but "if she does something wrong and I ask her about it, she will be honest about that too. She is real good about that."

Talia’s younger sister has a hearing disability and wears hearing aids. Mrs. Flowers has been very impressed with how well Talia works with her younger sister and takes into account her sister’s disability. Talia is quite the little teacher and "she teaches her little sister very well." Talia "teaches her reading. She teaches her math. Everything they go over at school, she comes home and teaches her that." Because of her hearing impediment, Talia’s younger sister sometimes mispronounces words, but Talia is very patient and works with her, "if she says something wrong, she goes back and corrects her. And if she is saying it the wrong way," then Talia works with her on saying it correctly. Talia even tries to teach her 5-year-old sister to read.

**Mrs. Flowers’ Practices.** Mr. and Mrs. Flowers coordinate their parenting, but Mr. Flowers is frequently out of town for several days in a row, so Mrs. Flowers often has to make parenting decisions on her own, which she has no problem doing.

Mrs. Flowers plays similar roles as her husband—encourager, counselor, teacher, supporter, values keeper, and organizer. The roles Mrs. Flowers believes she fills and examples of ways she carries out these roles are listed in Table 16.

Talia’s mother described herself as a quiet woman,

I always say that I am the quiet one. He [Mr. Flowers] is the talkative type, but I am more quiet. When somebody asks me something, I might say something or I might not. And I am that way with everyone, even my family. I have just always been like that.
However, Mrs. Flowers recognizes that shyness can be a bit of a social handicap and supports her daughter in being more outgoing. Because both her husband and her oldest son are more talkative and outgoing, she relies heavily on them to give Talia opportunities for social interaction outside of the family.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent roles</th>
<th>Enactment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourager</td>
<td>Encourages child to be more outgoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>Communicates frequently the importance of getting an education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teaches academic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches good self-presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models correct grammar and word usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporter</td>
<td>Provides home environment that is conducive to learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values keeper</td>
<td>Instills values such as responsibility and honesty, keeping God first, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>going to church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values education and discusses it frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models helping others, respecting others, and giving to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizer</td>
<td>Keeps family schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sets house rules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is true that Mrs. Flowers is not one to be very talkative, but when she does speak, she chooses her words carefully and makes a point to use correct grammar. These are qualities that she believes are parts of being a leader and are parts of the skill set that she puts under the umbrella of teaching good communication skills. "When she talks to people, I encourage her to use correct English and exactly the right words to express what she means. Some people do not use correct English, so I always try to tell her to speak correctly."

Talia’s mother believes that it is important to present oneself to others in ways that are socially acceptable. She wants Talia and her sister to have on "matching clothes." Mrs. Flowers also encourages her daughter to "take a bath, wash her face, brush her teeth, and all that kind of stuff."
Mrs. Flowers’ parent journal reveals some of the values she wants to instill in her daughter.

I remember one time when I gave an old woman a ride to the store and home. After helping the woman, I got back into the car and Talia asked, "Mom, why did you pick that woman up?" I responded, "Because it was hot and that old woman doesn’t need to be out here in the heat walking. Just think, that could’ve been your sister, mother, grandmother, or aunt that needed help." We continued our conversation and I told Talia that in life sometimes we help people when we are able to help and that good things happen to you by helping, respecting, and giving to others. Now I am seeing that Talia helps, respects, and gives back to others as much as she can.

Talia’s mother wants her to be a responsible person and gives her oldest daughter ample opportunities to practice that. "At home, if I get sick she has to help with her little sister. So I dwell on that. That it is important to take responsibility." Another value that Talia’s mother tries to instill in her is honesty. She said that she sometimes relates a family story to emphasize the importance of being honest, "I tell them that my grandmother always said ‘Never lie. Nothing good ever comes of that. So always be truthful.’"

In her parent journal, Mrs. Flowers discussed the differences between Talia’s opportunities for leadership development and her own. When Mrs. Flowers was a young girl she would accompany her grandmother to work and her grandmother always emphasized to "keep a job, go to church, and always keep God first." Mrs. Flowers believes her family’s stronger emphasis on working, rather than getting an education, prevented her from taking advantage of many leadership opportunities. Mrs. Flowers continues to pass down her grandmother’s wisdom to the next generation but with a slightly different twist. Like her grandmother, she teaches her children to "go to church and always keep God first," but she emphasizes preparing oneself for a good job by getting a good education as opposed to just keeping a job. She sees a big difference in what her daughter is doing at 7 years of age, "teaching her peers how to read," and what she did at that age which was "taught by my grandma how to work."
Some of Mr. and Mrs. Flowers comments indicated that they play a role that could be categorized as family history keepers or passing on a family legacy. On the one hand, Mrs. Flowers quoted her grandmother a few times and said that she used those quotes to help teach her children. On the other hand, she specifically said that one of her goals was to teach her children differently than she had been taught in her nuclear family. Likewise, Mr. Flowers wrote in his parent journal that his leadership abilities were strongly influenced by his grandmother and his uncles. Yet he went on to say that one of the big differences between his and Talia’s childhood is that he was influenced by extended family and she is not. It appeared that there was more intentional emphasis on not passing down family history than there was to pass on a family history, so neither parent was categorized in that role. However, many researchers acknowledge the strong influence that the family has on one’s development (Bloom, 1985; Hong and Milligram, 2008; Piirto, 2004; Sternberg, 2004). This would be true not only of Talia being influenced by her nuclear family, but it would also stand true in both Mr. and Mrs. Flowers’ childhood upbringing. Whether intentional or not, each generation of parents influence the next and, indirectly, have an impact on the generation that follows after that. In the case of the Flowers family, strong work ethic, teaching responsibility and honesty, going to church, and keeping God first are some examples of family values that they are being passed from an earlier generation of family members to the youngest generation of family members.

**Contextual Factors for the Flowers Family.** There are a few contextual factors that the Flowers believe are influential in Talia’s leadership development both from within the home and family and from within the community. Some of those are more direct, that is, Talia comes face-to-face with them on a regular basis. Others are more indirect, that is, influential but somewhat abstract or further removed from Talia’s conscious awareness.
As direct contextual factors in the home and family, Talia’s siblings have been helpful in molding her leadership abilities. Both parents made several comments about the influences her older brothers and younger sister have had on Talia’s leadership development.

Her oldest brother is "a carbon copy" of Mr. Flowers and as such "he works hard. He has trained others in different jobs and such. He was one of those students who assisted others…as they were going through school." Mrs. Flowers said that her oldest son sets an example for Talia. That he is "outgoing" and puts Talia in social situations with people outside of the family. He is also very good about "helping others" and so acts as a role model for Talia in that respect. Talia’s oldest brother comes to visit and play with her at least once per week. Mr. Flowers said that the oldest son not only plays educational games with Talia to help her learn academic skills, but he teaches her about "school culture" because he has "learned the educational system. What is expected and how you have to think and how you have to learn to take tests."

Talia’s middle brother has also been influential. Though she sees him less often, he models "caring and compassionate behavior." "Children seem to be drawn to him" and whenever he visits, a group of children gather in the driveway to play basketball with him, thus providing Talia another group with which to interact.

Talia spends a lot of time with her younger sister. Under her parents’ supervision, Talia takes responsibility for her sister’s well-being. She enjoys teaching her sister and her sister enjoys learning from her. Talia is aware of her sister’s hearing disability and takes special care to help her sister learn to compensate for that disability. Management and organization seem to be two of Talia’s strengths and she is very content to hone those skills in managing her sister’s behaviors. In describing opportunities for leadership development, Albert (1980) reported that older children often take the role of parent-surrogate/teacher to the younger child which is intellectually beneficial to the eldest in that she learns to teach and explain, as well as read the needs of another individual.
This description fits Talia perfectly. It is worthy of note, however, that Albert was writing specifically about the eldest child in the family in this description. Because of the 13 year gap in age between Talia and the youngest of her older brothers, her parents have kind of created two families. Birth order researchers proposed that a gap of more than 6 years between siblings can create a situation where the child born after the gap learns to function in a number of ways as a firstborn (Leman, 2005).

In addition to her siblings, Mr. Flowers feels that Talia has been influenced by one of her paternal aunts. The aunt spent much time with Talia before Talia started school and helped give her a foundation for loving to learn. She was often available to teach her skills and has been a big influence on Talia’s "attitude toward education." As a college graduate, this aunt also offers Talia a role model for attaining the higher education that her parents would like to see her earn some day.

Direct contextual factors in the community that have influenced Talia’s leadership development are teachers and peers. Mr. and Mrs. Flowers believe that Talia’s teachers give her opportunities to use her leadership skills by giving her classroom responsibilities, allowing her to act as a peer mentor, and assigning "group projects" that Talia enjoys "organizing" and "getting all of the stuff together" for as well as delegating tasks to different members of the group.

Talia’s experiences with peers are limited to home, school, and the neighborhood. At home, she interacts with her sister who is close to her in age. At school, she interacts with classmates. In the neighborhood, she watches over younger children with adults close by. She also plays basketball with her brothers and neighborhood children. Her father and her brothers reach beyond the parameters of the family to visit with neighbors and involve Talia in the interactions. She has not participated in adult-led extracurricular activities, but her parents want her to participate in basketball, softball, and other activities that interest her as she gets older.
In addition to the face-to-face or direct contextual factors that influence Talia’s leadership development, Talia’s parents acknowledge many indirect contextual factors that are a part of their family’s sociocultural, historical, or political climate as also being influential on Talia. Each of these was mentioned as having a bearing on Talia’s leadership development—parent workplace, social networking, television and internet, local government, local university, religious ideologies, size and location of town, values, laws, economics, and culture. Many themes across families were recognized in this domain and will be elucidated during the cross-case analysis.

Summary of the Flowers Family. As shown in Figure 6, beliefs, practices, and context factors that have helped this family to influence the leadership development of their first grader were identified. The interconnected factors of the model illustrate the many bidirectional relationships. Seeing these bidirectional relationships lends itself to viewing leadership development through a Bronfenbrenner lens, that is, from the bioecological systems theory perspective of human development. Both parents see their daughter exhibiting leadership in a variety of contexts—home, school, and neighborhood. They gave some situational examples as well as behaviors that they believe demonstrate their daughter’s emerging leadership. Additionally, Mr. And Mrs. Flowers discussed their parenting practices as well as other influences on their daughter’s leadership development. Their beliefs impact their parenting practices and their parenting practices influence Talia’s behaviors and attitudes. Reciprocally, Talia’s behaviors influence her mother's and father’s parenting practices and further develop their beliefs.

Family members, teachers, and peers come face-to-face with Talia in the home, school, church, and neighborhood to influence her behavioral outcomes. The family’s beliefs influence the direct contexts in which Talia has the opportunity to participate. Talia’s parents’ perspective concerning the sociocultural, historical, and political climate is impacted by their beliefs as well as the physical contexts in which they spend time, and ultimately have an indirect impact on Talia.
Figure 6. Representation of the Interconnected Factors that Influenced Talia’s Leadership Development
Cross-Case Analysis

I began the cross-case analysis by first looking at the data provided by teachers and making comparisons between different elements of that data set. I then moved on to the data collected from parents, beginning by constructing a meta-matrix to verify themes and patterns across families in one concise, easy to read and compare format (See Appendix I). By assembling the data from each case in this form, I was able to more easily see variables as they compared and contrasted to one another. In constructing the variable-oriented analysis, I again used the variables specified in the central question: Are there certain beliefs, practices, and contextual relationships within a family of a young child who has been identified as a leader in the academic setting that will contribute to an in-depth understanding of how parenting performance influences the development of a young leader? Looking across columns and blocks of data, I was able to identify common components across families as well as interesting contradictions and inconsistencies.

In reading and re-reading the transcripts of the parent interviews coupled with writing the case studies, several unexpected themes and collections of issue-relevant instances emerged. I paid careful attention to participant meanings and gathered clusters of meanings that shared a similar theme. Most of these themes fit the levels of human development outlined by Bronfenbrenner in his bioecological model of human development (See Figure 1) and so I categorized the themes according to those levels-microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Where pertinent, I have provided quotes and details that support the discovered themes.

Last, I looked for instances in the transcribed interviews of conversations that pointed to a parental perception of some unsupportive element of the environment that they found to hinder their child’s leadership development or an expressed concern about other children in the community who lacked the support that their own child received.
The Classroom Setting

Only information about first graders was used for this study because ethnic and gender diversity were established within that grouping. By reducing the data into categories that closely align with the sample selection criteria, comparisons could be made between the children selected for the study. Table 17 is a gender and ethnic itemization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Leaders</th>
<th>African American 1st graders</th>
<th>Caucasian 1st graders</th>
<th>African American 2nd graders</th>
<th>Caucasian 2nd graders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>I (1)</td>
<td>I (1)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>III (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>II (2)</td>
<td>IIII (4)</td>
<td>IIII (5)</td>
<td>II (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 17 reveals, there were no significant differences in the number of children selected for the study based on grade level, 8 first graders compared to 10 second graders. Ethnicity was also fairly balanced with 8 African American students recommended as compared to 10 Caucasian students recommended. However, if both ethnicity and gender are combined, then African American males appear to be under-represented as only 1 child of that description was scored as having strong leadership skills in the classroom setting, but a total of 4 Caucasian males were recommended. It is interesting to note that at both the first and second grade levels significantly more females were recognized for their leadership skills in the classroom than males, 13 females as compared to 5 males. The preponderance of female recommendations over male recommendations is in direct contrast to leadership research literature. In her review of gifted and talented research, Silverman (2000) found that boys were much more likely to have their leadership skills "recognized and nurtured" (p. 292) in schools than were girls.
Parent Beliefs

**General Leadership Characteristics.** Insofar as general leadership characteristics that parents appreciated in others—supervisors, pastors, political candidates, and others—good communication skills, intelligence, good decision-making skills, and the ability to regulate emotions were most frequently mentioned. Not surprisingly, these were also frequently mentioned as attributes that the parents encouraged their children to acquire. Other admirable attributes of leaders that were mentioned often were trustworthiness, morality, problem-solving abilities, organizational skills, and goal-orientation. Though phrased differently, general beliefs about leaders that parents listed such as "inspirational," "motivates others," "encourages others," and, possibly, "helps others" have similar meanings in that each involves a positive way to involve others in accomplishing a task or developing an attitude.

For the meta-matrix analysis, I combined mothers’ and fathers’ general beliefs about leaders because so much of what they said was in accord. There was only one contradiction between parents. Dr. Pillsbury believes that leaders are persuasive, whereas his wife said that she believed that the ability to persuade others was a leadership skill when she was younger, but as an adult, has come to the conclusion that it is the ability to inspire others that is truly a leadership skill, not the ability to persuade others.

In reviewing leadership in research literature, it appeared that men and women often have different leadership styles characterized by women being more relational and men being more administrative (Krüger, 2008). Because of these reported enacted differences between men’s and women’s leadership, it was anticipated that mothers would possibly name relational leadership traits more than fathers or that fathers would possibly list more administrative leadership characteristics than women. That did not turn out to be the case, however, as it appears that there were many nurturant general leadership qualities listed by both fathers and mothers and many administrative
general leadership qualities listed by both fathers and mothers. In addition, I did not note any category of leadership characteristics that were more prevalently mentioned by one gender or the other. One of the few gender related differences noted between mothers’ and fathers’ responses was that fathers had a tendency to use sports analogies in relation to leadership and mothers did not.

**Their Child’s Leadership Characteristics.** There were 10 categories of early childhood leadership characteristics delineated in the peer-reviewed research about very young leaders in the classroom (See Classroom Characteristics of Very Young Leaders According to Early Childhood Professional Literature, Table 1.) All 10 of those categories were also recognized by parents in the home and community setting and four new categories were created so that additional information provided by parents could be classified accordingly. Those four new categories were determination, morality, love of learning, and non-biased attitude.

**Determination.** Every parent interviewed for this study mentioned an attribute that was coded as determination. Some of the examples may not initially sound like determination, but when taken in context, seemed to fit that category. For example, Mr. Flowers said about Talia,

> One of the amazing things about a leader is that you have to be a leader *every day*. So, as a parent, you have to be a parent *every day*. So, every day, over 5 or 6 days, whether I feel like it or not, I have to get up and I have to go to work. There is a purpose for that work. There is a time for that work. It does not matter what the weather is. For her, she wants to go to school all days. She had a bruise under her eye one time and she still wanted to go to school. She didn’t have pink eye, it was an allergy. She still wanted to go to school.

This was described as "strong work ethic" and coded as an example of determination. The following is a list of parents’ significant phrases concerning their child’s determination

1. Gives best effort
2. Gives 100%
3. Can focus on topic for extended period
4. Stays on task
5. Competitive
6. Demanding of self and others
7. Once he makes a decision, he follows through with it
8. Works on skills until he has reached a self-imposed level of expertise
9. Has strong will power
10. Independent
11. Sets mind on goal and achieves it
12. Demanding of others
13. Stands her ground
14. Stubborn
15. Persistent
16. Sticks with topic for a long time
17. Won’t be easily re-directed
18. Attacks problem head-on
19. Strong work ethic
20. Gives her best everyday
21. Highly motivated

**Morality.** The morality that each child already exhibits impressed parents as an emerging leadership quality. Mrs. Sawyer said about Justin,

He is just a good kid. He knows what is right and what is wrong. Whenever the kids have to raise their hands and there’s a presentation, he always brings up moral choices of why you would do something versus doing something else. "If there were a dollar on the floor, what would you do?" kind of thing. He is always the first kid to say "I would go and try to find whose money it is." You know, "I would give it to the teacher" or "I would give it to the policeman." Things like that. That is his first response.
Dr. Pillsbury also noted his daughter’s developing morality and sees it as part of her leadership, "At home, I see her standing her ground. If she believes something or wants something, then she will stand up for it" and "She thinks about issues, usually about fairness." The following is a list of ways that parents described their child’s morality:

1. Sense of right and wrong
2. Stands up for what he believes
3. Knows right from wrong
4. Has strong moral compass
5. Stands up for what he believes is right
6. Will tell others how to follow the rules
7. Good character
8. If she believes something, she will stand up for it
9. Strong sense of fairness
10. Studies Bible alone and with family
11. Asks questions about and tries to practice Christian values
12. Is honest
13. Treats others the way she wants to be treated
14. Very respectful

**Love of learning.** All of the children who participated in this study attend a magnet school that requires that they have good grades and do well on the state’s standardized testing in order to continue their enrollment at that school, so it is predictable that these kids are intelligent. Since their parents have already noted that they see intelligence as a general leadership characteristic, it is also predictable that they would list intelligence as one of their child’s leadership attributes.
However, the descriptions that the parents gave not only indicated that the children are intelligent, but that they love to acquire new knowledge.

This excerpt from Mr. Sawyer’s transcript is a good example of his perception of his son as loving to learn: "He is a very, very smart little guy. He picks up on things a lot quicker." Even though his two older sisters are smart,

Justin is off the charts above them. He’s doing things earlier. He’s doing things quicker. Grasps abstract concepts quicker. Like little things around the house where we …we may have a conversation about some civics concepts and he grasps very, very quickly things I would not expect kids his age to get and understand. He’s also, um…He knows he is smart, but he also knows that there is a whole lot that he doesn’t know. It seems like a lot of times when you have kids that are really smart, they are kind of like "Eeehhhh, I already know it all." But Justin just likes to learn.

Mrs. Sawyer stated, "He likes to learn new things. So if he doesn’t know it, he wants people to tell him what the real answer is or what the correct answer is or something."

Mr. Flowers describes Talia as having a similar attitude.

One thing about my daughter is that she, um, like when she gets up in the morning, she is the first one to get up and get going with an attitude of "What do I want to learn today?" One of the things that she will reach for is something to read, whether it the Bible, the newspaper, or a storybook. She is a reader. Then her sister soon follows. And they get into it together. Talia teaches her sister everything that she learns. Everything. And they have a little friend. She’s about 2[-years-old]. And they teach her. And that starts with Talia. That’s one of the things. That’s my daughter, she not only loves learning, but she loves sharing.

