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<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Redmond, Susan</td>
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<td><strong>Publication Date</strong></td>
<td>2013-02-22</td>
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An Explorative Study on the Connection between Leadership Skills, Resilience and Social Support among Youth

A thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD to National University of Ireland, Galway

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December 2012
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**Glossary**

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>BBBS</td>
<td>Big Brothers Big Sisters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low ‘risk’ Youth</td>
<td>Youth scoring between 0-4 on the Adolescent well-being scale - indicates a good sense of well-being or considered low ‘risk’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High ‘risk’ Youth</td>
<td>Youth scoring above 13 on the Adolescent well-being scale - indicates a poor sense of well-being or considered high ‘risk’.</td>
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<td>HSE</td>
<td>Health Service Executive</td>
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<td>RCT</td>
<td>Randomised Controlled Trial</td>
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Declaration by Candidate

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort, and that it has not been submitted elsewhere for an award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signature: ..................................................

Date: ......................................................
Abstract

A growing interest in how young people can contribute to their communities has sparked a rise in the development of youth leadership initiatives. Whether these programmes yield benefits to youth beyond leadership and into the areas of social support and resilience are core to this research. This study involved a mixed-methodology approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative components in order to explore the impact of a youth leadership programme. The research included a quasi-experimental design focusing on 267 young people who received the Foróige Leadership for Life programme and a comparison group of 164 respondents who did not. Questionnaires were collected at baseline, post-intervention and 6 months follow-up over an eighteen month time frame. Standardised measures of Life skills, Leadership skills, Resilience, Social Support and Empathy were utilised. Interviews were also carried out at three time points with 22 young people categorised as high and low ‘risk’ in terms of well-being. In addition, focus groups were held with 23 programme facilitators.

Key findings indicate that youth leadership participants demonstrated statistically significant improvements over time when compared to the comparison group in goal setting, empathy, critical thinking, communication skills, team work, problem solving, leadership skills, resilience, sibling support, total social support, emotional support, esteem support and community involvement. High ‘risk’ youth also demonstrated significant improvements over time, indicating that the programme may have benefits for youth experiencing adversity. The study identified a set of factors key to developing young leaders including; resilience, self-belief, adolescent well-being, empathy, understanding oneself and social support. Qualitative evidence indicates additional improvements in social skills, sense of achievement, self-control, confidence, public speaking, assertiveness and ability to access more leadership opportunities. This study concludes there is a strong connection between youth leadership and resilience, and a more subtle connection between youth leadership and social support.
Acknowledgements

This has been quite a journey! From starting out with various ideas, to one by one selecting the most appropriate, to finally making this research become a reality. I have been fortunate in many ways, first and foremost the support and encouragement of my parents, who have always encouraged me to believe I can do anything I put my mind to. The hard work that I have put into this research was born on our farm in Wexford alongside the hard work of my Mum & Dad who worked tirelessly to ensure myself and my 6 siblings had opportunities in life. My sisters and brothers have been an incredible support. To Maggie, Ann, Catherine, Mary, John & Michael I would be nothing if I had not had you to support and challenge me as we grew up – Thank you. To my friends, who have given me ideas, laughed with me, proofed this document and done anything to make this process easier, thank you so much - Aoife Brennan, Karina Carroll, Caitriona Lee, Fiona Lyons, Deirdre Hassett and Sarah King. A special thank you must go to my furry friend ‘Timba’ who has endeavoured to add his own stamp to this work with his paws. If there is a ‘m,„,’ to be found it has surely been his doing! He has been curious, entertaining and a most loyal friend during this process. However, reaching this point would not have been possible had it not been for the ongoing encouragement, understanding and love of my partner Mike Hughes. He’s belief in me has been stronger than sometimes my belief in myself. He’s own love of learning has generated questions, ideas and discussion which has helped me to craft this research, enriching it along the way. Thank you Mike for helping me to keep perspective when I couldn’t, for taking away the smaller worries I had and helping me to relax and enjoy the journey.