**Non-biased attitude.** Another leadership category was created from the descriptions that parents in this study provided, but this category seemed to be exclusive to the boys. Both the mother and father of Justin and the mother of Brad made mention of their sons’ not having biases and each perceives that attitude as being part of their son’s leadership qualities.
As an example of non-biased behavior, this quote from Justin’s father is offered:

I don’t think I have ever had a conversation with Justin about skin color. That’s great. I don’t ever want to have a conversation (laughter). It is just skin color. That’s it. You’ve got brown hair. She’s got black hair. She has blonde hair. Just look at our family. Our middle daughter is very pale, has fair skin. Our oldest daughter looks like she was born in South Italy. She has very olive tone skin, tans very easily. Just look within your own family and you can see differences. It’s just what it is and we’ve never had that conversation because it is just not something that Justin is concerned about.

Mr. Sawyer further stated that

Justin has friends who are African American kids. He gets along fine with them. I don’t think he’s got any sort of racial indicator in his body whatsoever. There just isn’t; they are just friends. Which is great! I just love it!

Justin’s father noted another way that Justin is unbiased. Mr. Sawyer believes that Justin is not judgmental in his perceptions about other children’s school abilities.

He talks about other kids in the class and I have noticed…I’ll say "How does this one do?" He has no condemnation of kids that don’t get it or who have trouble in school. He doesn’t say "They’re not very smart." You don’t get any of that. I think that is very unusual for a young kid not to have a little bit of that “Yes, I am better!” I don’t see that from him. It is kind of interesting.

Likewise, Justin’s mother observed that Justin doesn’t notice skin color. Mrs. Sawyer said,

We will go to describe someone and the last thing any of us will say is skin color. My son does that all of the time. He’ll be describing this kid and I’ll say ‘I just don’t know which kid that is.’ And he’ll say ‘Oh, his skin is darker than mine.’ And then I’ll say ‘Oh, I know which kid that is!’ So it just isn’t that important to him.

Brad’s mother commented that Brad makes no judgments about class. Ms. Bigsby said,

A lot of these kids are older. Their economic status may not be, you know, what ours is. Not that we have a lot, but we may have a little bit more. Some of them may not have some of the, you know, little things. So I kind of have to watch a little more carefully than I normally would. But he feels….there is no class with him which is a good thing, I feel.
In an article about teaching children to care about others, Garner (2013) states that girls tend to show more nurturing behaviors and that boys tend to be more concerned about issues of justice. Parents of young leaders in this study often described their daughters as nurturing and, perhaps, the behaviors that parents of boys described that were categorized as non-biased attitudes are an outcome of a fairness or justice-seeking mind set.

**Gender-related differences.** In continuing to look at parent’s perceptions of their children’s leadership characteristics, a pattern emerged that indicated other gender-specific categories. Parents of girls noticed their daughter’s propensity for using organizational skills, responsibility, and creativity as leadership skills. Renzulli et al. that created the SBRCSS-III (2010) also recognized organization and responsibility as leadership qualities, but creativity was not a part of the leadership scale. However, creativity is recognized as a leadership skill by observers in early childhood classrooms as noted in Table 1. Both Brianna and Talia’s teachers reported them as "always demonstrating the ability to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations" and "always demonstrating responsible behavior, can be counted on to follow through on activities/projects." It was determined that for this study, those behaviors that indicated planning and preparation were coded as *organization* and those behaviors that indicated an independent willingness to follow through or take initiative in a situation were coded as *responsibility*.

**Is highly organized.** This story that Mr. Flowers related of Talia’s organizational abilities is an excellent case in point: Mr. Flowers believes that Talia is organized because she "knows she has a certain amount of time to get things done and we are not going to be late." She "brushes her teeth, gets cleaned up, and has her clothes ready." When it is time to walk out of the door to go to school, "she has her school stuff ready to go." So she "is prepared." He also talked about the parenting mind-set that has instilled those kinds of behaviors, "If you teach your child to be
prepared to go to school, prepared to go to church, then you are preparing them for leadership in the rest of their lives through preparation."

Dr. Pillsbury talked about the chores that Brianna is given and that she is dependable about getting them done without adult intervention. He said that she has certain things that she has to accomplish during the course of the week. Brianna "plans ahead" and "thinks through things" as she is making decisions about when to do her chores and how to use her time so that she can both have time to do the things she wants to do and accomplish the chores that she has been assigned.

**Responsible.** Talia’s parents gave many more examples of Talia exhibiting responsible behaviors than Brianna’s parents did, but that is probably in part due to Talia having a younger sister and Brianna not having any younger siblings.

Brianna’s mother said that she "completes her household chores" and that she "understands that everyone has to do their share" in a large household. Completing her household chores because she understands that everyone has to do their part to keep the household running smoothly shows a higher level of responsibility than simply doing one’s chores because it is the household rule and there will be unpleasant personal consequences for not getting them done.

Talia not only takes care of getting her own things ready so that the family can be on time to school and church, but she also helps manage her sister so that she is ready to walk out of the door on time as well. Mr. Flowers said, "A leader has to be willing to assemble things and also direct people or, the better word is probably ‘assists’ people in getting their stuff assembled. You know, if we are playing football, everybody needs their equipment." Talia is very good about that kind of behavior and she can be heard saying "So you’ve got your stuff? And you’ve got your stuff?" Her father said, and pretty much she verifies or assesses everyone’s needs. ‘Has the backpack been packed? Do you have this item? Do you have this item?’ Even though my daughter will say ‘I can do it myself’ in regard to anyone helping her, she will ask others.
Expresses creativity. Parents of both of the girls point out their daughters’ creativity. Talia’s father said, "She is also very creative." He said that she creates many ways of organizing information. Mr. Flowers said,

Sometimes she will write down tasks for her sister to do. And they’ll check off this, this, this. A leader has to, either they have to do it on paper or forever account for it in their mind, but she does that already.

Brianna’s mother said that she is creative in that she uses a dramatic flair as part of her persuasion strategies.

Bossy. Some gender differences noted were semantic in nature, but could be indicative of cultural attitudes. For instance, the word "bossy" was used in reference to females, but never in reference to males and was always mentioned by mothers, never by fathers. Instead males were more likely to be described as "leading’ or "directing." Table 18 gives more details about the word bossy and the context in which it was used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 18. The Word &quot;Bossy&quot; in Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of this word is interesting. Are women more likely to use the word bossy? Why is it only used for girls and specifically not designated as a boy trait? A conversation with Mrs. Pillsbury indicated that she questions herself on this topic:

Researcher: Okay, let’s talk about Brianna as a leader. I am interested in studying leadership. Do you see her as a leader?
Mrs. Pillsbury: Yes and no. I have not seen her in a whole lot of big
groups. I tend to think of leading as, you know, you are in a class and
everybody kind of looks to you for ideas. And that kid that kind of
sets the pace on the playground. I’ve seen her when she has friends
over and I’ve see her with her siblings’ friends. She doesn’t shy away.
She is right in there, involved in everything. The friends that she has
has over, um, they tend to be older. So she tends to play "up" a year
or two. And those older friends do not dictate to her. It seems pretty
even to me. Or maybe her as a little bossy even. And I don’t equate
bossiness with leadership, but I don’t know.

Researcher: How would you differentiate between the two?

Mrs. Pillsbury: Well, I don’t know. Maybe bossiness is immature
leadership or leadership skills. I don’t know. Leadership to me is the
ability to persuade other people to go along with your ideas. Whatever
it is that you are wanting to implement, you are leading them down
this road. Maybe when you are young your persuasive skills
are…..Mature persuasive skills… maybe bossiness is just immature
persuasive skills, I just don’t know. I have seen her in those ways, but
I have not seen her in a big group.

In discussing social development, leadership, and gender issues, Silverman (2000) describes
a series of similar occurrences where parents describe their girls as bossy at the Gifted Child
Development Center where she works. She believes that bossy and bossiness are negative terms
that are used almost exclusively to describe girls by parents, teachers, and even researchers. She
speculated, "Do young boys really lead in a different manner from girls, or is it simply expected that
boys will tell others what to do but unacceptable for girls to do the same?" (Silverman, 2000, p.
302). She expressed her concern that speaking of girls’ leading and directing behaviors as bossy
with negative connotations can have the potentially disastrous outcome of curbing young females’
leadership initiative and confidence.

**Nurtures.** The word "nurturing" was used by parents when talking about their daughters’
interactions with a younger child and the parents indicated that leadership skills were being enacted
as the girls communicated differently with people of differing abilities, took responsibility, or took
the initiative to help the child. The Merriam-Webster on-line dictionary (2013) lists synonyms for
nurture that include protect, encourage, nourish, nurse, and foster. In different instances both boys’ and girls’ parents used the words "protect" and "encourage" to describe their 1st graders leadership characteristics. The dictionary also stated that the word nurture is often used in conjunction with taking care of offspring. When parents spoke of their girls’ nurturing behaviors they sometimes used it in combination with phrases like "motherly" or "mother type role." This seemingly harmless gender division may be indicative of a broader cultural mind-set that is often seen in the adult work world. Research suggested that both men and women are quite capable of effective leadership but they often have differing leadership styles that are rooted in both gender socialization strategies as well as genetic predispositions that are reinforced by environmental factors (Krüger, 2008). In the adult work world, women who express qualities that are generally considered to be feminine traits such as gentleness and concern for others, meet gender role expectations of subordinates. If, however, they exhibit directive or assertive qualities they are frequently considered by their subordinates to be too masculine or overbearing. On the flip side, men are not held to that same standard, but can successfully lead others with either assertiveness or sensitivity (Eagly, 2007). Table 19 gives an outline of the gender differences discussed throughout this section.

**Inconsistencies.** Two inconsistencies between the children’s leadership characteristics need to be addressed. As mentioned earlier, all 10 categories of young children’s leadership characteristics that were listed in Table 1-Classroom Characteristics of Very Young Leaders According to Early Childhood Professional Literature were also noted by parents in this study. However, when taken individually, two children each had one category missing from their listing. As discussed in Brad Bigsby’s case study, he does not seem as apt to listen to his peers as the other children in the study do. Not only did I not hear an indication that he listens to peers to learn from them, see their perspective, or accept their ideas, but I heard evidence to the contrary. In Brad’s case study, I gave several reasons why this might be the case, including the possibility that his
Table 19. Beliefs in Relation to Gender Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Differences Discussed</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>Mothers</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs in accord with one another</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed relational characteristics of leaders</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listed administrative characteristics of leaders</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared leadership to sports through analogies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More likely to call girl &quot;bossy&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More likely to be nominated by teacher as a classroom leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-biased used as descriptor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized used as descriptor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible used as descriptor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative used as descriptor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bossy used as descriptor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective used as descriptor</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging used as descriptor</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

mother did not see it as a leadership skill and therefore made no mention of an episode that illustrated listening to peers. In a similar fashion, while interviewing Brianna Pillsbury’s parents, there was no mention of anything that indicated that Brianna regulates her emotions well, but there were comments to that effect about the other children in the study. However, there was also no mention of anything that indicated that she did not regulate her emotions well. Perhaps as the "baby of the family" she isn’t expected to regulate her emotions or, maybe, like the possibility I proposed with Brad’s mother, her parents just never thought to mention it.

**Practices**

**Practices of Parents.** Four mothers and three fathers participated in this study. All of these parents described themselves in ways that were classified as counselor, teacher, supporter, encourager, and values keeper. Four other categories were developed based on parent perceptions—organizer, family historian, tour guide of life, and protector-- but only some of the parents saw themselves in these roles. Each parent role will be further defined and discussed with examples from parent transcripts.
Counselor. Those practices that parents described as two-way communication where the conversation was centered on helping a child make a decision or choice were categorized as counselor. Every parent described instances that were categorized as counselor. In discussing ways that she has influenced Brad’s leadership skill development, Ms. Bigsby said,

When he makes bad decisions, I will ask him, "What could you have done differently?" or "What could have made for a better outcome?"
So I set up situations where he has to actually think about it and explain to me why it is what it is like, "Brad, what do you think your punishment should be for this particular offense?" We talk through a lot of things.

Mrs. Sawyer talked about counseling her son so that he would be an independent person,

I tried to do that with my own kids from a young age—just get them thinking about things. "Well, is it better to just impulsively do this or is it better to think about it and do it in the right kind of steps?"

Teacher. The teacher role was designated for those episodes where a parent specifically said that they taught their child a skill set or modeled a skill. For instance, Mrs. Flowers said that she made every effort to teach her children academic skills, teach them how to clean and dress themselves to be presentable in public, and model correct grammar and word usage. Parents often mentioned modeling as a way of teaching their children. In conversing with Mrs. Pillsbury about public speaking in church, she said,

Certainly she sees us and knows that public speaking and those kinds of things will be what is expected of her some day, so I would think that she looks to us and other leaders in the church as role models.

One particular set of skills, "critical thinking" skills, was mentioned by several parents. Two of the parents who used that term are teachers, so that is rather understandable, but Mr. Flowers used that same term as well.

Critical thinking skills, decision-making skills/opportunities, and problem solving skills are all closely aligned and were well represented among parent responses as to ways that they helped their child develop leadership skills. Researchers hypothesize that these are common skills taught
in upper and middle income families in the United States and serve to perpetuate upper and middle income levels. Children who are critical thinkers generally grow up to be creative problem solvers who are self-motivated to be life-long learners and who are also independent and self-directed. These types of skills and attitudes translate into higher-paying, more highly respected self-regulating professional and leadership positions—typically middle and upper income level jobs. Conversely, lower income families tend to dwell on obedience and conformity in their children, values that tend to increase the chances of success in jobs that require close supervision, low self-regulation, and minimal independence which then translates into historically low paying, low respect positions of blue collar and unskilled laborers, thus sustaining a cycle of multigenerational poverty (Hoff et al., 2002).

**Supporter.** The supporter role was reserved for those times when a parent provided goods or services that allowed their child to take advantage of an opportunity. Both the Pillsbury's and the Sawyers have several active children who participate in a wide variety of sports and other extracurricular activities. By saying that they "never miss a game" or always make sure transportation is provided to the activity, they are indicating their support. In the Flowers family, the mother is the leader in providing academic reinforcement at home and makes every effort to provide a home environment that is conducive to learning—specific spaces and materials are provided at every stage of development. Another example from the Flowers family is the supportive role that the father plays in providing opportunities for Talia to have social interactions outside of the family.

**Encourager.** Parents encourage their children by giving them confidence in their abilities and advancing or furthering some aspect of their development. When parents used the word "encourage" or their description implied a cheerleader kind of role rather than teaching specific skills, the role was coded as encourager. So in referring to the role discussed in the preceding paragraph of Mr. Flowers supporting his daughter by providing opportunities for Talia to have
many social interactions, Mrs. Flowers’ complementary role is as an encourager because she doesn’t teach the skills, but paves a path for allowing more social interaction outside of the family to occur. The parents play complementary roles to one another in this aspect because the mother is "the quiet one" and the father is the "talkative type." Sometimes encouraging children can be as much about what a parent doesn’t do as it is about what they do. For example, Dr. Pillsbury said that when he was growing up, his parents "picked" on their kids about singing in "front of groups, having boyfriends or girlfriends and things like that." As a parent, he doesn’t say anything negative to his children about such situations but "just lets it happen" and believes that by having a more encouraging attitude his daughter is "comfortable singing or doing things" that he wouldn’t have been comfortable doing at her age. Mr. Sawyer believes that he encourages risk-taking within reason. He used both sports and engineering as examples for the importance of taking risks.

You think you are good? Let’s go down to Baton Rouge and play a few games and see what happens…We go. We win. Then we go. We take a beating. Take a few more beatings. Got back. Practiced. Went down. Beatings weren’t so bad. Then it got to where we were beating them or at least the games were even. They’re getting better and that comes from losing. It comes from failure. Failure is fine. You know, I tell engineers "If you never have a project that is a failure, then you are not doing your job. You are not taking enough risks. You are not looking at enough alternatives. You are not doing enough testing. All you are doing is taking the safe, easy route every time.

He said that in life, sports, or engineering, adults and children need to "have those failures" that come from going beyond a comfort zone and "taking a risk."

Values keeper. The role of values keeper was categorized more by content than process. Many of these values were also taught or encouraged or supported or resulted from counseling, but, because values, virtues, principles, and morals stood out as the content to be achieved, these were placed in a separate category. Mr. Sawyer values fairness. He talked about it in relation to games, gender equality, and opportunities for school options that children may or may not have. Several parents talked about their religion, the teachings that they want their child to get from the church
experience, and the home culture that strengthens those values. In addition, many of them talked about valuing education. Mrs. Pillsbury values education, but said that it is so deeply ingrained that she wouldn’t have thought to mention it.

Researcher: So the story you told me earlier about expecting the kids to get their homework done and Brianna not realizing that every family doesn’t do that. You would say that illustrates what? That your family members do what they are told to do? Value education? Are hard workers?

Mrs. Pillsbury: Of course I value education, but I wouldn’t have thought to actually mention it. I guess I am kind of like Brianna---I don’t always know what other families do, so I am not necessarily aware of how what we do is different. I mean, isn’t it just normal to value education?

Table 20 shows how each parent fulfills different parenting roles that they believe help to build a foundation for a young child’s leadership development. These are the parent roles that were common to all of the parents interviewed for this study. Being able to see the information altogether, as opposed to separately as it is presented in the case studies, may lend aid in being better able to conceptualize the categories and how different parents enact their roles (Table 20).

**Organizer.** One role seemed to be primarily reserved for mothers, the role of organizer. The organizer of the family is the one who makes arrangements as well as manages family time and resources. Occasionally, fathers gave some indication of being an organizer, but other context clues indicated that the mother was the primary person responsible for that job. Here’s an example: Dr. Pillsbury indicated that he and his wife researched Riverdale school options prior to moving from another city. His purpose was in helping to determine whether the children could receive a quality education in this community or not; an indication that he values a quality education and supports his children in their desires to go to a good school. It was his wife who completed the paperwork and made arrangements with the schools, so she was categorized as the organizer and he was not. Mr. Flowers, on the other hand, clearly thinks about organizational strategies and teaches those
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Roles enacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mr. Sawyer   | Encourages trying new activities  
|              | Encourages independence  
|              | Encourages self-reliance  
|              | Encourages risk taking within reason  
|              | Challenges child to improve skills                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Mrs. Sawyer  | Encourages independent thinking                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Ms. Bigsby   | Encourages good decision-making  
|              | Nurtures his abilities in different endeavors                                                                                                                                                                |
| Dr. Pillsbury| Encourages academic achievement  
|              | Encourages participation in extracurricular activities  
|              | Spends quality time with children  
|              | Makes concerted effort not to "pick" on kids about normal childhood activities such as having a boyfriend or singing in front of a group                     |
| Mrs. Pillsbury| Encourages freedom of expression  
|              | Encourages child to achieve goals                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Mr. Flowers  | Helps child to be motivated and have positive attitude  
|              | Points out and expresses approval of caring attitude  
|              | Encourages preparing for the future                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Mrs. Flowers | Encourages daughter in being more outgoing  
|              | *Counselor*—Those practices that parents described as two-way communication where the conversation was centered on helping a child make a decision or choice were categorized as counselor. |
| Mr. Sawyer   | Discusses and talks through issues  
|              | Responds rationally to child’s behaviors and questions  
|              | Gives advice without fixing problem for child                                                                                                                                                                |
| Mrs. Sawyer  | Discusses decision-making and alternate solutions to problems                                                                                                                                               |
| Ms. Bigsby   | Helps him turn bad decision-making episodes into learning situations  
|              | Discusses and walks thru decision-making process  
|              | Discusses potential consequences of actions  
|              | Explains his limits  
|              | Listens to him  
|              | Disciplines him                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Dr. Pillsbury| Talks through decision-making process                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Mrs. Pillsbury| Helps child think through decision-making  
|              | Helps child learn from failures  
|              | Disciplinarian                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Mr. Flowers  | Discusses importance of daily consistency and strong work ethic  
|              | Points our rewards and consequences of behaviors  
<p>|              | Compares responsible behaviors vs. irresponsible behaviors                                                                                                                                                   |
| Mrs. Flowers | Communicate frequently the importance of getting an education                                                                                                                                               |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Role enacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Those practices that parents described as teaching a skill set or modeling a behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Sawyer</td>
<td>Teaches situational awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches life skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches person to person interaction skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides decision-making opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Sawyer</td>
<td>Provides decision-making opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sets an example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides opportunities for selected outside of family influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bigsby</td>
<td>Provides decision-making opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acts as role model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches him to weigh options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Teaches decision-making skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models ways of interacting with people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models public speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches life lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Models role of strong women in family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches child to set reasonable goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models public speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Flowers</td>
<td>Teaches good decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches critical thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models training others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches methods for working efficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models leadership role of supervising underlings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches organizational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Flowers</td>
<td>Teaches academic skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaches good self presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Models correct grammar and word usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporter</strong></td>
<td>Parent is a provider of tangible goods and services that allows child to take advantage of opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Sawyer</td>
<td>Supports involvement in extracurricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supports opportunities for competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Makes sure child has transportation to sports practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forces child into new situations outside of his comfort zone for a period of time and then lets child decide if he wishes to continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Sawyer</td>
<td>Supports efforts at home, school and extracurricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attends events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provides many opportunities for involvement in a variety of extracurricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>Role enacted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bigsby</td>
<td>Physically stands behind him in difficult social situations&lt;br&gt;Family breadwinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Researches best school options&lt;br&gt;Supports public speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Supports efforts at home, school and extracurricular activities&lt;br&gt;Attends events&lt;br&gt;Purchases equipment for extracurricular activities&lt;br&gt;Supports public speaking&lt;br&gt;Gives foundation for developing independent thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Flowers</td>
<td>Provides opportunities for outside of family interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Flowers</td>
<td>Provides home environment that is conducive to learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Sawyer</td>
<td>Values fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Sawyer</td>
<td>Helps child develop a good moral compass&lt;br&gt;Values education&lt;br&gt;Values serving others&lt;br&gt;Values hard work and competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bigsby</td>
<td>Teaches moral decision-making&lt;br&gt;Teaches character development&lt;br&gt;Values education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Teaches consideration of others&lt;br&gt;Supports serving others&lt;br&gt;Teaches and discusses Biblical scripture&lt;br&gt;Values quality education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Pillsbury</td>
<td>Teaches moral decision-making&lt;br&gt;Instills values such as responsibility, honesty, and respect for others&lt;br&gt;Values education&lt;br&gt;Upholds family and church teachings of right and wrong&lt;br&gt;Teaches virtues such as helping less fortunate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Flowers</td>
<td>Values education and makes that clear to child&lt;br&gt;Instills values such as honesty, responsibility and respect for others&lt;br&gt;Discusses application of Bible teachings to daily life&lt;br&gt;Teaches virtues such as displaying caring attitude toward others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Flowers</td>
<td>Models helping others, respecting others and giving to others&lt;br&gt;Instills values such as responsibility and honesty, keeping God first and going to church&lt;br&gt;Values education and discusses it frequently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table 20 continued)

strategies to other family members. In addition, he is concerned about time management and efficiency. Because his work takes him out of town for extended periods of time, the
responsibilities of running an efficient household must be shared and cannot be placed primarily on one person or the other. For example, Mr. Flowers said that he "does not like being late" and talked about things that Talia does beforehand to be prepared so that tardiness to school is not as likely. However, he went on to say that Mrs. Flowers is the one who "always takes the children to school," indicating that she is also the time manager.

It is worthy of noting that the young girls were likely to be more organized than the young boys and, likewise, the adult females were likely to be more organized than the adult males. This is in contrast to other studies where men were more likely than women to show self-direction and pay more attention to administrative tasks than women (Krüger, 2008). Table 21 delineates the parents’ roles as organizers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 21. Parents’ Roles as Organizers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizer-The person who makes arrangements, helps manage time, and manages resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Sawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Sawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bigsby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Pillsbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Pillsbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Flowers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three other roles were mentioned as roles that parents perceived as being important and helping to build a foundation for leadership development. Mrs. Pillsbury talked about her role as family historian and Ms. Bigsby saw herself as both a tour guide of life and a protector.
Family historian. Mrs. Pillsbury discussed her role as family historian and said,

I read somewhere recently that we should make a point of telling our children that "in this family we XYZ" and you can fill in the blank about what it is that are your family expectations. I thought that was a good idea and I have been trying to do that more.

Carrying on a family legacy involves teaching your children about their family history and that "there are certain things" that your family is "known for and that the children should carry on those traditions."

A great story Mrs. Pillsbury told involves both family history and church history. Both Dr. and Mrs. Pillsbury’s families have been members of the Mormon Church for many, many generations. The Mormon Church holds high regard for the teaching of church history, spending 1 year out of every 4-year cycle concentrating on the teaching of church history. Mrs. Pillsbury described the early American Mormons:

[They] are held up as people who suffered persecution, who stood up for what they believed and went out West to escape that persecution and then established communities out there that then allowed everything to thrive. So they are revered in our history for being able to withstand the things that they endured.

So one of the stories the Pillsbury children are told by their mother is about a grandmother from many generations back in time. Back then there were "mobs that would form against Mormons" because their ideologies were not understood or well received by many. She continued, "And this mob had formed" around the grandmother’s house. "She had missionaries staying at her house. They were young men who were going around to teach people." The mob had gathered "outside of her house demanding that those missionaries be brought out because they wanted to do something to them." The mobs had "attacked" other missionary groups and that information had spread, so that the grandmother was well aware of the mob’s intentions. The grandmother, who was also a long-time resident of the community and practiced midwifery, stood on her front porch with
shotgun in hand and "hollered, ‘I brought every one of you into this world and I can take every one of you out right now!’” So she "stood up for the missionaries and the mob disbanded."

This story is used to illustrate that their family has a long history of standing up for what they believe is right even if it goes against popular opinion. It is also used to teach that when one is known to have a respectable reputation, their words carry more weight. Research indicated that women are frequently the transmitter of family histories and oral story telling is a mode for passing lessons and values to the next generation, as well as a way to help children establish a positive identity (Thompson et al., 2009). In her popular press book, Stone (1988) said that

[Our family stories] delineate the rules and the mores that govern family life, rules that succor and support as well as rules that chafe uncomfortably; rules that are out in the open as well as those that operate only by stealth. Indeed, family stories go a step further and define the family, saying not only what members should do, but who they are or should be (p. 31).

**Tour guide of life.** Ms. Bigsby had two roles that she perceived herself as filling that were distinctive to her in this study. The first role perceived as being an essential part of raising a young leader to this one parent was the role of tour guide of life. Tour guide of life was defined in this study as those statements made by the parent that indicated that she perceived her role as being one who shed light on what happened to other people, called attention to it immediately, and used it as an opportunity to teach her child an important life skill or behavioral expectation. Ms. Bigsby said,

I will explain situations when we see things together. I am like "that is not how you would treat your little brother" or whatever. "If I see you doing that, there is going to be a price to pay." So a lot of it is upbringing. There are things that he knows. And he has seen examples. Because when I see them or we are together and we see them, I let him know "No, that is not acceptable." So a lot of it has been on somebody else’s back, per se, but I don’t try to hide. Now I protect him as a child, but I don’t try to hide the real world from him because he needs to understand, you know, when this goes on and that goes on, that is not right. That’s not what I want. Even when he is not with me, you know, I want him to have some character. Good character. You know, that means doing the right thing when no one
else is looking. Mom is not watching, even then, you do the right thing.

In some ways Ms. Bigsby’s role as tour guide of life is closely akin to Mrs. Pillsbury’s role as family historian. They both use the circumstances that happened to other people to teach life skills, lessons, and values. Three main differences stand out. First, Mrs. Pillsbury specifically used family members’ stories as opposed to Ms. Bigsby’s community stories. Second, Mrs. Pillsbury used historical stories as compared to Ms. Bigsby’s current in-the-moment stories. Last, Mrs. Pillsbury only used positive stories whereas Ms. Bigsby used primarily negative stories to teach that she wanted to see different behaviors from her son. The parallels between these different parent stories illustrate some ways that parents convey similar messages with similar intentions and intended outcomes, but use different strategies to do so.

**Protector.** The second role played by Ms. Bigsby is that of protector. The protector role was defined for this study as those statements that indicated that the parent perceived her role as one who guards her child or shields him from potential harm. Three of the activities that Ms. Bigsby talked about that were placed in this category were (a) constantly watching out of the window when her son is playing with neighborhood kids, (b) limiting his activities to those that either she can supervise or another trustworthy adult can supervise, and (c) maintaining his childhood innocence. I propose that other parents protect their children in different ways as well, but that this role is more substantial in her mind for a number of reasons. One, she is a single mother and as such may feel more pressure to fulfill this role than she would if there were another young, strong adult in the household to share the role. Second, she works with prisoners and because of that is more aware of the potential harm humans can inflict on one another. And last, she lives near a low-income housing complex and people of a low-income status are statistically more likely to commit crimes such as attacking an individual or fighting (Kent, 2009).
**Practices of children.** All of the children had the broad practices of building relationships, achieving in school, being socially active, applying learning to new situations, being leaders in different contexts, usually meeting behavioral expectations, and being involved in community activities. Broadly speaking, the overall practices of the children are about the same. Some of the children are more heavily involved in extracurricular activities in the community than others, but all are involved in the community. As has been pointed out in the case studies, each child exhibits abilities and characteristics that only that study child exhibited, yet they all exhibited some types of leadership skills in a variety of contexts. Considering that they all scored high on the same instrument designed to help determine the leaders within a classroom of children and considering that their parents play similar roles and teach similar skills, this is not a surprising consistency. Taken individually, they each have particular strengths, different ways of influencing group processes, and different ways of expressing their leadership abilities. But as a group, their general practices all fall into the 7 categories listed.

**A Bioecological Systems Perspective**

**Supportive Influences on Leadership Development**

Both direct and indirect contextual factors were listed by parents of young emerging leaders as being influential on their leadership development. Both contextual categories, direct and indirect, can be elucidated through the use of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of human development.

In Bronfenbrenner’s model, human development is studied as five inter-related levels—the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. As Figure 1 indicates, each smaller system is embedded within and influenced by each of the larger contexts surrounding it. The microsystem is the smallest system consisting of the individual child and his biological makeup, his family, neighborhood, school, church, and other contexts within which the child
regularly has face-to-face interaction with significant others. The mesosystem is the interconnectedness between all of the microsystems that an individual develops within. Mesosystemic factors deemed important to the study of early childhood leadership development include connections between the family, school, and community. The exosystem is a layer of society that the developing person has no direct contact with but, the events that occur within it are influential to his development. The overarching societal influences such as culture, values, laws, and customs surround and influence each of the smaller systems and is referred to as the macrosystem. Last is the chronosystem which revolves around each of the previously described systems. The chronosystem refers to the importance of time within an individual’s life development. Time is considered important because those events that occur most frequently will have the most influence on the development. Likewise time is an important factor because the point in time that an event occurs during the life span will have differing effects on human development. Additionally, the historical point in time that an individual lives will have an influential effect on how he responds and interacts with his environment, as well as how the world responds to him in kind (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Cross & Frazier, 2010; Lerner, 2002).

Many other research projects have used the bioecological model of human development to determine inter-related influences on human development and by doing so, a clearer overall picture emerged. It is postulated that the same will be true of looking at young leadership development through this theoretical framework.

**Microsystem.** Several direct contextual factors are listed in the in the meta-matrix analysis and each of these can be placed in the microsystem. Home and family, church, neighborhood, school, and extracurricular activities were influential elements on the development of leaders according to the parents interviewed for this study. These are contexts where young leaders interact face-to-face
on a regular basis with people who, in some way, help them to develop skills and attitudes that parents see as building blocks to leadership.

**Home and family.** Within the home are several relationships, including the relationship with each parent and sibling. In addition, there is a family structure in place that affects relationships and a general family climate. In considering the family, some extended family members are interacted with on a regular basis and the impact those extended family members have on the children is considered to be significant to the parents.

**Parent factors.** Some features of the parents in each family were similar enough to be remarkable. Socioeconomic status was held constant, so all of the study families were of middle income status. Every family in the study had at least one parent that had earned a college education. Three of the families had an intact marriage and one parent was divorced. But, regardless of marital status, each parent reported a significant other as a parenting partner. Each of the married couples made comments and references to suggest that they considered parenting to be a partnership and leaned on one another for support and help in making decisions regarding their children. The single mother continues to have a parenting relationship with the child’s father, but leans more heavily on her mother who lives next door in helping with day-to-day decisions and child guidance. All of the parents were in their thirties when the young leaders were born (Table 22).

Both Olzewski et al. (1987) and Gardner & Laskin (1995) found that families of gifted/talented individuals and families of leaders shared the characteristics of frequently being of middle or higher income status, were college graduates, and usually stayed in one marital relationship. I found no historical information concerning ages of parents when their leaders were born, but Olzewski et al. (1987) did find that parents of the general gifted and talented population were typically in their thirties when the child labeled as being gifted/talented was born.
**Table 22. Characteristics of Young Leaders’ Parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Middle income level</th>
<th>Bachelor degree</th>
<th>Masters, Doctoral, or Professional degree</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Divorced or Parenting singly</th>
<th>Presence of parenting partner</th>
<th>30-40 years of age at time of young leader’s birth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Sawyer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Sawyer</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bigsby</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Pillsbury</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Pillsbury</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Flowers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Flowers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Family climate and atmosphere.** Statements from parents indicated that there are also some similarities in the family climate and atmosphere within each of the study families. Research indicated that families of children who are strong leaders tend to not be overly-dominant, but rather encourage an openness of expression, supporting children in thinking and expressing ideas (Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Olzewski et al., 1987). This is the case with the study participants as well, as indicated in the list below by the many statements from parents suggesting that they encourage openness of expression and thinking.

1. Child "influences others through speech."
2. Parent encourages child to "use exactly the right words to express what she means."
3. Parent teaches child to us "critical thinking skills."
4. Parent wants child to "use better judgment, to think, to use some critical thinking skills to make decisions."
5. Parent let child "talk through a lot of things."
6. Parent gives child "a lot of decision-making options."

7. Parent teaches child "to weigh the pros and cons."

8. Parent wants child to "make decisions that are well thought through."

9. Parent tries to get child to "think through things first."

10. Parent wants child to make decisions that others will see and think "the intentions behind the decision were good, even if they don’t necessarily agree with the decision, it is obvious that it was well thought out and the intentions were good."

11. Parent wants child to "made a good decision based on what he knew and choices he had."

12. Child is "a good communicator."

13. Parent applauds child for "taking the initiative. He is not afraid to ask questions. His hand is always the first one up. Even if he doesn’t know the answer, he is going to give you a good reason for why he thinks what he does."

14. Parent "asked them questions" and "tried not to just tell them how to do something" but asked "What do you think you need to do?"

15. Parent wanted to "build those critical thinking skills."

16. Parent tries to "just get them thinking about things."

17. Parent tries to "get the kids to think over the facts and make a decision."

18. Child "does communicate well."

19. Parent likes to "talk through a situation with" child.

20. Parent will "walk through" child’s "thought processes" with him.

21. Parent wants child to "make some real decisions regarding the directions you want to go."

22. Parents allow child "some control over his decisions."
23. Parent "lets" child "make decisions."

24. Parent involves child "in problem solving exercises."

25. Parent does "what if scenarios" so that child can "be prepared in case things don’t work out right."

26. Child has "been very verbal since a real, real early age" and has been able to "argue very well since an early age."

27. Parent wants child to be an "independent thinker."

28. Parent encourages "moral decision-making."

29. Parent talks "a lot about freedom of expression."

30. Parent wants "all" of her children to have "problem solving skills."

31. Parent wants child "to be vocal and she is."

32. Parent sees that child has "own thought processing."

33. Parent gives child opportunity to "express themselves and voice their opinions."

34. Child is allowed "opportunities to make decisions and when we feel her decision is incorrect, it gives us an opportunity to teach and guide rather than just making the decision for her."

The following transcription is an excellent example of a parent’s description of her supporting her son’s thinking and expressing his ideas. (Phrases 8 and 9 from the above list came from this transcription.) Ms. Bigsby said,

If there is something that he wants, every now and then I just let him be spontaneous and just make a purchase without going through all of that, but it is not all the time because you want them to make decisions that are well-thought through and as a leader that’s something that you have to do. You can’t just say "I am going to lead 5 million people to the Red Sea" (laughter). The Lord hasn’t talked about that part and I don’t know how I am going to part that sea. You know, we are not even sure that we are on the same page! So I try to get my children to think through things first. Before we lead everybody to the Red Sea,
let’s think this thing through and have a couple of plans of action or something!

Although I did not observe the home environments of most of the study families, the series of in-depth interviews conducted were combined to create over 140 pages of transcriptions that painted pictures of homes where authoritative parenting styles were in use. The statements in Table 23 are some examples of parents encouraging independence, exhibiting nurturing behaviors, and giving explanations as part of their parental guidance techniques, all indicators of authoritative parenting.

Parents who encourage independence are warm and nurturing, give explanations for their discipline and guidance decisions, maintain parental control more through discussion than through punishment, and encourage open communication (even allowing the child to express views that are in opposition to parental views) are liable to have children who are socially competent, academically successful, and psychologically healthy according to research conducted by Baumrind (1971; 1972). Taken in combination, Table 23 and the list statements from parents suggesting that they encourage openness of expression and thinking are strongly indicative that the parents in this study practice the authoritative parenting style as described by Baumrind (1971; 1972).

All of the children in this study are considered to be academic high achievers and their homes seem to be very child-centered. In accord with that, researchers generally find that parents of high achievers create homes that are very child-centered, that is, the children are the focus of the family and family activities revolve around the interests of the children (Olzewski et al., 1987).

**Family structure.** Family structure also impacts leadership development. Family structure includes such factors as birth order, family size, sibling influence, and extended family members with whom the child has regular face-to-face interaction.

**Birth order.** Birth order is a constituent of family structure. Research shows that children who are the only child in the family tend to do well academically, but do not usually fare well in a...
Table 23. Evidence of Parents Encouraging Independence, Exhibiting Nurturing Behaviors, and Giving Explanations to Guide Behaviors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Authoritative Parenting Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraging independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>&quot;I guess it comes from being a teacher. I wanted my students to be independent thinkers and learners. Working in Special Ed that was always kind of the goal&quot; and she went on to say that all of her own children &quot;are more independent because of that.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigsby</td>
<td>&quot;Even when he is not with me, you know, I want him to have good character.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillsbury</td>
<td>&quot;Your purpose is to teach them to be independent, contributing adults. So those are leadership qualities. If that is your purpose then you are doing a lot of things along the way to make them develop whatever characteristics lead to independence and contributing members of society and not being dependent, not just followers or do-nothings.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flowers</td>
<td>&quot;…my daughter will say ‘I can do it by myself.’&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|          | Exhibiting nurturing behaviors           |
| Sawyer   | We like to sit and watch movies together and cuddle up on the couch." |
| Bigsby   | An episode where her son was exhibiting his independence but she was nurturing that independence while making sure he was safe, "But this one is going to tell it, no problem. ‘Mama said that you’ve got to go.’ Of course, I am the mama right there behind him backing him up with the attitude of ‘I said you have to go, yes I did.’ That way they won’t take anything out on him if they have anything to voice." |
| Pillsbury| "…she was spoiled a little bit in the beginning because she was so cute and the little one." |
| Flowers  | "Talia is more of a patient leader which could be better at certain tasks. Talia would be more patient, compassionate in training other people (than one of her siblings would be). I recognize that as being a part of me too." |

|          | Giving explanations to guide behavior     |
| Sawyer   | "He came home and he was a little upset because he did not like what was going on but I explained to him that" the other child "played with older friends and he wasn’t trying to be mean or anything. Justin was okay with that." |
| Bigsby   | "You can reason with him. If you explain to him why it is what it is and what’s going on, you can usually expect 100% cooperation." |
| Pillsbury| "But we tried to just say things like, ‘Well, you know, it doesn’t matter where you go to school, you are going to get out of it what you put into it. People have come out of schools from wherever that may have been lacking, but those people were very successful…..You just need to try to learn what you can and get the most out of it.’" |
| Flowers  | "And then comes the question, ‘Why is there food in the trash can?’" so he explained to his children, "It doesn’t matter how clean the trash can, if you always put an extra bag in there, you are going to be okay. You might have to rinse it out or sanitize it occasionally, but if you don’t put a bag in there, ‘Poof!’ It is just a mess." |

leadership position (Goertzel et al., 1978). None of the study children were only children.