In terms of academic support, this work would not have been possible if it had not been for the support of the following people:

**Professor Pat Dolan**, UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement. As my supervisor Pat has always been fantastic at encouraging me, challenging my ideas and supporting me through this process.

**Professor Mark Brennan**, Pennsylvania State College. Mark has been an incredible support during this project particularly in providing statistical guidance and support.
Dr. Bernadine Brady, Child and Family Research Centre. Bernadine has been a very helpful guide for me to bounce ideas off when I needed it.

I would also like to sincerely thank the following people for their help along the way:

Sean Campbell, CEO Foróige. If it wasn’t for Sean’s vision and commitment to ensuring the very best outcomes for young people, the opportunity to do this specific piece of work would not have arisen.

Colleagues in Foróige’s Best Practice Unit: Isobel Phillips, Caoimhe McClafferty, Miriam Jones, Ger McHugh, Bernie McHugh, Bernie Meally, Jean O’Gorman, Claire Kennedy and John O’Brien. Thank you so much for all your support, particularly in relation to the leadership programme and this research.

Colleagues in Foróige: John Cahill, Dick O’Donovan, Claire Gavigan, Colin McAree, Aidan McQuillan, Gerry Prior, Maria Doherty, Siobhan Duane, Tara Gannon, Ciara O’Halloran and Kirsty Boucher. Thank you for your encouragement, humour and wit.

Colleagues at the Child and Family Research Centre, NUI, Galway: Cormac Forknan, Allyn Fives, Iwona Jakubczyk, Danielle Kennan, Leanne Robins, Fergal Landy, Jessica Ozan, Aileen Shaw, Gillian Browne, Emily O’Donnell, Louise Kinlen, Tanja Kovacic, Carmel Devaney, Noreen Kearns, John Reddy, Liam Coen, Sheila Garrity and Michael Browne. Thank you for answering so many of my questions, it’s been a privilege working with and learning from you all.

The Staff and Volunteers of Foróige who participated in this study and facilitated the participation of the young people. It is by having dedicated and committed staff and volunteers that Foróige can reach and positively affect the lives of young people.

The Young Leaders for allowing me to have a glimpse into their lives, without whom, this research would not have been possible.
Chapter One: Introduction

1 Introduction

In recent years youth leadership has received growing attention both nationally and internationally as a way of preparing young people to contribute meaningfully to society (Anderson et al., 2007; Libby et al., 2006; Detzler et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2008; Klau, 2006; Shelton, 2009; Kahn et al., 2009; Nelson, 2010). Similarly concepts of resilience and social support have gained increasing interest as mechanisms of enabling youth cope with adversity and deal with challenges of everyday life (Masten, 2001; Ungar 2004; Cutrona, 2000; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). However, there is limited research into the effectiveness of youth leadership programmes in achieving their goals of developing young leaders. As well as this no studies to-date have explored whether involvement in youth leadership confers any additional benefits to youth in terms of their capacity to enable resilience or enlist social support.

As countries consider their legacy to young people, in light of a global economic downturn, it is important for governments to consider their contribution to effectively enabling youth to deal with the challenges they face today and in the future. At the same time there is an increasing need for youth organisations to demonstrate that money invested is in fact yielding positive results in terms of outcomes and value for money. In a time when families are under increasing pressure financially, it is important to consider effective ways of ensuring our youth are adequately supported and display sufficient resilience to withstand the uncertainty that faces them. Having at least one person who can consistently provide support to a young person can help them deal with problems particularly when tangible advice and support is offered (Cutrona, 2000). Therefore, social support is a valid area to be considered in the context of youth development particularly when emotional distress and mental health problems appear to be on the rise (Dooley et al., 2012; NOSP, 2007). For youth to be resilient this involves a process that enables them to adapt to situations of adversity while maintaining their health and well-being (Ungar, 2004; Benard, 2006). A greater understanding is required of how the mechanisms which
enhance young people’s capacity for resilience assist in leadership development.