Firstborns with siblings are generally thought to most frequently be in leadership positions (Albert, 1980), but none of the children in this study were the first born child of the family. Firstborn males are especially likely to become leaders (Albert, 1980). Admittedly, it was shocking to discover that
the only two males recommended by first grade teachers at the selection site both had older brothers who had died, resulting in the study children growing up in the firstborn male position of each of their respective families. In another twist, Talia is the third born child in her family, but because there is a 13-year difference between she and her next oldest sibling, birth order researchers would term her as the "firstborn of the family’s second family" (Leman, 2005). Another birth order position that tends to do well as a leader is the baby of the family, especially if the child is male and even more particularly if he had older sisters to dote on him (Albert, 1980). Without observing the family’s interactions, it is difficult to say whether Justin occupies the role as the oldest male or the role as the baby of the family. However, considering that Justin is 9 years his sister’s junior and his father made statements like "he is being told constantly ‘Oh, you are so smart’ and ‘Oh, you are so cute’ and ‘Oh, you are this and that’ coupled with "his sister dotes on him quite a bit," leads one to believe that perhaps he is more the baby of the family. Likewise, Brianna’s mother specifically named her birth order placement as not just the baby of the family, but the "baby, baby" of the family because all of the other children are about one or two years apart and there is a 5-year gap between them and Brianna. Thus, all of the children in this study do hold a birth order position that places them as a strong contender for being a leader according to historical research on leaders in the United States (Albert, 1980; Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978; Leman, 2005).

**Family size.** Family size is also a constituent of family structure. Talented people in general tend to have at least one sibling. Leaders on the other hand, tend to have more than one or two siblings (Albert, 1980). The example that is given by Albert (1980) is that U.S. presidents have on average 5.4 siblings. Considering that historically, the size of U.S. families has decreased in the last 50 years, perhaps it is unrealistic to expect the young leaders in this study to be a part of a family that has more than four children. In fact, the U.S Census Bureau (2010) reported that the average woman gave birth to only two children and only 12.3% of women had more than four children.
Each of the study children has either two or three siblings which, by today’s standard, is considered to be a fairly large family.

**siblings.** Parents, across the board, named siblings as influential in the leadership development of the young leaders studied. Older siblings acted as good role models, expanded the young leader’s experiential base, introduced young leaders to a wide variety of people and circumstances, as well as taught them useful skills and attitudes. Younger siblings made for readily available, less experienced people for the young leader to teach, lead, manage, protect, and interact with regularly. Scharf and Mayseless (2009) found that children who had siblings at home to interact with were more likely than those without siblings to show strong leadership characteristics in the classroom. They attributed this to the day-to-day experience of “influencing and managing others” (Scharf & Mayseless, 2009, p.88).

**Familial matriarchs.** Sometimes extended family is considered to be a part of the exosystem, but when the developing child is in regular contact with the family member in face-to-face interactions, then those extended family members are a part of the microsystem. Every parent participant named at least one matriarchal family member as very influential in their child’s leadership development.

Justin has a paternal grandmother and a paternal aunt who are both teachers. His mother said,

> Both of them will sometimes talk about their students. And he hears! He hears what they say about the good students and he hears what they say about the bad students. That they tend to not do their homework, not study, not be prepared, and he hears all those things and he kind of remembers them and he goes to school and he notices. He comes home talking about, he’ll say "Oh, we better take care of this or, you know, we’ll have this problem or that." So he listens to them.

Ms. Bigsby praised Brad’s maternal grandmother as

> the mother of mothers. She is the mother that everyone looks up to and if I could be, I guess I would be [more like her]. "But I am so
different. My mother is that nurturer 500%. I am maybe 250% (laughter). She is an educator. She is an old school educator….She helps a lot. She is a lot of reinforcement….Mom is full-force reinforcement. Her influence is so good.

Mr. Flowers pointed out an influence on Talia,

They have an aunt in Dallas, but she graduated from college and she has helped with their education and their attitude toward education. When they were younger, she read different stuff to them. You know, everybody is not always going to be there, but she was available when they were little [and she had] different little educational toys. She was available when they did the small books. [If my wife was] on the porch [and my sister was] in the house with the girls, then she would help them. They didn’t have to wait until somebody came in. They had a resource right there ready for them. She stresses education because she has a degree and believes this is the way. I believe that this is the way.

Brianna’s mother said that "her grandmothers--both paternal and maternal" have been influential in her leadership development and that each of them helps to instill values, teach virtues, and uphold church and family teachings. She went on to say that Brianna’s maternal grandmother was a school principal for many years and is just "geared" to "encourage, inspire, and teach."

There is evidence to indicate that grandmothers have a penchant for playing a significant role in espousing family values and encouraging their grandchildren to win honors and awards (Olzewski et al., 1987). Some of the interesting and possibly significant variables related to the cases studied here are that all of the influential matriarchs were college-educated and most were educators by profession. Additionally, in the family where there was not a college-educated grandmother, the family looked to the college-educated aunt or the college-educated aunt stepped into the role of the concerned matriarch who intended to have a positive influence on the child.

Familial patriarchs. It is also interesting that there was no mention of a grandfather or uncle who was influential on any of the children in these cases. The only mention of patriarchal figures being influential on young leaders in the literature referred specifically to elder male relatives who were clergymen or involved in politics at some level so that young children were accustomed to
watching a loved one speak publicly with the intention of persuading his audience (Gardner & Laskin, 1995). It is worth mentioning here that even though there were no extended family members mentioned in these roles or having an influence on a young child’s leadership development, Brianna’s father is the lay pastor in their church for this year and her mother believes that seeing her father in that role has been influential on her leadership development.

**School.** School was the only other influential microsystem mentioned by all of the families in this study. Parents felt that their children developed relationships with their teachers and with their classmates. In addition, parents listed specific group processes that teachers facilitated that helped in the development of leadership. Two parents talked about a school play that the first graders produced and performed in, one parent talked about group projects where children had the opportunity to work toward a group goal and one parent pointed out peer tutoring as a leadership development opportunity. Leadership development activities suggested by researchers include activities like these and more (Bisland, 2004; Karnes & Stephens, 1999; Maccagnano, 2007; Sisk & Shallcross, 1986). It is noteworthy that parents recognized these opportunities that were being afforded to their children in the classroom.

**Neighborhood.** It is interesting to note that Riverdale Magnet School serves children from throughout the Big River Parish so that children from outlying rural areas as well as children who live inside the city limits are represented within the school population. However, all four of the families whose children made the highest scores on the SRBCSS-III and fit one of the sample selection categories live inside the Riverdale city limits.

Three of the families perceived the relationships and interactions that their children had with others in the neighborhood to be significant in helping their children to develop leadership skills. All of the Sawyer children play soccer. Mrs. Sawyer said in her parent journal that Justin "started playing soccer with his sisters as a toddler" and began "organizing" neighborhood soccer games.
when he was "only 4-years-old." Mr. Sawyer told about other neighborhood interactions, most of which involve playing sports but, more importantly, all of the neighborhood stories indicated that Justin is honing his interpersonal communication skills.

Ms. Bigsby felt that the relations of the children in the neighborhood were influential on Brad’s leadership development. She felt that he learned how to deal with people, how to discern between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, and to be assertive while interacting with the neighborhood children.

Mrs. Flowers did not have much to say about the neighborhood other than it was "safe" but Mr. Flowers indicated that their driveway had neighborhood children in it frequently, especially when either of the sons was visiting. As Mrs. Flowers put it, she and Talia "don’t get out much" and Talia mostly "just goes to school and back home," so the neighborhood interactions that take place on the basketball court and driveway are an important way that Talia gets to interact with people outside of her family but, while still under the watchful eye of her parents or older brothers.

As a side note, Mrs. Pillsbury did not mention the neighborhood interactions as influential on Brianna’s leadership development, but did converse about the neighborhood being very influential on her own childhood leadership development.

**Church.** It is the people and face-to-face interactions between people that are the focus of the microsystem. The Pillsbury family specifically talked about the relationships that Brianna had with her Sunday School teachers and that she looked to church leaders as role models, thus there are strong relationships for her that stem from the church context. Talia’s family, on the other hand, mentioned church many times, but did not discuss relationships or close interpersonal contacts that were associated with the church, but instead talked about the influence of church ideologies. Ideologies are a more expansive or overarching concept and will be addressed as part of the macrosystem in Talia’s case. Likewise, the Sawyer family and the Bigsby family both indicated
that they did not believe that the church context was influential in their children’s leadership development, but that overall Christian values were, so those will also be addressed in the discussion of the macrosystem.

**Extracurricular activities.** The peers, coaches, and teachers that children interact with in the microsystem have been influential on some of the children in this study. Justin’s parents believe that sports, but more especially soccer, have been a strong influence on his leadership development. Justin’s father shared this account in his parent journal:

> There was one day in soccer where another boy was not working hard. He was just kind of standing around. Justin was playing hard, as he always does. He told the other boy, rather sternly, that he needed to play hard also. After a couple of prods, the other boy started participating. Justin encouraged and complimented him after the drill on how hard he worked the rest of the time. I don’t know how much of an impact it had on the other boy long-term, but Justin got what he wanted in that practice.

Using those kinds of communication skills with his peers and working to get everybody involved as part of the team are good examples of ways that Justin forges team relations. Mr. Sawyer believes that as his son listens and learns from coaches that he is also strengthening relationships on the field. Such relationship building is a great example of a leadership skill involving group processes.

Ms. Bigsby has not gotten Brad involved in many extracurricular activities, but she looks very favorably on the after-school program at Riverdale Magnet School. The after-school program offers a variety of activities including homework help and other academic support, but Brad has been mostly involved with the sports programs. Ms. Bigsby has confidence in the adults supervising the program and feels that her son is in a safe environment. She believes that he has good male role models to look up to and that it is definitely a developing ground for leadership insofar as interacting with other kids under well-supervised circumstances.

Mrs. Pillsbury said, "We encourage the kids to try different sports. I think team sports help you to learn to work with others and be a good sport whether you win or lose." Dr. Pillsbury is in
agreement and believes that children learn from one another as they interact on a team with a like-minded goal as the focus.

Regular contacts and personal relationships that are built in the microsystem effect the development of the child within it. Likewise, as the child interacts with these significant others, he has an effect on them. For example, peers learn from one another and constantly adjust their responses based on the reactions they get from one another. Likewise, teachers learn better teaching techniques as they observe children respond to the environments and teaching strategies they have employed. Thus, each individual in the microsystem is having an effect on his own development as the give and take of interchanges continues and shapes the next interchange.

Mesosystem. The places listed as direct contextual factors in the meta-matrix analysis are connected to one another through the mesosystem. The connections between home and organized community activities such as church, sports organizations, and the child’s school are well-represented in the mesosystem by the families interviewed.

Church. An excellent mesosystem example is the Pillsbury family and their church connection. The Pillsbury family attends church where Brianna develops a relationship with her age-mates and teacher (microsystem). The Sunday School teacher sends an e-mail to the family to let them know that they need to allow Brianna to dress in work clothes the following Sunday because the class is going to serve an older member of the congregation by going to her house to help her with yard work. The parents respond positively to the e-mail and Brianna attends church the following Sunday ready to serve (mesosystem).

In order to successfully participate in activities outside of the family, it is necessary to be informed of events and schedules. This happens most successfully when there is two-way communication between the parents and the organizations and if another member of the family physically goes to and interacts within the outside-of-home-context with the child. So, by Brianna
attending church with her family and her parents knowing the Sunday School teacher and talking with her, the home-church connection is strengthened.

**Extracurricular activities.** Another case-in-point of a strong mesosystem connection: Justin attends soccer practice every time it is scheduled and develops a relationship with his coach and teammates (microsystem). Not only does Justin attend practice and scheduled games, but his dad is a soccer coach and president of the local soccer association. Both of his sisters have been involved with the soccer league over the years and his mother never misses a game. Because so many family members are involved with soccer at different levels, Justin’s mesosystem is well-connected in that context.

**School.** The Bigsby and the Flowers families seem to have mesosystem connections primarily with their child’s school. The school boasts a very strong home-school connection and that was evident with all of the families in the study. In addition to attending school, Brad is also engaged in the after-school program. Brad’s grandmother helps him with his homework every evening. Ms. Bigsby described that activity: After school, Brad rides the bus to his grandmother’s house and he stays there until his mother gets home from work. "She is going to go though the book sack, and I mean literally go through the book sack and look at everything" and asks all kinds of questions to determine how his day was at school and what his homework assignments are. Although the Bigsby adults may not be physically at the school regularly, they are working to keep the lines of communication flowing freely and supporting the classroom activities at home, all of which strengthens the mesosystem connections.

The Flowers family makes sure that Talia has a place at home that is conducive to getting her homework completed. Like the Bigsbys, they ask lots of questions and are aware of any notes that the teacher may have sent home and make ample preparations in response to those notes. Again, like the Bigsbys, the Flowers adults may not have a strong physical presence at the school,
but they are in communication with the teacher and support the classroom activities at home, thus building mesosystemic connections.

**Social networks.** The interconnectedness of the people in a child’s life helps provide support for children’s overall development as well as their leadership development. The more people a family is connected with and has established relationships with, the more likely it is that the family will be able to utilize those connections for the good of their children (Subotnik & Olzweski-Kubilius, 1997).

Mr. Sawyer believes that being civic-minded and active in the community as an adult is important in building those social networks.

I think you need to lead by example... You have to set an example. "Guys, this is part of what you do. When you live in a community, you’ve got to participate in the community." They see us. They always see [their mother] doing her Junior League stuff and me doing soccer stuff and Knights of Columbus and I do a lot of work activities as well. Not just Soccer Association, but coaching. So they see how much time both of those take. So, you know, you are participating in the community. You have to.

Instead of a community presence that helps to establish people-to-people connections, the Bigsby's have a strong social network that consists primarily of family members. Brad’s maternal grandmother takes care of him in the afternoons and is a strong part of Ms. Bigsby’s support system. Brad’s paternal grandmother is professionally and socially active and makes a special effort to connect Brad with a wide variety of people through her relationships. Brad’s father and step-mother take him to church on Sundays and connect him with people in that context. The last time I interviewed with Ms. Bigsby, she was in the middle of organizing a multi-state family reunion. Being well-connected to a large family network can be as beneficial as a large, well-connected community social network and, if the family has a strong community presence, the family network and the community social network can sometimes overlap.

These kinds of networks are so important in the overall development of a child that some researchers consider children with poor social networks to be as disadvantaged as children who lack
other quality resources such as good schools or monetary resources (Olzewski-Kubilius & Grant, 1994). Mr. Sawyer sheds some light on that in respect to leadership development:

It is very difficult to be where you can develop leadership skills, developing rapport with a group if you are not there. I mean you’ve got to be part of a group and you’ve got to be part of a community. You are not just going to come out…I mean if you haven’t been coming to practice for whatever reasons—your mom can’t get you there, she can’t get off work or anything else. You are not going to develop as a leader on a team if you are not coming to…If you are not there.

There seemed to be a lack of interconnectedness or social networks for Talia. Her mother specifically said that she and Talia "pretty much stay at home" and "don’t get out much." She also said that she did not usually read the newspaper or "keep up" with sports in the community. The family does stay connected to the school and attends church. When her father is home, he makes a concerted effort to connect Talia with people in the neighborhood. But there is a lack of two-way connections between the home and an organization. Considering that the Flowers two older sons were very active in sports organizations both as players and as basketball camp counselors and considering that both Mr. and Mrs. Flowers have expressed a desire for Talia to play sports as she gets older, it is probable that her social networks and mesosystem connections will grow stronger as she gets older and becomes more involved in the community.

The mesosystem is the grounds for building connections and relationships between different microsystems that a developing person is engaging within. If an organization is receptive to the family’s involvement and encourages participation, then the family is more likely to continue engaging in that activity and to learn ways to become more deeply involved. Reciprocally, when families show a keen interest in engagement and interactions, then the organization is more likely to find ways to help the family get more involved. The more involved the family is, the more communication takes place and the more the family is made aware of special events, schedules, needed supplies, and other information. In addition, interconnections between microsystems cause a constant action-response-action pattern that effects beliefs and practices.
**Exosystem.** There are several dynamics that are listed as indirect contextual factors in the meta-matrix analysis that can be viewed as exosystem influences. The exosystem is that layer of the bioecological model of human development that is a part of society that the developing person has no direct contact with but, the events that occur within it are influential to his development. Family history, parent workplace, mass media/internet, size and location of town, local university, city government, school board, and neighborhood were all listed as having some kind of influence on leadership.

**Family history.** The literature review indicated that parents would be influenced by their culture, but did not indicate that parents purposefully pass on a family legacy with hopes that their child would emulate the positive characteristics of their forefathers. Some of the historical accounts mentioned were from only one generation back, while others were from many generations back in time.

In talking about what she values, Mrs. Sawyer goes back to her own childhood, alluding that these values are being passed down to her children as well.

I come from a family of white, middle class folks. I come from very work-oriented people, people with a strong work ethic. You worked hard. Period. Nobody gave you anything. You didn’t ask for hand-outs. You didn’t ask for help. You worked really hard and that is how you became a better person and improved your lot in life.

Ms. Bigsby said that she has been influenced by her mother and followed her path by graduating from college and going into the teaching profession. Likewise, she expects her children to continue that legacy and get a college education as well.

Mrs. Pillsbury shared information that indicates that one of the roles she plays in her family that helps Brianna develop leadership skills is that of family historian. Not only does she share the family legacy with Brianna in an effort to influence her personal identity development and pass down family values, but she also believes that family history paves a path for her children’s future.
For example, insofar as her expectations of her children, she said that she wants them to be a part of "...building a better community—kind of taking the reins from those who came before" and "do better." In addition she wants her daughters to be strong women like the women who came before them,

My great-grandmother’s husband died when she was 20 [-years-old] and had two small children. After his death, she went to college and became a teacher. She was very well-respected, never remarried, and worked well into her seventies. Both of her daughters then went to college. One of those daughters is my grandmother and she took care of her business. My grandfather was the mayor of their town and he really didn’t do much at home. The running joke was that he didn’t even know where the kitchen was! Despite the fact that he was a mayor and obviously knew how to run things, when he got home, she was in charge. Of the two, she was the strongest family figure.

She also talked about family expectations and "following a pattern that has already been set for me by past family expectations...."

Mrs. Flowers obviously brings part of her family history with her and shares it with her daughter in ways that the mother believes have an effect on Talia’s leadership development. She tells her daughters, "My grandmother always said ‘Never lie. Be truthful about everything. When you lie bad things happen. Nothing good comes out of that. So always be truthful.’"

Mr. Flowers shared this story in his parent journal:

My leadership concepts were formed at an early age. My great-grandmother...stressed to me the belief in God, family, education, and strong work ethic. She was a strong woman born around 1900 who ran her own farm; the community leaned on her for advice and directions from WWI to Desert Storm. I also looked up to my uncles who had awards of excellence in industry and military service. I remember when she was giving directions from kitchen to yard to pecan orchard to [both] family and friends. I followed her example as the older brother of four kids and took responsibility watching my siblings as my mom worked.

Sometimes deliberate efforts are made to not pass on family traditions or habits. Ms. Bigsby said that there were some male members of her family who looked for "that Easy Button
you see on the Staples commercials" and she wanted her boys to learn to "Work smart, not work hard." Dr. Pillsbury said that when he was growing up his parents "picked" on him about performing in front of an audience or having a girlfriend. He makes every effort not to do the same with his own children. Mr. Flowers gave the impression that unlike him, he is more interested in Talia being influenced by her nuclear family than by her extended family. Mrs. Flowers stresses the importance of "getting a good education" even though her family stressed "working hard" instead of getting an education when she was a child. Mrs. Flowers also said, "Pretty much, I think about the way I was raised and I want Talia to be raised differently."

In some instances family history is intentionally shared, discussed, and used for teaching lessons. Other times, it is part of a person’s upbringing and, whether intentional or unintentional, is shared in one’s own family. Research indicated that people tend to pick and choose such that they are intentional in passing down that part of their family legacy that they perceive as positive, but ignore or choose not to mention that part of their family legacy that they view as negative (Thompson, et al., 2009). Other researchers acknowledge the strong influence that the family has on human development (Bloom, 1985; Hong and Milligram, 2008; Piirto, 2004; Sternberg, 2004). Parental influence is not new, but has continued over generations. Unless a family tradition is recognized as being harmful or detrimental in some way and there are deliberate efforts not to replicate those traditions, then they are likely to become a part of the next generation’s parenting repertoire, thus influencing the generation to follow.

**Parent workplace.** Every family in the study told of specific instances that their workplace environment or training affected their parenting behavior in a way that they perceived as being influential on the emerging leadership skills of their children.

Mr. Sawyer is a supervisor in a large manufacturing plant and attends leadership conferences as part of his work requirements. He said,
I think that a lot of things that you need to be a good leader are things that are good life skills to have, period. I think I am probably more aware of those little individual things because of my, you know, I have to go to leadership seminars once a year, go off to St. Louis for a week.

Mrs. Sawyer talked about her training as a Special Education teacher and how she uses some of the same teaching techniques to help her own children to be "more independent."

Ms. Bigsby teaches adults in a correctional facility. She sees behaviors and attitudes from the prisoners that she doesn’t like and intentionally teaches Brad to behave differently. In discussing the attitude that many of her prisoners/students have about education she said, "Oh, and with me working in a correctional facility, oh my goodness! I see it now. I have not been there long, but I see it now just magnified because the young guys are smart" but they don’t seem to be interested in learning.

Mrs. Pillsbury talked about how some of her concepts about leadership were influenced by watching others that she worked with. Mrs. Pillsbury related this story of a new co-worker:

She came in straight as an attorney and I had just been made attorney. She had all these ideas on how to change the office. She had good ideas, but she lacked tact in trying to get her ideas implemented. Some of the secretaries had their backs against the wall and they were not going to make her suggested changes just because of how she put it. So she had good thoughts and good ideas but, poor communication, I would say, at that level.

Children seldom visit their parents’ workplace, but the events and policies that a parent deals with at work directly impact the child, thus placing parent workplace squarely in the exosystem (Morrissey & Warner, 2007). Parent workplace may have a greater overarching influence, though, because of the attitudes and perceptions that are developed in the workplace and consistently infiltrate in-home family affairs. Family discussions, discipline strategies, and parenting styles are just a few ways that parent workplace is reflected in the home environment.
**Mass Media/Internet.** It was anticipated that electronic messaging systems such as electronic mail and text messaging would have an effect on parents’ ability to communicate with others and build their social network. That is not the information that participants conveyed. Instead, several parents talked about television or internet having an influence on their child’s budding leadership.

When asked how Justin’s leadership development opportunities were different than her own as a young person, Mrs. Sawyer wrote in her parent journal,

> I was able to think of an example that might demonstrate the difference I think that technology can play in developing leadership. Justin is very curious and he enjoys going on-line and playing puzzle games. He plays until he wins and he doesn’t like to give up.

She believes that these experiences help him to work long and hard toward a goal, build his confidence, and even teach him ways of helping his classmates to better understand math problems.

In talking about ways of finding out about community opportunities for her son to get involved, Ms. Bigsby said,

> I like reading. I like researching. I hear things. My mother always has her ear to the ground about things, especially things for the kids. A lot of things the school will send home. There are things where I see the signs out. I am always looking for stuff to put them in to keep them structured and to keep their time used well, avoid idle time. So I look for stuff. I read stuff. I will read the local paper. I’ll go on the internet quite a bit. I love researching so I’ll turn to the internet in a heartbeat.

Mrs. Pillsbury believes that here was a time when people could be ignorant about behavioral expectations in different situations as well as opportunities that were available in the world. But she believes that "we are losing a lot of those excuses" as children are exposed to different ideas at school, on television, and the internet. "Complete ignorance is not completely wiped out, but it is a lot. So it is a matter of choices and a matter of breaking bad habits in a family, which can be really hard."
Mr. Flowers talked about the many influences a child has even at a very young age. He believes that children are influenced by their classmates, the older kids that they admire, and "they are also influenced by what they see on television and what you can stream on-line. And then all this stuff just explodes! By the time they are 5-years-old, they practically have access to the whole world."

Television and internet certainly exposes children to more than they would have access to in their own neighborhoods. The Riverdale Magnet School principal even states on the school’s website that the school’s goals are to "provide a caring learning environment where all students have the opportunity to explore the world at their fingertips, discover new ideas, and develop as lifelong learners" (Riverdale Magnet School Principal, personal communication, April 11, 2012). No doubt, part of that statement is referring to internet access and children’s ability to use it as a learning tool. Parents’ statements point to a perception that the internet is a valuable learning tool for both adults and children and does, indeed, affect children’s leadership opportunities.

**Size and location of town.** Parents talked about the size and location of Riverdale as having beneficial components that affected their child’s leadership opportunities. In addition, they talked about specific elements that affect leadership development. Many of those elements were repeated by several different parents—the local university, the city government, the school board, and neighborhoods. Each of these will be discussed.

Although there were some things that they admired about larger towns and different places that they had lived, all of the parents named many, many reasons why they moved to or chose to stay in Riverdale and think of it as a good developing ground for young leaders.

There are about 18,323 residents within the city limits of Riverdale and it is situated about forty miles from a very large town in one direction and about seventy miles from a mid-sized city in the other direction, both of which are easily accessible by way of an interstate highway.
This is what Mrs. Sawyer had to say about the size and location of Riverdale:

Overall, I think Riverdale has a lot of things. There are little things, "Oh, it would be great if we had a mall" or "It would be great if we had our own zoo," you know, things like that. But in reality, it is not that far away to go to those types of things...there are enough programs between what the churches offer, the athletic type things that are offered here, and the programs and things that the college sometimes does that I think you can get a lot of growth and leadership opportunities for your kids.

Mrs. Pillsbury moved to Riverdale from Dallas three years ago and because she has older children, she has ample experience to compare the two vicinities in terms of how the community does or does not support young leadership. She said, "Well, I think it is better in Riverdale than in other places we’ve lived. You are probably going to think I am crazy for saying this..." and she went on to describe why she likes the schools better. She appreciates that there is a "broader range of socioeconomic levels in the schools" and that the teachers recognize that many mothers work outside of the home, so they don’t seem to really expect a lot of parent involvement in the schools.

She then compared her family’s Riverdale experience with their Dallas experience:

Anything that went on in the schools, the parents were just all over it and they did it. They did a good job, but the kids were just shuffled around and told what to do. The kids weren’t doing any of the creating or planning...There would be a mass spread of food, the program would be planned down to the tee---the craft, the this, the that. The parents did it all...the kids are just "tell me what to do and I’ll do it." Then they are just like these fine little porcelain dolls that we stand around and look at.

She compares that to story about the children at Riverdale Magnet School producing their own play and said that the latter was definitely a greater "opportunity for leadership building." In addition, she believes that there are greater opportunities to get involved in several high school sports in a small town whereas in larger cities "they start in the middle school kind of narrowing you down" so that you are only on track to play one sport per semester. She said much, much more to sing the praises of small town life, but this quote summarizes it nicely:
Everybody seems to think, "Oh, big city, you are more sophisticated, you are more whatever," but I don’t necessarily find that. I think people have a tendency to get lost in cities. So, when you are in a smaller community, you have an identity and all that some of the chances of getting lost in the shuffle and the mix is less. I think in a smaller town you have more of an opportunity to get involved, to shine, and therefore more opportunities to develop those leadership skills and become a leader.

**Local university.** Mr. Flowers said that he loves Riverdale because it is "a school environment. Whereas other cities, bigger or smaller, are not a school environment." He went on to list organizations that are available for leadership development such as "Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts," then talked about all the things he loves about living in a university town such as "the performing arts," "all different kinds of athletics," and "tutors and academic help when your child needs it." He said that the children in this community are "exposed to a ton of culture." He also liked that so many things are free, from university lectures to recreational facilities and nature preserves. He said, "You can go to the city and have a lot of fun. If you want to focus just on education there is plenty to do here." He believes that these kinds of opportunities "help kids develop a lot of stuff mentally. By being exposed to this wide range of opportunities, they can be challenged." He said if people in Riverdale "want to go have some city experiences; it is right down the road." He enjoys traveling with his family and rolls off the names of many cities within a 300 mile radius and all of the things that families can do in those places. He also appreciates that Riverdale has "limited distractions." He believes there is plenty to keep young minds engaged but "your child is not always on the city bus trying to go downtown to the mall."

**City government.** According to the parents interviewed, some of the major benefits of living in this small community are made available by the city government. They named concerts, literacy events, festivals, and many family-friendly events that take place at either the city coliseum or a large green space in the center of the town. They felt that having so many cultural events gave children exposure to things that they might not otherwise encounter. In addition, they seemed to
feel that because there are so many community events, it is easy to find a "niche" to fill. By getting involved in the behind-the-scenes business of the event, either as an adult community leader or as a child who helps in some way, one can not only enjoy and learn from some of the activities presented, but can help bring the event to fruition. This further enhances leadership opportunities as children either get to take a leadership role or they see their parents "role model community involvement."

**School board and neighborhoods.** Parents had some concerns about school board zoning laws and the effects those laws have on school choices especially in certain neighborhoods. Those concerns will be discussed further in a later section outlining parental perceptions of unsupportive influences on the development of leadership.

The exosystemic features listed as indirect contextual factors in the meta-matrix analysis are effected by and have an effect on parent beliefs, child and family practices, home and community, and the overall development of leadership in young children. For example, as Howe (1990) points out and can be seen in the workplace discussion, the exosystemic factor of the parent workplace influences how parents perceive their role in teaching their child the social and cultural norms that result in productive citizenry. Both within and across cultures, parents try to pass on the values that they believe will maximize their child’s success as adults (Kohn, 1987). Parents’ definitions of success and the necessary skills to achieve that success tend to be limited, however, to their own personal experiences. So, the parents’ workplace experiences shape the parental belief system and how values are inculcated.

** Macrosystem.** There are several indirect contextual factors that are listed in the meta-matrix analysis that can be placed in the macrosystem. Values, laws, economics, and culture were influential elements on the development of leaders according to the parents interviewed for this study. These broad, overarching societal influences surround and influence each of the smaller
systems of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) bioecological model of human development that have been discussed thus far. Each of these will be discussed in relation to the way parents perceived them to be important in the development of young leadership.

**Values.** Values are woven throughout the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem and so, have been discussed several times already. There are three categories of values that every parent talked about and those will be focused on briefly—church ideologies, work ethics, and the valuing of education.

**Church ideologies.** Every parent said something about church ideologies and how those ideologies affected not only their parenting, but also their child’s leadership development. The families in this study represent different religious sects, but all of them proclaim the Christian faith. All of the families talked about taking their child to church and two families specifically discussed ways that they share their faith such as reading, studying, and discussing the Bible or "serving others." The Sawyers attend the Catholic Church with their children and Mrs. Sawyer works for the Catholic Church. Ms. Bigsby said that her son attends church with his father and that "religion is very important to both families." The Pillsburys mentioned many times that the Mormon faith is a big part of their family history, family identity, and foundation that they base parenting decisions on. Mr. Flowers talked about establishing a "culture" in the home that reflects Christian values.

In doing a quick internet search for "Christian ideas for raising a family," various blogs and sites were discovered that promoted related ideas such as spending quality family time together, placing greater value on time spent with a child than extra income, setting boundaries for children, being an accountable adult role model, teaching children not to judge others, teaching virtues such as honesty and respect for others, as well as specific behaviors like not cursing. The following is a list of quotes or ideas that parents shared during the interviewing process that support Christian beliefs:
1. "We try to do a lot of extra family things."—Mrs. Sawyer

2. "I spend quality time with the children."—Dr. Pillsbury

3. Chose to be a "stay-at-home mom" while her children were pre-schoolers.—Mrs. Sawyer

4. Chose to put her efforts toward her husband’s business rather than building a law clientele at this point so that there would be less family stressors.—Mrs. Pillsbury

5. "Riverdale is the place where you can do this for your child. Are you willing to sacrifice a higher standard of living, financially, to do that?.... if you are trying to better your child and give them 10 good years, this is a good thing, a good place."—Mr. Flowers

6. "And I intend for him to live and operate within the confines of the rules and regulations of the house."—Ms. Bigsby

7. "Certainly she sees us and knows that public speaking and those kinds of things will be what is expected of her some day, so I would think that she looks to us and other leaders in the church as role models."—Mrs. Pillsbury

8. Talked about helping her son to develop a "good moral compass."—Mrs. Sawyer

9. Talked about helping her son develop "good character."—Ms. Bigsby

10. Wrote in parent journal that she modeled "helping, respecting and giving to others."—Mrs. Flowers

11. "Justin has friends who are African American kids. He gets along fine with them. I don’t think he’s got any sort of racial indicator in his body whatsoever. There just isn’t; they are just friends. Which is great! I just love it!"—Mr. Sawyer

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12. "A lot of these kids are older. Their economic status may not be, you know, what ours is....But he feels....there is no class with him which is a good thing, I feel."—Ms. Bigsby

13. "You have to respect others. In a large household it is absolutely not a choice, it just is."—Mrs. Pillsbury

14. "If she does something wrong and I ask her about it, she will be honest about that too. She is real good about that."—Mrs. Flowers

15. "Number one, she doesn’t curse. It doesn’t matter what is going on around her, she is not going to curse. Even if nobody is around, she still will not curse."—Mr. Flowers

16. "...go to church and always keep God first,"—Mrs. Flowers

**Work ethic.** Work ethic was also talked about by all of the parents. Mrs. Sawyer said,

I come from very work-oriented people, people with a strong work ethic. You worked hard. Period. Nobody gave you anything. You didn’t ask for hand-outs. You didn’t ask for help. You worked really hard and that is how you became a better person and improved your lot in life.

Ms. Bigsby tells her son,

Brad, you are not going to get everything you want in life. I mean, you have to work for something. You can’t just point and click and it is here... That Easy button on the Staples commercials is not real! It is not real!

She went on to say that there are male family members who do not exhibit the strong work ethic that she values and encourages in her children. She does not want her sons "to fall in behind" them "thinking that there is an Easy button, because there is not." Strong work ethic is valued in the Pillsbury family as is indicated by this statement from Mrs. Pillsbury:

Your purpose is to teach them to be independent, contributing adults. So those are leadership qualities. If that is your purpose then you are doing a lot of things along the way.
to make them develop whatever characteristics lead to independence and contributing members of society and not being dependent, not just followers or do-nothings.

Mr. Flowers wrote in his parent journal, "My great grandmother….stressed to me the belief in God, family, education, and strong work ethic" and went on to say that he "followed" her example.

**Value of education.** Not only does the preceding statement from Mr. Flowers exhibit work ethic, it also exhibits the long-standing value of education in his family. Likewise, Mrs. Pillsbury shares this story regarding multi-generational valuing of education:

My mother is a school principal. I don’t practice anymore, but I am an attorney. All of my siblings are professionals. My brother is a radiologist. His wife is a doctor. I just always knew that I was expected to go to college—there were no other options. Everyone I knew, all of our adult family members, were college-educated. It brings a level of expectations, you know? I distinctly remember the first time that I realized that I had friends who were smart, made good grades, were in honor classes, all that kind of stuff, and I realized that they were not planning to go to college. I was incredulous, "What?!"…I guess I am just following a pattern that has already been set for me by past family expectations, valuing education being one way that that is the case.

Insofar as valuing education, Ms. Bigsby not only followed in her mother’s footsteps by getting a college education and going into the field of education, she also encourages her son to get a college education as well. She tells her sons, "You are intelligent young men and that is why I have high expectations."

Another indication of valuing education is how parents respond to their own child’s school expectations and ways they support the school’s education process. Mrs. Sawyer said that parents should "do the normal positive things that parents are supposed to do if they want their child to develop." She went on to demonstrate the kinds of questions that parents should ask their children like "How was school today?" and "What did you do at school today" and "What do you have for homework? Let’s talk about it." Similar lines of questioning and expectations for getting
homework completed and expectations for academic achievement were noted in all of the families in the study.

Correspondingly, the literature review supports this evidence that parents of young leaders value education, academic achievement, and expanding the mind (Albert, 1980; Gardner & Laskin, 1995; Goertzel et al., 1978). These researchers also indicated that education outside of an educational institute such as the learning that takes place from traveling and visiting other places also enhances learning for young leaders and is often found to be supported by parents. Many of the parents in this study made similar indications in their own families.

**Laws.** Laws were only mentioned twice and by the same parent, but her observations were noteworthy. The two laws discussed were school attendance regulations and Title IX, both laws that affect schools.

**School attendance regulations.** Justin’s mother wanted to hold him back for a year in school. It would have been her preference if he could have entered pre-kindergarten, but that was not allowed. As she understood it, a law at the state level prevented children from entering into preschool at the age of 5. (It is possible that this is not a law, so much as a funding stream limitation from the state to parish level.) However, there were some emotional issues connected with turning 5-years-old. Mrs. Sawyer said,

> We felt, emotionally, that 5, turning 5[-years-old] was having an impact on him. It was hard, approaching that fifth birthday because that is how old his brother was when he died. So he had a lot of emotional issues with the idea of turning 5. He thought for quite a long time that when he turned 5, *he* would die.

Being allowed to repeat kindergarten at the parents’ request, even though the teacher did not believe that Justin needed another year because of his high academic ability, also relates back to laws. As Mrs. Sawyer understood it, kindergarten is not under the same age limitations that pre-kindergarten is and kindergarten is not mandatory in the state of Louisiana and therefore the state laws governing
kindergarten are more flexible than they are at other grade levels. These laws, as she perceived them, disallowed Justin from going into pre-kindergarten, but did allow her to let him repeat kindergarten so that he had some additional time for emotional healing. Being older than his classmates may have some impact on his leadership ability in the classroom setting. There is evidence in the gifted and talented literature that older children are more likely to lead younger children because the older child is likely to be slightly above the younger child in intellectual ability (Silverman, 2000).

**Title IX influences.** Mrs. Sawyer also mentioned another law that she believes effects leadership opportunities. She discussed it in relation to differences that might be experienced between males and females. "When they did Title IX, what, 20 years ago? Whenever I was in school…Holy mackerel! They just went completely opposite." Title IX is the federal civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination in education and was enacted in 1972. This law is best known for the changes it made in school athletics, breaking barriers in sports for females. But Title IX did much more than focus on sports. Classroom academics were also affected (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001). Mrs. Sawyer explained it from her point of view:

They so over-emphasized that girls needed to talk in class, that, and other things that the genders did not do equally, that sometimes the boys got pushed aside. I think it is kind of cycling back around to being a little more even now. But for a long time teachers told their boys to "shut up, sit down, and quit moving so much" and every time a girl raised her hand they wanted them to talk.

She went on to discuss the attempt to make things equal for both genders in school sports, "You had to have an even number or ratio of slots for males and females in sports." As an example of that ruling still having an affect she states, "So if you’ve got 70 slots on the football team, then there has to be 70 slots for girls’ athletics. So, for example, at our local university we have a girls’ soccer team, but not a boys’ soccer team." She is glad that Title IX seemed to have opened the door for girls to pursue math and sciences.
Well, I am so glad that this state has the Louisiana School [for Math, Sciences, and Art—a state high school for gifted and talented teens]. Those girls are very excited about those areas of learning. My daughter came back from that weekend there going "Woo-hoo! It was like Nerd City everywhere. Nobody was afraid to say anything!" I was like, "Okay, it’s going to be fun!" I think they have gone a little overboard with all of the opportunities for women, but, you know what? I guess it would have been worse if they had never done it. So I guess I am glad.

The opportunity to repeat kindergarten was significant for Justin, was related to laws from his mother’s perspective, and the age difference it created between he and his classmates may have an impact on his leadership opportunities. Title IX opened doors for females in both sports and academics (U.S. Department of Justice, 2001) and though the current impact that law is having on the study family is more about an older child than the young leader being focused on in this study, it is still relevant to leadership development.

**Economics.** These middle-income parents made comments in regard to other people’s socioeconomic statuses. Some parents pointed out their perceptions about various issues faced by families of lower socioeconomic status.

Mrs. Sawyer’s son spent one year at one of the regular parish schools. The rest of her time as a parent of a school-ager has been spent with either the university laboratory school system or the magnet schools. She said,

the regular parish schools have to go at a slower pace because they have to try to keep up with the median of the class which tends to be lower because of some of the factors that we talked about before—lower socioeconomic status, more single parent families, lack of male role model in the family, not reading to their kids, parents not being involved, not valuing education.

She said later in the same interview,

I’ve heard enough from friends who’ve taught at those schools to know that it is really hard for the really, the kids that really want to learn. It is hard for them to learn in that environment that they are in because some of these other kids disrupt the class.
Mrs. Pillsbury believes that poor people can pull themselves up out of poverty but it requires resilience, changing some bad family habits, and taking advantage of some educational opportunities. She also believes that it is better to empower people than to always do for them. She said,

Not to dismiss that we should be helping people, but if we can achieve those things through, not just getting in there and taking over everything and saying "We’re doing this!" It might be better. That’s the way I perceive it.