Furthermore, there is the need to invest in the development of young leaders as change makers so that they can contribute meaningfully to the challenges their communities face. Considering how resilience and social support interact with leadership is an area of interest as both appear to play an important role in normative youth development (Ungar, 2004; Benard, 2006; Cutrona, 2000; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). However knowledge of their contribution to youth leadership is largely unexplored and understanding the interaction of these three areas will help to broaden the understanding of the benefit of youth leadership in both normative youth and youth experiencing adversity.

Historically, young people would have had substantial responsibilities in the family and community spending much of their time working to secure food and materials (SRDC, 1996). In more recent times the role of the adolescent has changed and it seems the focus is more on what they fail to do rather than what they are capable of doing (SRDC, 1996). The media may be largely responsible for the negative stereotype of adolescents in today’s global society, often portraying young people as a menace for loitering on street corners, engaging in public order offences, and drugs and alcohol consumption (Devlin, 2006). Counter to this negative stereotype there can be seen a rising desire to portray youth in a positive light through youth leadership and civic engagement (Kahn, et al., 2009; Nelson, 2010; Best & Dustan, 2008). Some of the emphasis of youth leadership programmes has been on the intent to make leaders for the future, possibly denying them the right to contribute today to their community and to the wider society (Kahn et al., 2009; Connor & Strobel, 2007; Nelson, 2010). This focus on young people as leaders of tomorrow may be a failing of youth organisations, schools, and community groups to see young people as valuable assets in the present. The emphasis on youth participation in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the forthcoming amendment to the Irish constitution are welcome changes in societies contemplating the civil rights of young people. As Article 12 highlights that young people’s voices should be heard in decisions that affect them, it paves the way for youth to get increasingly involved in their communities. Seeing
youth as having a contribution to their society encourages them to use their skills, time and energy to harness the will of their peers to find unique solutions to issues they see as relevant. This in turn can have a positive impact on themselves, their peers and their communities.

Given the rise in youth leadership programme development is important to consider whether these initiatives have the capacity to shape young leaders in the present, so they can contribute meaningfully to civic society now as well as in the future. Indeed whether such programmes have benefits beyond youth leadership in areas such as resilience and social support merits investigation. This research will explore a youth leadership programme in an attempt to establish a connection between youth leadership, resilience and social support.

The rest of this Chapter is divided into three sections. The first discusses the background to the study and focuses on the underpinning theoretical areas that will be examined in the study. The second section presents the aim and objectives of the study, while the third lays out the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the Study
This thesis sets out to bring four distinct and highly interrelated theoretical concepts together namely – adolescence, social support theory, resilience theory and youth leadership.

Adolescent development theory is the first area explored. Adolescence is seen as a period of transition from childhood to adulthood during which mental, physical and emotional change occurs (Santrock, 2007). It is during this time that the adolescent moves from dependence to independence, and this sense of autonomy can be met with the development of coping strategies yielding normative development or challenges and mal-adaptation leading to non-normative development (see Chapter 2.1) (Kellmer-Pringle, 1986; Santrock, 2007). During adolescence increased emphasis is placed on friends - as adolescents seek out people with similar values to themselves and may begin to question the family rules (Youniss & Smollar, 1985; Shucksmith & Hendry, 1998). School can bring with it opportunities and challenge, as they play an instrumental role in the young person’s ability to socialise, achieve academically and be involved in extracurricular activities (Eccles et al., 1996).
As well as this community provide teenagers with many opportunities to engage in pro-social or anti-social behaviour (Kottak, 2002). All of the above contribute to whether a young person begins to see themselves as a leader and as such seeks out and seizes leadership opportunities should they arise (Greenberger, 1984; Lerner, 1986).

The second area explored is social support (see Chapter 2.2). Cobb (1976, p.300) illustrated the essence of social support, ‘being information leading the subject to believe that one is cared for and loved, esteemed, and a member of a network of mutual obligations’. Social support theory illustrates that there are different sources of support, types of support, contexts for support and how the quality of support may vary depending on the individual’s ability to access it and their perception of its availability (Cutrona, 2000). For young people, sources of support include: parents, friends, siblings and other adults (Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). Social support can also be broken down by type, which includes: concrete support, emotional support, advice support, and esteem support (Cutrona, 2000; Dolan & Brady, 2012). Cutrona (2000) highlights that, for a young person, support is best provided within relationships which include at least one reliable person who provides all forms of support, is dependable, close and offers the opportunity for reciprocity. Social support theory implies that either received or perceived social support can enhance a person’s overall health, as it acts as a buffer against the effects of stress (Uchino, 2009). Having good social support has been shown to improve well-being, health, reduce anxiety, depression, improve self-esteem, enhance the locus of control and yield a greater ability to persist at tasks that are not easily solved (Sarason et al., 1983, p.137).

The third area focused on in this thesis is that of resilience theory (see Chapter 2.3). Resilience is defined by Ungar (2004, p.23) as ‘the result of negotiations between individuals and their environment to maintain a self-definition as healthy’. It is often considered the ability to ‘bounce back’ and successfully overcome the challenges life presents. Resilience theory highlights the risk factors that young people be exposed to that can lead to the development of emotional or behavioural disorders. These risk factors can stem from a variety of areas, such as from the individual, the family or their environment (Rutter,
It also appears that the accumulation of risk factors produces more negative outcomes (Smith & Thornberry, 1995; Ungar et al., 2007). Counter to this are protective factors which also stem from the individual, family or their environment. Having more protective factors or assets conveys a buffer to the development of negative outcomes which can play a role in how a young person copes, perceives themselves and their competencies (Hjemdal et al., 2006; Clarke & Clarke, 2003; Benson 1997). This may also impact their ability to contribute to their family and wider community.

The fourth conceptual area explored is that of youth leadership (see Chapter 2.4). Distinguishes are made between youth and adult leadership. Wheeler and Edlebeck (2006, p.89) eloquently describe youth leadership as ‘learning, listening, dreaming and working together to unleash the potential of people’s time, talent and treasure for the common good’. This section also looks at the theories and styles of leadership, as well as explores youth leadership education models available. The components thought necessary for a leader are then explored which can largely be categorised into skills, environmental conditions and action. This section argues that leaders can indeed be made - they aren’t simply born. Finally, this section distinguishes youth leadership and civic engagement and explores the benefits of youth leadership to communities.

The final section of the literature review brings together the aforementioned concepts in a conceptual model which describes the interrelationship between the concepts of adolescent development, social support, resilience and youth leadership.

The author’s interest in this topic is three-fold; firstly because of her background as a youth worker and interest in engaging young people meaningfully in activities and programmes which lead to enhanced positive outcomes. Secondly, because of her role within Foróige – the National Youth Development Organisation in Ireland, as manager of their Best Practice Unit - a unit developing needs-led, outcomes focused and evidence-based resources for youth workers. This role provides the author with a unique perspective to explore the life-cycle of programme development in line with international best
practices, as well as overseeing the evaluation of a number of programmes on which the unit is currently working on. This involvement in evaluation sparked the author’s interest in evaluating the youth leadership programme, so as to gain a greater intimate understanding of the process of evaluation and to garner additional tools to enhance the evidence-based and evidence-informed approach of the unit. Thirdly, to understanding whether involving youth in programmes such as youth leadership convey any additional benefits to buffer them against life’s challenges in terms of resilience or whether indeed such involvement has any bearing on their capacity to enlist greater social support.