Dr. Pillsbury had this to say about socioeconomic status and leadership:

I think that socioeconomic status effects parenting. I think as you go down the socioeconomic ladder there is less mom and dad raising kids and less teaching. I mean they are probably sometimes more worried about surviving—putting food on the table and taking care of that kind of stuff and so sitting down and spending time with your kid and teaching, you know, I think they are going to have less of that.

Parents in this study felt that there were many opportunities for people of low-income status to pursue leadership opportunities. Some of their statements applied specifically to Riverdale, others were broader. The list below contains quotes from parents about opportunities for leadership that can be accessed by low-income families:

1. "And the churches, they offer a lot of opportunities and they are free."
2. "The city does all kinds of free things you can do downtown. Festivals, things especially for kids…"
3. "If you are in a lower socioeconomic group, the Boys and Girls Club does a lot of really good stuff over there."
4. [The Elementary and Middle Lab Schools] "don’t broadcast it, but they do have some scholarship opportunities."
5. "Transportation…. might not be a problem if you lived in town because the town is just not that big."
6. "If you told your church that your kids didn’t have bikes and you couldn’t afford it and they needed them to accomplish this and that, somebody would come through with a bike, new or used."

7. "Seems like I have seen a bus with ‘Boys and Girls Club’ on the side of it before, so I think that they have some way of getting those kids over there."

8. "To lead a gang requires some leadership…it is not in the regards that we like to think about it, you know, but it certainly is a way to develop some leadership skills. Now are those skills applicable to a different environment? Be a supervisor and lead the group? Well, probably not."

9. [Because of all of the educational institutes in the community] "there is always going to be someone who can assist you [with school work] at some level" and it is sometimes "free."

10. "…there are Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts."

11. "So many things are almost free" including "vast amounts of land where you can just go and play for free" and "fishing" and "rec centers" and "boating docks" and "the downtown riverfront" and "national forest" and more.

12. "There are many projects going on at the university on Saturdays. Sometimes they are free. Those kinds of things are fun, plus they are not only promoting the university, but they are promoting education."

13. "You can go on campus and take advantage of the resources there."

14. [I think that] "the schools are pretty good about giving everybody a shot, a chance [at being part of something] that develops leadership abilities."

As opposed to some of the perceived issues faced by low-income families, the study parents also recognized the opportunities that were available to their own children as a result of being of
middle income status. The following is a list of leadership opportunities that study parents believe are afforded to families of financial means:

1. Family can afford school tuition at many of the better schools.
2. Family can expend money and resources on expanding a child’s world through travel experiences and cultural events.
3. Family can pay fees for registration, equipment and other ancillary costs often required in extracurricular participation.
4. Family circumstances can permit flexible work scheduling or allowing one parent to be at home full-time or part-time.
5. Family can have multiple options for transportation to extracurricular activities (multiple vehicles, teenager has vehicle, pay someone for their gas, etc.)

Parents recognized that some barriers to leadership development are associated with low-income levels. Those barriers will be discussed further in an upcoming section about parental perceptions of non-supportive influences on the development of leadership.

**Culture.** Culture can be defined as patterns of behavior that are acquired and shared through time in such a way as to be communicated within a group and shared with new group members in order to serve as a cognitive guide for them to use in the future (Krueber & Kluckhohn, 1952). So once you are in the group, then you know the language, meanings, and symbols associated with that group and used between the group members.

**School culture.** Mr. Flowers used the word "culture" in two different contexts. He talked about religion creating a "culture" in the home and he also talked about teaching his daughter a "school culture." I picked up on Mr. Flowers’ terminology and began noticing that other families taught a "school culture" to their children as well. The school culture teaches children general expectations and behaviors that are appreciated and/or acceptable in the school setting. Getting
homework completed each night is a general school expectation. Reading notes from school and fulfilling whatever obligation they are requesting is another. Being dressed appropriately, having needed materials ready, and being punctual are more expectations. Mr. Flowers feels that helping less-able classmates is part of school culture. He also said that even if you finish your test early, you can’t "just sit there and smile. You have to convince them [the teacher] that you are being thorough" by going back through and checking your answers. Siblings and family matriarchs played a major role in transmitting these cultural mores.

Smart boys aren't cool. There is also a sub-culture within schools that parents identified as a "Smart boys aren’t cool" culture. The only family that did not mention this was the Flowers family who has two young girls; their boys have been out of school for a few years. Mr. Sawyer began talking about which schools in the community he felt were the best and told about Justin’s one year in a school that he said "he wasn’t real happy with. The teachers were fine, but the social environment and the attitude toward learning and smart kids was not what I liked." I asked him who created that social environment and he said, "Other kids, definitely other kids." He continued his story,

It was Justin and one other kid. You can definitely hear it that there is a bit of negativity from the other kids "Oh, the smart kid is in the class. Oh, yeah, there is one of the smart kids." That is why I asked Justin, "Aren’t you one of the smart kids?” He says "Yes, but I try not to hang out with…." See he is trying to mentally navigate. He wants to be one of the smart kids, but he wants to hang out with these other kids who don’t think smart kids are cool. This is in kindergarten! This has already started.

Mr. and Mrs. Sawyer were unhappy with that school’s environment and were delighted when Justin got accepted into the magnet school. There was spring awards ceremony at the magnet school that the Sawyers attended. Justin received the Reading Award for his grade level and a young lady received the Math Award. Mr. Sawyer said,
We asked her, "You must be really smart?" and she is like "Oh, yeah, I am one of the best math people!" and she is real proud. It was all very positive. The environment, the teachers certainly foster that environment, but the kids have taken to it and embraced it. Being the smart kid is the place to be at the magnet school.

Mr. Sawyer said that he saw "being a good performer" and "academic achievement" fostered at both the magnet school and the university lab schools that his older daughters attended. Conversely, "we started seeing signs" at the "regular" public school "that socially there was starting to be a divide already. We started getting that in kindergarten and my wife and I were like ‘No, we don’t need to start that.’ We did not need to go down that path." I asked him if there was a similar stigma attached to being a smart girl. He said,

I think the stigma in the boys’ environment of being the smart kid is a lot worse than in the girls’ community. In the boys’ world, it is more prevalent than it is with girls. I think the girls just tend to accept other girls as "that’s just the way they are," but the boys…I think it is more prevalent for being the smartest to not be the cool thing more so with boys than with girls.

Other parents agreed with Mr. Sawyer. Mrs. Pillsbury said that her 12-year-old son is not the achiever and teacher pleaser that her girls are and part of that is because he doesn’t want to be considered a "nerd."

Ms. Bigsby described the conflict between being cool and being smart:

Right now Brad is a good kid. He is an intelligent kid. He likes to learn. He likes to read. He likes to show his knowledge, so that is a good thing, especially for a boy. If I can keep him on that track as long as possible, I will. Because when they get to a certain age, you know, they don’t want to be smart anymore. They just want to be cool and cool is not going to cut it with Mommy.

She also expressed her concern that he would pick up an attitude from the surrounding culture. She described that culture:

It doesn’t matter. I don’t want to be smart. I don’t want guys to think I am a nerd. I don’t want guys to think I am gay or whatever. Uh-uh, I can’t worry about the books. I’ve got to have my swag on.
But her attitude is "I don’t care about your swag, Sweetie. Your swag better be your good name. That is going to be your swag right there!" Ms. Bigsby’s comment about "especially for a boy" leads right into the next cultural milieu noticed among the parents interviewed. There seemed to be a general feeling that the parents perceived their children as fulfilling the cultural norm for their gender.

**Gender expectations.** Ms. Bigsby described Brad as "all boy" and "an All-American boy" and said that he likes "anything that is boy-related, rough stuff." During the course of the interviews, she also referred to him as "the big brother" and "a little man."

Mr. Sawyer said that "Justin will make anything into a competition. I think it is a boy thing." He describes him as a "popular boy," "smart boy," and "athletic boy."

Mrs. Pillsbury said of Brianna, "…she is probably more the ‘girlie, girl’ of the bunch." She also used descriptors like motherly and talked of her daughter spending time picking out fashionable outfits, taking time to fix her hair, and enjoying going out to pick flowers.

Mr. Flowers said that Talia will play the "mother role." She too is concerned about her clothes and appearance being just right.

After studying leadership in preschools for over 10 years, Fu (1982) concluded that one of the factors that influenced leadership success in the preschool was fitting into peer expectations for gender-specific behaviors. It appears that the focus children fit their parents’ expectations for gender-specific behaviors, which leads one to wonder if the same might be true for meeting their classmates’ expectations. And, if that is the case, does that play into their leadership position in the classroom?

**Ethnic relations.** Participating parents were asked, "Just imagine for a minute that someone similar to you, same age, gender, marital status, ethnicity, and salary range moved in next door to you. This person has a child much like yours, but a little younger. If they asked you about the
opportunities for their child to develop leadership skills, what might you tell them about ethnic relations? As one might expect, the answers received were specific to the community. However, parents made many comparisons of their perceptions of Riverdale to perceptions of other places, especially other places in the U.S. where they had lived or worked at another time. Therefore, their observations took on a broader cultural perspective.

Mr. Sawyer compared Riverdale to Texas cities and North Carolina cities that are much larger than Riverdale. He believes that there is a "lack of adult leadership" in the Riverdale African American community and that deficit is a contributing factor as to why it is "20 years behind" other communities in which he has lived in terms of ethnic relations. Local community characteristics that he cites as indicators of this deficit are the "physical racial divide" that creates completely segregated neighborhoods, "low-performing schools that are predominantly" African American and lack of community leaders or political office holders who are African American. He went on to say that there was a very strong female African American contender for the mayoral seat and he was disappointed when she did not win that election. He also mentioned that even in a sphere where one would anticipate cultural diversity, there is sometimes what appears to be a racial divide. The example he cited was in conjunction to the soccer league. As president of the soccer league, he helped design the registration form which did not have any designation for race. He said,

We kind of give coaches a certain amount of control over deciding who they’ll put on their team…but the Black coaches had 2/3 of the Black kids [because they] knew those kids and who they were and grabbed them up and put them on their teams…[causing what appeared to be] a racial divide.

Mrs. Sawyer does not believe that "skin color" or ethnic heritages are local issues that have a bearing on leadership development. She believes that what others may perceive as being ethnic issues, are actually caused by factors such as weak work ethic, unsupportive parenting styles, and halfhearted valuing of education. "I don’t think race matters," she added but "attitude" does.
Dr. Pillsbury does not see any connection between ethnic relations and leadership development. He specified the two dominant ethnic groups in the community and said that he believes the opportunities for each are equal.

Mrs. Pillsbury said "While living in a Dallas suburb we were kind of in a white enclave." She felt that integration was almost non-existent. "We got it at school, church, everywhere we went. Everybody was the same. It felt weird. I am not used to that, I guess." But in comparing Dallas to Riverdale, she said,

...here it is more a natural flow...It may just be me, my experiences, where I lived, where I worked, who I associated with, that sort of thing, but the races seemed to be much more segregated there than here. Even though you have a higher percentage of middle class Blacks there than you do here—I am not sure about that, but I think that is true—I know it is true with the upper class. You saw them around, but my involvement with Black people while I was there was really small. Really, just nothing. And here, it is all the time and I think that is way better actually. People would probably be surprised by that, but I think it is just more natural friendships and people interacting on a natural basis than this kind of weird stance that people tend to get with people who are different.

In continuing the comparison between Dallas and Riverdale she believes that Riverdale lends itself to greater diversity and is more conducive to building both relationships and teams. She is comfortable in this community, "I realized how much I like that different interaction between people of different races and different economic situations."

Mrs. Flowers’ perception of Riverdale is that African American children and Caucasian children have equal opportunities for leadership development.

Mr. Flowers said that the Riverdale community at large is "pretty non-biased compared to other communities because we have like a 47:52 ratio of Blacks to Whites. Most people never see this in their entire lives. This kind of balance is normal to us." The schools are not all racially balanced, but his daughter’s magnet school is and he believes that Riverdale High School is as well.
He said that he moved to Riverdale when he was in high school and when he entered the high school there were all kinds of people that made him feel welcomed. He said,

Ethnic problems? For me, no! I have lived and worked in other places and you wouldn’t find that. For example, when I worked in Kentucky… The people who were White or Caucasian, the people who work in the coal mines and some of their parents, they were ostracized. "He has worked in the mine all his life. Can’t you tell?" [said with disdain in imitation of his work supervisor]. And I was like, "Whoa! Nobody where I am from would say that!" I was like shocked. These were Caucasians talking about Caucasians to Blacks, Hispanics, and the other guy, I guess he was from Pakistan, all of us. And he just stopped and pointed that guy out and said, "He’s a hill topper. Do you know why they call them hill toppers?" We were quiet. I thought, "Man, I never!" They were just trying to make a living….that was one of the strangest experiences in my whole life. I don’t think we have the racial issues here like that. We are just going to work or school. This has been our experience—but I know that there are other areas that are not like this all the time. This is one of the best things about Riverdale.

Ms. Bigsby commented that the smart boys aren’t cool attitude discussed earlier is more prevalent among African American males than in other sub-cultures. She "sees that mentality" and believes that she will "be a little harder" on her boys as a result. Although she never said it outright, she apparently feels that there is an attitude out in the world about African American parenting. That perception is based on a statement in which she said that she will "keep on" her sons about achieving academically because she does "not want them to be categorized as just another African American male whose parents don’t think or whose parents don’t care enough or weren’t intelligent enough to help their kids achieve." Because Ms. Bigsby values education, she sees these attitudes that are specific to the African American culture as being barriers to leadership development. As substantiation for Ms. Bigsby’s concerns, research that supports her beliefs is offered. According to Passow (1972) as well as Fordham and Ogbu (1986), African Americans who achieve academically will often feel pressure from other African Americans students not to excel in school and, if the high achiever chooses to continue to do well in school, his ethnic peers will abandon him socially.
It is the highly achieving African American male who is most likely to be put in the position of
either choosing to be popular or smart, but not both (Davis, 2003). Ms. Bigsby’s beliefs about
general attitudes toward African American parenting also have some merit as shown by research
literature. Not only is there evidence to indicate that some African American parenting styles are
not conducive to either academic achievement or leadership growth (Piirto, 2004) but there are also
reported that some teachers, guidance counselors, and other school personnel may have low
expectations of African American males based solely on their ethnicity (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986;
Ogbu, 2003).

Military culture. Another cultural observation noted was that both mothers and fathers
made references to the military in conjunction with leadership. These references were not noted
during the typing of the transcripts, but only after all of the interviews were over. Two families in
particular made military references. Some of these parents had mentioned a connection to the
military but others had not done so. Two post-interview phone calls provided answers about
whether all of those who made military references had a personal connection to the military. Those
families who either served in the military or were raised in a family where a parent served in the
military were the ones who made military references connected to leadership. The conclusion made
was that there could be a "military culture," and within that culture, a focus on leadership. The
following list shows military-related remarks in connection to leadership.

1. "My definition of is very simple. A leader has to be someone who can lead others
to get the job done. That is the military definition."

2. "If you are going to the field, you have to have all of your stuff and that is one of
the things that a leader has to do"

3. "The leader has to believe that we can achieve this. We can pile these rocks up,
like in the military. We can pile these rocks up. It is what we gotta do, so we are
gonna get it done. And then we’ll get a break. You have to convince your people that this is something we can do. We can do it!"

4. "There is no skin color in the military. Everyone was khaki. That is what the uniform was."

5. "I grew up in the military….They can do their job? Great. They can’t do their job? Then you have a problem."

6. "You can’t just come out and bark orders and expect everyone to understand."

7. "People don’t start off as generals. They start off as sergeants and they work their way up. They work and they learn and they get there."

The macrosystemic features listed as indirect contextual factors in the meta-matrix analysis not only have an impact on both parent and child practices and beliefs, but also on the home and entire community. In kind, the practices and beliefs of families in the community either maintain or tear down the perceived cultural beliefs of the larger society. For example, there is an apparent perceived belief on the part of the study parents that there may be problem racial relationships in other parts of the country, but they do not see that as much in their community. In relation to leadership development, the literature review indicated that the study parents are correct. There are some wide-ranging national perspectives about different cultures that often divide opinions and cause racial or cultural rifts (Ogbu, 1994). For the most part, the parents in this study do not believe that ethnic or cultural clashes occur in their community and therefore see ethnic relations in the community as supportive of leadership development for both African Americans and Caucasians.

**Chronosystem.** The chronosystem is used to explain the effects of time on development. Although several parents mentioned a "change in the times," two parent stories stand out as distinctly being influenced by the chronosystem. In addition, a similar incident happened to both of the boys in the study at different points in their lives and, consequently, those incidents made different impacts on their lives. This will also be elucidated through the chronosystem analysis.
**Parent Involvement.** When asked "How do you think your child’s opportunities for developing leadership skills are different than the opportunities you had at his/her age?" Mrs. Pillsbury specified a difference in the amount of "unregimented" and "unsupervised" time she was allowed as a child in comparison to the "controlled" schedules of many children today. She shared her story in her parent journal:

What I have seen (more in Texas than Riverdale) is less ability to develop leadership qualities at a young age because of parental involvement. A young child’s time was too regimented; parents were too involved and controlled every aspect of everything from play-dates to activities in the school during school hours. This affected the children’s confidence and their ability to make decisions and adequately handle social situations. As a result, leadership development was lagging because it requires some self-confidence and having those abilities. The parents were always the leaders – they made every decision, monitored every move and settled all disputes. This was different from my childhood where parents did not get involved in our play activities (unless someone got hurt) and did not come to the school very much. We roamed the neighborhood and woods and had lots of unregimented playtime. We planned our own activities and games and most of the time handled our own disputes and problems. It wasn’t always done with thoughtfulness and kindness, but we learned along the way how to deal with each other. We developed self-confidence and other leadership skills by being allowed to experience the good and the bad of interacting with others and by being allowed to make a lot of our own decisions and to suffer the consequences of them.

This may be an example of the pendulum swinging too far in a particular direction. The research of Campbell and Verna (2007) indicated that parents need to be involved and show concern for what happens in the school setting. Mrs. Pillsbury’s actions as a parent and many of the statements she made during the interview indicated that she is in agreement with that. Moore et al. (2005) would frown upon too many unsupervised peer interactions out of the eyes of adults because, in some neighborhoods, that would be a recipe for gang formation. Hong and Milligram (2008) would also encourage caring adults to oversee children’s interactions. It does not appear that Mrs. Pillsbury is suggesting that children be completely left to their own devices every day, all
day either. But, what Mrs. Pillsbury appears to be saying is that there needs to be a healthy balance. Every second of a child’s day does not need to be scheduled, scrutinized, supervised, and spent working toward a goal or developing a skill. Nor do parents need to, as Ms. Bigsby put it, turn children "loose" and let them "run wild" and "whatever" they pick up, they pick up. Mrs. Pillsbury’s beliefs are supported by many researchers. Elkind (1989) warned parents of the detrimental effects of over-scheduling a child. Likewise, Louv (2008) and Pelligrini (2005) warned parents that too little time spent in the outdoors enjoying nature, freedom, and peer-to-peer interactions could also have harmful outcomes.

Technological advances. In answer to the same question posed to Mrs. Pillsbury, Mrs. Sawyer wrote in her parent journal about Justin’s use of technology being different than anything that she had access to as a child. She believes that by Justin using the computer and internet to play problem-solving games, he is "developing leadership." He "plays until he wins and doesn’t like to give up" thus increasing his ability to focus, improving "his confidence," and helping him to be a better peer tutor. She feels that the internet has "opened up the world" for him. She said that "this was not something that was available for me at such an early age." Certainly the technological world has increased by leaps and bounds in the past 30 years and it is not surprising that internet access has made a difference in the lives of children, even a difference in their leadership abilities.

Major life event. The chronosystem is about time. One chronosystemic effect on development is that the point in time that an individual experiences a major life event or transition will have a consequential outcome on that individual’s life (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). As mentioned earlier, both Brad and Justin had an older brother who passed away. Even though Brad was not even born at the time of his brother’s passing, his death did have an effect on Brad. By Brad moving into the oldest son birth order slot, his life is different than it would have been had his brother lived and Brad had occupied the little brother role. In contrast, Justin was almost 3-years-
old when his brother died of cancer. This "impacted Justin quite profoundly" according to his mother and his father is in agreement. "Being the only boy and the youngest and not having his big brother anymore, he does feel a little lost and lonely sometimes" testified Mrs. Sawyer. Justin’s father said much the same,

Davy died when Justin was pretty young. He still talks about him a lot. Still misses him. Once a month or so I’ll catch him kind of sitting in the corner, all sad. He’s missing his brother. It’s that big brother relationship that you really want. He really wanted to have that. It’s without a doubt had a big influence on him.

Not only did Justin’s birth order get re-positioned as the result of his brother’s passing, but Justin has emotional wounds and a noticeable vacancy in his life. In addition, there are indications from the parent interviews that his parents and sisters treat him differently, cherish him even more, now that he is the only male child in the family.

**Summary of chronosystemic influences.** As is apparent from this discussion, the parents in this study perceive the chronosystem as having effects on young children’s leadership development. The chronosystemic features listed as indirect contextual factors in the meta-matrix analysis surround each of the smaller contexts—macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem. The shifts in belief systems that result from changes in the chronosystem, impact parent and child practices as well as the physical contexts that they choose to spend time in. Likewise, the shifts in cultural views that result from chronosystemic changes influence parent behaviors and their priorities, thus changing values, laws and eventually, child outcomes.

Another level of the chronosystem involves the timing of a traumatic event in a person’s life and the resulting effect. Justin and Brad each had an older brother pass away, but because they were each different ages when that event happened within their families, the events had very different impacts on their young lives. Not only did it affect each of the boys differently, but their parents responded to them differently based on the perceived needs of the child, thus the
chronosystem affects the child, and the child, in turn, affects the parents. Once again, bi-directional influences are evident.

**Non-Supportive Influences on the Development of Leadership**

After a lengthy discussion of supportive factors influencing young leadership development, a wrap-up of parents’ perceptions about non-supportive factors that act as barriers to young leadership development is in order. Some of these factors have been given prior attention, others need further clarification. Table 24 shows factors that parents perceived as being non-supportive to leadership development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-supportive factors</th>
<th>Mr. Sawyer</th>
<th>Mrs. Sawyer</th>
<th>Ms. Bigsby</th>
<th>Dr. Pillsbury</th>
<th>Mrs. Pillsbury</th>
<th>Mr. Flowers</th>
<th>Mrs. Flowers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smart boys aren't cool attitude</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural attitudes about African-American parenting</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unorthodox family values of parents with low-performing students</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values and practices of friends/neighbors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of social networking</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income status</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender inequality</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family mental illness or destructive decision-making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School zoning practices</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the smart boys aren’t cool attitude and cultural attitudes regarding African American parenting have already been discussed fully, focus will be maintained on the other 7 unsupportive factors as perceived by these study parents.
Unorthodox Family Values of Parents with Low-Performing Students. Mrs. Sawyer believes that there are certain practices or values that parents uphold that support their children in healthy, well-rounded development and, in contrast, there are others that have adverse effects on children’s development, academic achievement, and outlook on life. She said,

I think parents need to be willing to put forth a little effort. They would have to do that no matter who they were. They need to find things to get their kids involved in. They need to ask questions. They need to do the normal positive things that parents are supposed to do if they want their child to develop.

Mrs. Sawyer encourages parents to ask specific types of questions about school and homework. In addition she believes that "lack of a male role model in the family, not reading to their kids, not valuing education," lack of "parent involvement," and parenting singly are all stumbling blocks to leadership development. She is concerned about "the poor kids" who go home to parents who "almost don’t even interact with their child." Despite the advances and support that mass media, internet, and instant communication can afford, Mrs. Sawyer believes they are sometimes unhealthy distractions, "I’ve seen plenty of instances where the parent is going to be on the computer or texting or whatever and that is all they do."

Values and Practices of Friends and Neighbors. Participating parents recognize the influence that peers can have on their children and also realize that other children that their child is spending time with can have a negative impact. Ms. Bigsby talked about the older boys who come from the low-income housing development to her house to play basketball and that she is not always appreciative of the things they do and say. Mr. Flowers mentioned concerns about the children at school that his child might admire and even more concerns that he doesn’t know those children. That is why he said it is important to "instill your family values" in your child when they are very young. Mr. Sawyer recognizes one of his children’s friends as exhibiting what he considers to be the "opposite of leadership skills—eccentric, not really concerned about how her decisions affect
other people, very much concerned about what you are going to do for her." Overall, parents expressed a concern for those children whose parents are not supervising their kid’s interactions with other kids enough to know how that relationship is affecting the child.

**Lack of Social Networking.** Social networking is a valuable behavior that helps make relational connections between different contexts. Study parents acknowledge that all parents need "to get their kids involved" and that not helping them to do so or not supporting the child’s initiatives can be a hindrance to leadership development. Bronfenbrenner would agree with this and said in his book that "the least favorable condition for development is one is which supplementary links are either non-supportive or completely absent" causing the mesosystem to be "weakly linked" (1979, p. 215).

**Low-Income Status.** Parents noted many ways that poverty can act as a barrier to leadership development. For instance, the parents conveyed the importance they believe that extracurricular activities play in helping children develop leadership skills. Parents who don’t "have a decent work schedule" or "reliable transportation" or money to pay for the registration fees and needed equipment associated with many extracurricular activities are at a severe disadvantage in "getting their kids involved." The following is a list of barriers to leadership development resulting from low-income as perceived by the parents in this study:

1. With the exception of the magnet schools, the "better" schools in town require tuition.
2. Expanding a child's world through travel can be expensive.
3. Many extracurricular activities require money for travel, equipment, fees, etc.
4. Getting kids to practices and games requires a decent work schedule.
5. Getting kids to practices and games requires reliable transportation.
6. Low-income neighborhoods are associated with low-performing schools.
Gender Inequality. Gender inequality is also an issue raised by parents. Mr. Sawyer told of parents who give more credence to their son’s athletic activities than they do to their daughter’s athletic activities, "Parents of girl athletes for some reason don’t view it the same as they do boy athletes. They just seem to look at the boys as a little more serious than the girls." He said that it seems that "constantly the girls are put on the ‘not as important as something else list’…Why is what he is doing more important than what she is doing?"

When asked about differences between boys and girls leadership development opportunities, Mrs. Flowers said that "upfront" it looks like boys and girls have equal opportunities for leadership development, "but they really don’t." She went on to give two examples, "If a girl wants to play football, then I think she should have that opportunity. I don’t think they should discriminate and say she can’t play football just because she is a girl." Likewise she sees unfairness in the ways that pregnant teenagers are treated. There are some schools that have proposed to "put girls out" if they become pregnant while attending high school (a regional charter school). In reference to the father of the unborn child, Mrs. Flowers said, "If they are going to put the girls out, then I guess they would need to put the boys out too." Frustrated with a school that would consider such a policy, she said, "All they are doing is messing up what could be for that child." She believes that of all people, school officials should realize that "an education helps people get ahead in life."

Family Mental Illness or Destructive Decision-Making. Mrs. Pillsbury believes that parents with mental health issues or constant employment of destructive decisions have a negative impact on children’s overall development and leadership development. She said,

If you have a crazy spouse or you’re married to someone who is sick all the time or is mentally unbalanced, it is a drain to you. You are struggling just to keep it going and do ordinary things. And that has something to do with the kids too. Kids that come from a household that is so unstable, so erratic, it’s hard for them to get things together and think beyond just treading water.
Although resilience can be fostered, the leadership literature supports Mrs. Pillsbury’s assertions. Eamon (2001) affirms that children who have parents who have a chronic inability to cope with daily stressors grow up with a sense of powerlessness that encumbers their ability to learn problem-solving skills and, consequently, diminishes the likelihood of them growing into strong leaders.

**School Zoning Practices.** Several parents saw a discrepancy between what some schools in the parish were able to offer in contrast to other schools. Parents felt that the magnet schools and university lab schools were the best schools in the parish as shown by "better test scores," better comments from state regulators and an overall "better climate." They were concerned about low performing schools and the disadvantage that would put children at in terms of competing outside of that school. Furthermore, there is a connection between particular neighborhoods and particular low performing schools. Some concerns were also expressed about kids who "want to learn" being squelched by the class majority who did not value education. They wondered aloud about the limited options that low-income families in those neighborhoods have for their children. As Mrs. Sawyer put it,

There are plenty of low-income families who have self-esteem and they care about how they look and they care about how their house looks and they care about education and they care about learning. They want their kids to do well. And even if they don’t have a higher education, they want their kids to have one.

Overall, unsupportive influences on the development of leadership can stem from most any level of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of human development. From mental illness to gender inequality, the parents in this study perceived there to be many unsupportive influences that can have an influence on whether a child has ample opportunities for leadership development or not.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This study was an attempt to provide a qualitative examination of beliefs, context factors, and practices within the families of four children who were identified by their classroom teachers as strong leaders. Leadership by young children is defined in this study as the ability to preserve the functioning of social processes as well as make changes that either improve the efficiency of solving a problem or advance the level of thinking in the group (Foster, 1981). Generally speaking, early childhood researchers agree that leadership is an interaction between a child’s personality characteristics and his ability to consider the needs of the group interaction (Kitano & Tafoya, 1982). By only interviewing 7 parents, a relatively small number, I was able to provide an in-depth examination and description of individual parent and family components, as well as to describe common components. Like following a single thread at a time through a woven rug, I followed themes through the data, and as I did so, an interconnected system began to emerge. This interconnected system was viewed through a Bronfenbrenner lens, that is, was looked at in relationship to the bioecological model of human development developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). While analyzing the interconnected components that the study parents perceived as beneficial to young leadership development, I was able to include the voices of parents as they described the issue of young leadership development in both time and place. The data gathered from this study provides information on how parents view leadership both in a broad context and specifically in young children. In addition, the information gathered has the potential to influence the behavior and activities of other parents, as well as educators, coaches, and others who work with young children by shedding light on the strategies used by parents that seem to nurture budding leaders.
Summary

Beliefs and Practices

The four families represented in this study—Sawyers, Bigsby, Pillsburys and Flowers—shared their beliefs about general leadership skills as they had experienced them in their own lives. The development of their beliefs stemmed from influences that occurred in the family and community as well as workplace, church, history, culture, and the times we live in. In addition, they shared their beliefs about the types of behaviors their children exhibited that the parents believed were indications of budding leadership. Throughout our discussions, the study parents also told how they believed their children had developed those leadership skills. Sometimes the parents provided information that linked to the literature review so that I was able to further develop connections to leadership development. Despite individual differences which have been expounded upon throughout this paper, in bringing all of the information back together, the data can be reduced to give a summary of the findings.

Parents seemed to believe that their child had personality characteristics from a very young age that were conducive to building leadership qualities. For example, all of the parents mentioned their child’s early speaking skills and willingness to stand up for themselves. In addition, parents believed that early childhood leadership occurs as the result of a supportive environment and part of that environment includes the parent practices enacted. The child’s personality, family structure, family climate, family values, and parent roles are all supportive of leadership development.

Leadership, as demonstrated by young children, has been defined throughout this document as the ability to preserve the functioning of social processes as well as make changes that either improve the efficiency of solving a problem or advance the level of thinking in a group. This definition is based on Foster’s (1981) theoretical framework. As discussed in the "Theories and Definitions of Leadership" section of this document, Foster (1981) ties together the great person
model of leadership with the *small group dynamic* model to develop this definition of leadership that is applicable to young children. In relation to the *great person* model that emphasizes that leaders have strong personalities and are born with accompanying characteristics, Foster takes into consideration that not all children are leaders, but that there are those who have a desire to lead or natural proclivity to lead. In addition, Foster proposed that leadership skills can and should be taught and guided by caring adults to help children further develop leadership skills, thus also taking in the *small group dynamic* model that emphasizes group processes and skills that can be taught. Succinctly put, leadership is an interaction between a child’s personality characteristics as well as his ability to consider the needs of the group interaction and leadership effectiveness is teachable (Foster, 1981; Kitano & Tafoya, 1982).

Foster’s framework and the parental beliefs outlined in this study concur. Parents recognized that each of the children in their own family were different, with some having stronger leadership skills than others. Though it is inevitable as life changes and more children are added to a family, that parents enact their parenting practices somewhat differently with each child, overall, parents felt that they had used basically the same parenting strategies with all of their children. They proposed that the reason some of their children were leaders and others were not was because some people are "natural leaders" indicating that some children are born with distinct personality characteristics that lend themselves to leadership performance. Like Foster (1981), parents also believed that leadership skills are teachable and that the parenting strategies they used with their young leaders helped to further develop traits that were already present within the child’s personality.

Family structure that includes family size and birth order of children also has an effect on leadership development. The encouragement and support for skills development that parents provide nurtures leadership that children present both in the home and in many other environments.
such as church activities and athletic competitions. The family values that are espoused by parents of young leaders include valuing education, a strong work ethic, academic achievement, and morality. The roles that parents play include encourager, counselor, supporter, teacher, organizer, values keeper, family historian, protector, and tour guide of life. Each of these has a different effect on young children’s leadership development but, at the same time, all are supportive of the child as his leadership abilities develop. A pyramid of leadership development was created to summarize supports for young leadership development (See Figure 7).

Figure 7. Pyramid of Support for Young Leaders
Contextual Factors

Parents believed that early childhood leadership was strongly influenced by interactions with other humans and influences from the family, community, and world. In looking at the contextual factors that parents believed were influential on their child’s leadership development, each of the five inter-related spheres of development outlined in Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of development were mentioned.

The developing leader exists in the microsystem where individual development occurs. The microsystem also includes all of the people that the child has face-to-face interactions with and develops a personal relationship with. This includes people within the home such as parents and siblings. In addition, parents noted that extended family, most especially female matriarchs such as grandmothers and aunts, were also influential on their child’s leadership development. People that the child interacted with in the school environment, teachers and school mates, had an impact on the child’s leadership skills, as well. Those who were influential within extracurricular activities included team mates, coaches, and teachers. The church members that influenced young children’s emerging leadership included peers, Sunday school teachers, and church leaders who acted as role models, especially role models of public speaking and community service. Neighborhood peers were also included among children that influenced the young leaders who were the focus of this study.

The mesosystem is the part of the bioecological system of human development that connects different factions of the microsystem. The connections between home and organized community activities such as church, sports organizations, and the child’s school are well-represented in the mesosystem by the families interviewed. Parents also discussed ways that social networking was important to overall human development and, more especially, leadership development.
The exosystem is defined as that layer of the bioecological model of human development that is a part of society that the developing leader has no direct contact with but, the events that occur within it are influential to his development. Family history/family legacy, parent workplace, mass media/internet, size and location of town, local university, city government, school board, and neighborhood were all listed as having some kind of influence on leadership.

The macrosystem is the broad, overarching societal influences that surround and influence each of the smaller systems of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) bioecological model of human development that have been discussed thus far. This level of the system is an overarching level of the society that the child exists within that includes, the social, cultural, political, and historical influences. Values, laws, economics, and culture were influential elements on the development of leaders according to the parents interviewed for this study. Values included church ideologies, the value of a quality education, and the valuing of a strong work ethic. Laws that were mentioned as influential on leadership development were laws that governed school practices such as non-mandatory kindergarten and Title IX, which impacted female participation in sports and academics. Economic influences on leadership were also discussed. Parents in this study believed that economics played a role in leadership development as middle income gave children more opportunities for leadership development and lower income not only effected parenting skills, but also the ability of low-income parents to aid their child in leadership development. Cultural influences on leadership included the teaching of school culture to their children and the appreciation of their children meeting cultural expectations for gender role enactment. In addition, the influence of ethnicity was found to have an impact on emerging leadership. Military association seemed to have an influence on parenting which may, in turn, have an impact on the child. Last, parents felt that there is a subculture that perpetuates the concept that smart boys are not cool, and this has a negative impact on boy’s leadership confidence.
The chronosystem was mentioned several times by parents but only at a more in-depth level about three topics. First, child activities have become too regimented, thus disallowing children ample opportunities to play in unsupervised situations that permit them to work out interpersonal incidents with peers without adult intervention. These circumstances were brought about by a change in parent practices that resulted from changes in women’s roles in society. When women were mostly stay-at-home moms, children came home from school and went out to play in the neighborhood with friends. As more and more women entered the workforce, more and more children came home to empty houses with directions to lock the doors and stay inside (Pelligrini, 2005; Louv, 2008). In addition, the lack of unregimented play time has also been supported by the Western civilization’s love affair with competition. Parents often over-schedule their children in sports and skills building activities such as piano lessons as a way to help their child be more competitive with peers (Elkind, 1989).

Second, technological advances such as home computers and internet access are readily accessible to children thus, have opened up new worlds for children and helped to teach skills that parents feel have been influential in their leadership development. The phenomena of every family having a home computer began about 30 years ago and the capabilities of computers have increased exponentially during the course of that time, so that the opportunities children have with computers today far exceeds anything their parents would have experienced as children.

Last, the point in time that a child experiences a traumatic event has an influence on how that event will impact his life. Two sets of parents shared a similar event that their families had experienced, but indicated that the two boys in the study reacted or were influenced in different ways as the result of their age at the time of the traumatic event. Figure 8 outlines the parental perceived influences on young leadership as viewed through the bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).
Non-Supportive Influences on Young Leadership Development

Parents shared beliefs about those things that they believed were supportive of leadership development as well as some things that were not supportive of leadership development. These different factors that parents perceived as being non-supportive stemmed from different levels of the bioecological model of human development. Figure 9 outlines non-supportive influences on young
leadership development. Non-supportive factors seem to push a child down or weigh the child down in ways that cause him to be at-risk of not developing leadership skills, thus an inverted triangle was chosen to represent non-supportive factors influencing leadership development.

Figure 9. Non-Supportive Factors of Young Leadership Development as Perceived by Parents.

Family mental illness and destructive decision-making were listed as non-supports of leadership development and because these would be behaviors that would occur within a child’s home and face-to-face interactions with a parent, each was placed it in the microsystem. The enacting of family values that study parents viewed as unconventional or having an ill-effect were
also placed in the microsystem. A lack of social networking was placed in the mesosystem. Local school zoning practices was placed in the exosystem. Several factors that parents viewed as unsupportive were placed in the macrosystem—gender inequality, unorthodox family values, low-income status, values and practices of some friends and neighbors, and the smart boys aren’t cool attitude. No unsupportive factors of leadership development seemed to stem from the chronosystem.

**Interconnectedness**

Young children’s leadership development is an interrelated system of events and relationships. Figure 7 shows how different components of family life build up a child’s potential to be a leader, each component acting as a different level of a foundation. Parent roles support family values which, in turn, support family climate. Family structure and the individual child also impact outcomes.

The relationships in a child’s life influence young leadership development. Figure 8 represents the interconnectedness of a child leader’s life as perceived by the parents in this study. The relationships with people that a child encounters on a regular basis will influence his leadership development (microsystem). The more frequent and the closer the relationships, the more influence there will be on the child. Because the child has relationships with people outside of the home such as those he interacts with in the neighborhood, at school, at church, and through extracurricular activities, it is important that the family has strong lines of communication between the home and these types of influential contexts (mesosystem). Groups of people or contexts that exist outside of the home and that the child has little, if any, personal contact with can also be influential on his development (exosystem). Parent workplace, family history, and local government are just a few of the influences within this layer of the child’s life that have an impact on his leadership development. The larger, wide-ranging, more extensive influence of society that generally includes social,
cultural, political, and historical influences has a strong influence on the child’s overall development as well as his leadership development (macrosystem). In considering this level, parents in this study perceived culture, values, laws, and economics as being influential on their child’s leadership development. Because every individual exists within a family unit within a community within society at large, it is important to realize that none of the contextual levels discussed can be considered as separate bodies, but all are connected and influence one another. An individual develops within the child-parent relationship that, in turn, is embedded within the family context. The family shapes and is shaped by the quality of the relationships it has outside of the family and within the community-at-large. And, as the definition of the macrosystem indicates, the larger society in which the family is embedded indirectly influences the world that an individual lives and develops within (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

Last, the unsupportive practices that have a negative impact on young leadership development are also interconnected. As Figure 9 represents, there are ideas, values, beliefs, practices, and family situations that can weigh a child down so much that his potential for leadership development is thwarted. Rather than building up and providing a foundation for leadership development, different contextual factors can have a negative impact on the potential for leadership development. An individual develops within an unhealthy child-parent relationship that, in turn, is embedded within the family context. The family lacks strong communication with others outside of the family which results in a weakly linked mesosystem. Neighborhood limitations and school zoning practices can further exacerbate the situation, preventing the child from reaching beyond his home limitations to learn with others of different circumstances. The interconnected physical contexts that a child develops within such as home, community, and school that are unsupportive of leadership can be further weighed down by unsupportive societal culture, values, laws, and economics.
Implications

Parents see their children in a variety of contexts and have an intimate relationship with them. Because of these factors, it is likely that information gleaned from the analysis of data obtained from parents of young leaders can shed light on situations that young leaders derive the most benefits.

First, it was determined that parents’ beliefs shape their parenting decisions that, in turn, influence the contexts that children are allowed to interact within and, eventually, impact child outcomes. With this consideration in mind, it seems only realistic to recognize that teachers, coaches, activity leaders, and others who work with groups of young children must also examine their own beliefs before determining the practices that they wish to implement in order for there to be a good fit between adult beliefs and practices.

Likewise, the many interconnected spheres that a child exists within are individual to that child and the community he lives in. Thus, those who work with young children need to be aware of general personal and community factors, as well as family perceptions of societal beliefs, in order to best meet the needs of the child.

Next, the many examples of young leadership in action throughout this document may broaden the perspectives of teachers and coaches, as well as others who work with young children, to have a better understanding of leadership and how it looks enacted. In addition, both supportive and unsupportive contexts for leadership development have been elucidated, thus giving readers an opportunity to think through the adult practices they see in action in their particular context and determining if what they are currently doing will aid in leadership development or if they may want to make some changes.

Last, parents perceived particular practices as having a strong influence on leadership development. Many of these are things that teachers do regularly such as encouraging critical
thinking, providing structure and adult supervision, and exploring efficient organizational strategies. Other strategies that seem to work in the home environment are similar to specific curriculum strategies.

For instance, some parents said that their child got deeply involved in an activity and would not give up until he reached a self-determined goal. Often times classrooms are not set up to allow such in-depth involvement in an activity, but instead, expect children to complete smaller assignments with short-term goals within a class period. Perhaps, involving children in high interest class projects that have structured goals and schedules that last over a month or more would allow for such in-depth involvement (see Helm & Katz, 2001).

Many parents in this study believed that strong adult leaders are those who weigh all of the options quickly and efficiently, then make a good decision. In order to promote this skill set in their children, they provided many opportunities to make decisions. In addition, when those decisions did not work out well, they counseled their children on ways to make a better decision next time. There are curriculum strategies that function similarly to this parent description of home support for young leadership development. For example, teachers who use learning centers in their classroom often describe the materials and intended usage to the children, ask children which learning center they would like to utilize, and ask them to predict some of the ways that they might use the materials. As the child interacts with the materials and people in that learning center, the teacher discusses and extends learning. If the child uses the materials in an inappropriate way such as being destructive, then the teacher counsels the child to help them make better decisions. These types of activities are often culminated with a brief group presentation where the child tells his classmates about what he did and what he learned. This is just one example of a curriculum strategy that could be used in the classroom to support decision-making opportunities.
Several parents talked about their child being drawn to children of different ages. Sometimes they enjoyed playing with older children for cognitive stimulation. Sometimes they enjoyed working with younger children to teach, nurture, and lead them. Some classrooms have a mainstreamed organizational scheme that allows children to be exposed to and interact with children who have a wide variety of abilities, thus allowing budding leaders many cognitive ability levels to interact with. In a situation like a magnet school where all of the children in a classroom have very similar ability levels, it might be conducive to leadership development to plan occasional multi-grade level and multi-age cooperative activities.

There are other possible classroom teaching strategies that could nurture young leadership skills based on the information parents in this study shared. For example, parents said that they encouraged responsibility taking. In the classroom this might mean helper jobs and asking children to teach another classmate how to do a helper job such as feeding the fish in the classroom aquarium.

**Limitations**

This study had a small number of participants all of whom resided in a small geographical area at a particular point in time. To enhance the possibility that this study may be informative to other contexts of similar makeup, I attempted to provide rich descriptions of the families, their beliefs and practices, and attempted to compare them to one another. To avoid any threat to the trustworthiness of this research, I implemented the use of triangulation to support the results: Teacher observation with a validated instrument, parent interviews, parent journals, participant transcript checking of interviews, data analysis, and cross-case analysis. The in-depth interviews were conducted using both structured and unstructured questioning techniques. I informed the participants of how the study would be conducted and have plans to share the findings with them.
I chose to use teachers as informants to determine the children whose parents would be interviewed for this study. Parents gave examples of their children leading both in school and other contexts. However, by limiting the sample to only children who exhibited leadership in the academic setting, leadership and academic achievement may have been confounded.

During the interviewing process, one of the parents said,

You know I guess every family has its own culture and I’m kind of like my daughter—I don’t always know what other families do, so I am not necessarily aware of how what we do is different. I mean, isn’t it just normal to value education? You would have to follow me around all day at home and listen to the conversations and watch our interactions to determine what some of our values are because I just don’t even think about it. Of course, I value education, but I would not have thought to actually mention it.

I believe this parent had a valid point. Whether one could actually observe families at home in an unobtrusive manner is questionable, but one option for developing a greater understanding of their family culture would be through immersion.

Future Research

Although the federal definition of gifted and talented education includes leadership and young children, the research into and understanding of early leadership is sparse. In addition, there is ample evidence to indicate that educators are interested in developing a better understanding of leadership at adolescent and adult levels. For these reasons, experiences and perceptions from parents of identified young leaders are of interest in learning how leadership is supported and developed.

Others have done research that included observations of children in the classroom. It would be useful to couple classroom observations with observations of children in other contexts in order to find if their strategies change from one context to another or are stronger in one context than another.
Future research should consider initially determining young leaders from contexts other than the school setting. By seeking out adults from other contexts such as church or extracurricular activities to act as informants of young leadership demonstration, there is less likelihood of confusing leadership with other constructs such as academic achievement.

More research needs to look into the connection between early childhood leadership and adult leadership. The question that needs answering is "Do leadership skills at a young age point to a greater likelihood of leadership as a future behavior?" Longitudinal research needs to be conducted to identify leaders at a young age, and then follow-up 10 and 20 years later to see if those who were determined to be young leaders continue to lead later in life. It is interesting to note that several of the parents interviewed believed that they did not have strong leadership skills as a child, but do have strong leadership skills as an adult.

A greater understanding of young leadership could be achieved through contrasting the beliefs and practices of parents whose children make a high score on the SRBCSS-III to the beliefs and practices of parents whose children make a low score on the SRBCSS-III.
REFERENCES


Hailey, D. J. (2008). A mini-case study of parent’s beliefs about young children’s emerging leadership skills. Unpublished manuscript, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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Olzewski-Kubilius, P. (2002). Parenting practices that promote talent development, creativity, and optimal adjustment in Neihart, M., Reis, S. M., Robinson, N. M., and Moon, S. M. (Eds.), The social and emotional development of gifted children (pp. 205-212). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.


APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, all LSU research projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

- Applicant: Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-E, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at http://www.lsu.edu/screeningmembers.shtml

- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:
  (A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru E.
  (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1 & 2)
  (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
  *If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
  (D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
  (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (http://php.nihtaining.com/users/login.php)
  (F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (http://www.lsu.edu/irb/IRB%20Security%20of%20Data.pdf)

1) Principal Investigator: Renee Casbergue, Ph.D.
Dept: EDCI  Ph: 225-578-6660
Rank: Associate Professor
E-mail: rcasberg@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
Debra Jo Halley, Graduate Student
EDCI  318-554-9441
debra.jo.halley@yahoo.com OR DHalley@lsu.edu

3) Project Title: Parental Perceptions of Supportive and Non-Supportive Influences on the Development of Leadership: A Biobehavioral Perspective

4) Proposal? (yes or not) No If Yes, LSU Preproposal Number
Also, if YES, either

- This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
- More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students): Parents of young children who are leaders in 1st/2nd grade classroom
  *Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (i.e. children <18; the mentally impaired; pregnant women; the aged; other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature: Renee Casbergue  Date: 1/30/12

**I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of each non-LSU institution in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted

Reviewer: Kristin A. Canada  Signature: 02/01/2012
April 13, 2013

Debra Jo Hailey
1131 Eight Mile Loop
Natchitoches, LA 71457

Dear Ms. Hailey,

This is to verify that you have permission to reprint your own work, specifically the chart entitled, "Classroom Characteristics of Very Young Leaders According to Early Childhood Professional Literature," in your dissertation. Please reference it as follows: Reprinted with permission from Hailey, D. (2013), "I wanna be president!" Nurturing leadership in young children, Focus on PK&K, 25(3), 1-4.

Sincerely,

Renée M. Casbergue, Ph.D.
Co-Editor, Focus on PK & K
Association of Childhood Education International
Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research
Vira Franklin and James R. Eagles Professorship
221 J Peabody Hall
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803
APPENDIX C
SRBCSS-III TEACHER TRAINING EXERCISE

Teacher Training Exercise for Completing the
Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students-III
(SRBCSS-III)

LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

Task No. 1: Individually, select the letter of a key concept that you believe most closely matches each item.

Task No. 2: In a small group, discuss specific examples of when you have observed each behavior in a student.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Poised</td>
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<td>B. Dependable</td>
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<td>C. Collaborative</td>
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<td>D. Facilitator</td>
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<td>E. Highly regarded</td>
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<td>F. Director</td>
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<td>G. Articulate</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The student demonstrates…

1. responsible behavior; can be counted on to follow through on activities/projects

2. a tendency to be respected by classmates

3. the ability to articulate ideas and communicate well with others.

4. self-confidence when interacting with age peers.

5. the ability to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations.

6. cooperative behavior when working with others.

7. a tendency to direct an activity when he or she is involved with others.

## LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

**The student demonstrates . . .**

1. responsible behavior, can be counted on to follow through on activities/projects.
2. a tendency to be respected by classmates.
3. the ability to articulate ideas and communicate well with others.
4. self-confidence when interacting with age peers.
5. the ability to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations.
6. cooperative behavior when working with others.
7. a tendency to direct an activity when he or she is involved with others.

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<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
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APPENDIX E
PERMISSION TO USE SRBCSS-III

Dear Debra Jo,

Creative Learning Press, Inc. gives you permission to make 20 copies of the leadership portion of the SCRBSS. If you need any other information, please do not hesitate to contact us. Good luck with your dissertation.

Kristina Morgan
Executive Director
Creative Learning Press, Inc.

October 14, 2011

Dear Ms. Morgan,

Thank you so much for returning my call this week. You were very informative and helpful.
APPENDIX F  
SBRCSS-III LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS  
RATING SCALE WITH SCORING WEIGHTS

Student’s Name (or Assigned Code No.)

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<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
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<td>3. the ability to articulate ideas and communicate well with others.</td>
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<td>4. self-confidence when interacting with age peers.</td>
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<td>5. the ability to organize and bring structure to things, people, and situations.</td>
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<td>6. cooperative behavior when working with others.</td>
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<td>7. a tendency to direct an activity when he or she is involved with others.</td>
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Multiply by weight: 1 2 3 4 5 6  
Add weighted column totals: + + + + +  
Subscale total:   

APPENDIX G
SAMPLE PARENT CONSENT FORM

Interview Consent Form
for participation in the
“Parental Perceptions of Supportive and Non-Supportive Influences on the Development of Leadership: An Ecological Systems Perspective” Study
Spring 2012
Debra Jo Hailey, Ed. Sp.
Renee’ Casbergue, Ph.D.

Dear Parent(s),

We are writing to request your permission for face-to-face interviews with you about your child’s emerging leadership skills. The purpose of this research study is to explore beliefs and practices of parents whose children have been identified as leaders in the classroom setting and to gain parent perspectives about limitations to and resources for building children’s leadership skills.

This research study has been approved by the LSU Institutional Review Board. Any data collected will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used in all oral or written reporting of information. You may choose not to participate in the study if you prefer. You may withdraw from this activity at any time with no penalty to either you or your child. Mrs. Hailey, the researcher/principal-investigator, is a graduate student at Louisiana State University.

Mrs. Hailey would like to ask you some questions about your perceptions of leadership both generally and more specifically regarding your child and his/her leadership skills. Each interview within the 3-part series of interviews will a) take approximately 45 minutes, b) be conducted in a mutually agreed upon quiet location, c) be scheduled during a time that is convenient for you, and d) be audio-recorded to help maintain accuracy.

Potentially, the field of early childhood education will benefit from this study by being better informed regarding young children’s emerging leadership skills and about supportive influences that are likely to further develop young people’s leadership potential. In addition, this research study will contribute to the empirical data the under-explored dimension of parental perceptions about young children’s leadership development. This information can help teachers to broaden their perspective as well as better identify and nurture emergent leaders who may need special services such as gifted and talented education to support their potential leadership abilities. Louisiana State University will benefit as the results of the study are disseminated and their role as a research university is promoted.

There are no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.
This study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators using the contact information listed at the end of this document. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns, I can contact the following individual:

Robert C. Mathews,
Louisiana State University
Institutional Review Board
(225) 578-8692.

I give my permission to be interviewed for the study described above. I acknowledge the investigator’s obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Please print your child’s name and age, as well as your name.

Child’s name and age ___________________________ Parent’s name ___________________________

Please sign and date to indicate your consent to be interviewed.

Parent Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

If you are interested in receiving a copy of the summary of the research findings for this study, please print your mailing address in the space below and they will be sent to you.

Name ___________________________

Mailing address ___________________________

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please feel free to call either of us at your convenience.

Debra Jo Hailey
(318)-554-9441
debrajohailey@yahoo.com

Renee’Casbergue, Ph.D.
(225)-578-6660
rcasberg@lsu.edu

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Expiration Expires: 11/30/2015
APPENDIX H
LETTER FROM SUPERINTENDENT GRANTING PERMISSION

Debra Jo Hailey, LSU graduate student, has my permission to proceed with the research study titled “Parental Perceptions of Supportive and Non-Supportive Influences on the Development of Leadership: A Bioecological Perspective.” I understand that the researcher will be working collaboratively with the school principal and will follow the guidance of the principal in eliminating any disruption to the students’ normal school routine. I look forward to reading any published articles based on this research conducted with the parents of first and second grade students at [redacted].

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
Schools Superintendent
### APPENDIX I

**META-MATRIX ANALYSIS ACROSS CASES**

**Parental Perceptions of Supportive and Non-Supportive Influences on the Development of Leadership:**
*A Bioecological Systems Perspective*

Meta-Matrix Analysis Across Cases

(Case 1 of 4)

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<td>Aware of feelings</td>
<td>Influences others</td>
<td>Regulates emotions</td>
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<td>Respectful</td>
<td>Regulate emotions</td>
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APPENDIX J
DOMAIN ANALYSIS

Domain Analysis

Study of Parent Perceptions of Early Childhood Leadership

Caucasian are kinds of ethnicities that participated
African American

Boys are kinds of genders that participated
Girls

1st graders are kinds of age levels that participated

Mom, Dad, 3 kids are kinds of family make-ups
Mom, Dad, 4 kids
Mom, 3 kids

Traveling
Watching movies
Playing board games
Playing video games
Engaging in outdoor sports
Hiking
Exploring
Computer surfing
Going to zoo
Picnicking on waterfront
Playing in local parks are ways of spending family time together
Listening to music
Traveling to museums
Playing with siblings
Going to older siblings
Extracurricular activities
Riding 4-wheelers
Riding horses
Participating in community events—parades, festivals, concerts, etc.
Studying Bible/reading and discussing scriptures

Reading
Playing computer games
Dancing
Picking flowers are ways young leaders spend time alone
Making crafts
Planning wardrobe
Figuring out puzzles
Building with Legos
Riding bike
Playing piano
Practicing sports skills

High expectations
Good communication skills
Awareness of others emotions
Encourages others
Knowledgeable
Determination
Social competence are examples of characteristics of adult leaders
Intelligence
Organization
Self-confidence
Flexibility
Good character
Regulates emotions

Good communication skills-listening and speaking
Shows awareness of different people
Influences others’ behavior
Determination
Social competence are examples of characteristics of young leaders
Intelligence
Organization
Self-confidence
Sense of right and wrong
Expresses creativity
Regulates emotions
Physical competence

Gives best effort
Gives 100%
Demanding of self
Demanding of others
Can focus on topic for a long time are examples of ways parents describe their child’s determination
Responsible
Strong work ethic
Shows up everyday
Highly motivated
Stubborn
Sticks with topic
Won’t be re-directed
Persistent
Stands her ground
Sets mind on goal and achieves it
Sticks with decisions
Determination
Competitive

Talking through situations,
   particularly social issues
Encouraging trying new activities
Giving advice and helping, but not
   fixing problems for child
Encouraging independence
Encouraging problem-solving
Encouraging risk-taking within reason
Encouraging self reliance
Challenging child to achieve
Parent has awareness of
   leadership qualities
Awareness of child’s friends
Supporting child in their endeavors
Setting an example
Exhibiting interest in school activities
Running organized home/schedule
Discussing decision-making
Encouraging critical thinking skills
Encouraging independent thinking
Providing opportunities for selected
   outside-of-family activities
Communicating the value of education/
   expectations for educational
   attainment level
Teaching responsibility
Teaching presentation of self—good
   hygiene, matching clothes, etc.
Encouraging honesty
Teaching methods for doing
   work efficiently
Modeling daily consistency and strong
   work ethic
Pointing out rewards and consequences
   of behaviors
Creating a home culture reflects values
Modeling and discussing caring attitude
   toward others
Instilling values
Providing discipline and structure
Teaching moral decision-making

are ways parents believe they
influence their child to
be a leader
Being there when child fails in order to help child learn from experience
Teaching respect
Encouraging child to be vocal
Expecting homework to be completed daily
Modeling leadership roles
Modeling ways of interacting with people
Taking pride in family name/legacy
Helping child to have realistic expectations

Maintains close relationship
Spends recreation time together
Reads together
Teaches academic skills
Teaches school expectations
Sets example for community involvement
Acts as mentor
Demonstrates responsibility
Discusses decision making process
Models speaking respectfully
and diplomatically
Introduces young leader to a variety
of people
Introduces young leader to a variety of
outside-of-home activities and
associated expectations
Models confidence
Assists with parental guidance
Provides opportunities for young leader
to express opinions
Provides transportation to
extracurricular activities

Maintains close relationship
Spends play time together
Reads together
Teaches academic skills
Teaches social skills
Manages their time
Assists with parental guidance
Protects from other children

School/school-related activities
Organized sports activities
Church
Youth clubs and organizations
Neighborhoods
Local university

are ways that
older siblings
influence young leaders

are ways that
young leaders
manage younger siblings

are types of
community support for
young leadership
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| are examples of                  | are examples of                          |
| exosystem influences             | macrosystem influences                   |
| on leadership development        | on leadership development                |
|                                  |                                        |
VITA

Debra Jo Gifford Hailey is the daughter of Wayne and Jean Gifford. After graduation from Jena High School in 1983, she began her college career at Louisiana Tech University, majoring in early childhood education. She married Tommy Hailey in 1985 and earned her bachelor's degree in 1987. After college graduation, she and her husband moved to Austin, Texas where he continued his studies and she taught kindergarten in the Texas public schools. In 1989, she and her husband moved to Bryan, Texas, where she both taught kindergarten in the Texas public schools and attended classes at Texas A&M University. She graduated from Texas A&M with a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction in 1996.

Careers took her and her husband to Northwest Louisiana where she taught at a university-based Head Start program for the next 13 years. During this time, she and her husband welcomed their wonderful son, Thomas, into the world.

Debra Jo resigned from Head Start to pursue her goal of earning another degree. She earned her Education Specialist degree from Louisiana State University in 2008. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy will be conferred by Louisiana State University at the May 2013 Commencement ceremony.

Debra Jo has primarily taught children in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, but enjoys teaching adults as well. She has taught as an early childhood education adjunct professor, as a contract presenter teaching child care providers, and as a parent educator. She continues to write grants that benefit children and families, write articles for professional journals, act as a consultant, and present at early childhood conferences as often as possible.

Her career interests include early childhood education, developmentally appropriate practices, cross curriculum strategies, early literacy, curriculum development, young children's social and emotional needs, gifted and talented education, parent education, and service learning.