1.2 Aim and Objectives of the Study
The overarching aim of this study is to explore the connection, if any, between leadership, resilience and social support among youth. It must be stated that the focus of this study will be to explore how social support and resilience interact with youth leadership and not to explore how social support and resilience interact.

The research objectives are five-fold:

1. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support among a set of young people, including those who are about to participate in a youth leadership programme and a comparison group who will not take part in the programme (time one).
2. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support on completion of the youth leadership programme (time two) and at six months follow-up (time three) in respect of both groups.
3. To establish the difference in leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support between each group at the three time points.
4. To track the changes among those identified with initial lowest and highest perceived well-being prior to participation in the youth leadership programme and again in light of having received a youth leadership programme.
5. To identify key messages for practice, policy and research in light of this study.
The study examines and compares young people in two groups, a leadership intervention group and a comparison group, over 18 month period with a sample of 431 young people across Ireland. It also elicits the views of 22 young people selected on the basis of risk through interviews and 23 programme facilitators consisting both Foróige staff and volunteers through focus groups.

This study has a number of core strengths. Firstly, it is a comparison study involving similarly matched young people to explore the potential benefits of youth leadership programme involvement. Secondly, it involves three time points of quantitative data collection on measures of leadership skills, resilience and social support over an 18 month period. Thirdly, it employs three time points for qualitative data collection with 22 young people, selected on the basis of their adolescent well-being scores, involving both high and low risk youth, and to explore how the programme may impact these subgroups differently. Fourthly, it employs the objective perspective of the programme facilitators. Finally, it utilises a creative aspect called photo-voice as an illustrative tool to further explore perceptions of the young people’s journey over the course of the programme. Such comparative knowledge and exploration of the interrelationships between resilience, social support and leadership skills in youth is something that has not been investigated previously.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven Chapters. Following on from this introductory Chapter, Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive review of the literature across four relevant areas: the study of adolescence development theory; social support theory, resilience theory, youth leadership. The final section of Chapter 2 constructs a tentative conceptual model for this study, combining adolescent development, youth leadership, resilience and social support.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to answer the overarching aim and objectives of the study and is divided into three sections. The first section revisits the rationale, aim and objectives of the study. The second section outlines the study design, including the epistemology considerations, research approach, the quasi-experimental design incorporating triangulation and the
tools used. The third section describes the implementation of the design including sampling, ethical considerations, consent, data collection and analysis and the limitations of this methodological approach.

Chapter 4 details the contextual information for the study and has three sections. The first section explores youth work history in Ireland, youth leadership programmes nationally and internationally followed by the policy context both nationally and internationally. The second section outlines the programmatic context, describing in detail the leadership for life programme being evaluated including origin, programmatic content, outcomes and programme logic model. The third section describes the service provider – Foróige and the youth leadership programme setting.

Chapter 5 presents the core findings of this study. The first section presents a brief profile of the participants involved in the study. The findings for each of the five objectives are presented individually.

Chapter 6 elaborates on the findings in relation to the research objectives and how these findings are placed in the context of current available literature internationally.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter of this study. It highlights the key research findings of the study and presents a set of core messages for practice, policy and research. A number of concluding remarks are also made.

1.4 Summary
The aim of this introductory Chapter was to provide a starting point for the entire study, illustrating the overall rationale for this study which is to add to the body of knowledge in relation to youth leadership programmes and whether they contribute to enhanced youth leadership skills and confer other benefits in terms of enabling resilience and enlisting greater social support. The background to the study and the core aim and objectives of the study were then outlined. Finally, the structure to the remaining six Chapters was illustrated. Chapter 2 will now examine the four key theoretical areas that underpin this study.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2 Literature Review

Introduction

This Chapter provides a review of the literature as it relates to the aim and objectives of this study. It is divided into five sections. Section 2.1 examines the literature in relation to adolescent development where it defines adolescence and explores normative development and development in youth who experience adversity. The section also looks at the influence relationships have on adolescent development. Section 2.2 considers social support theory and what constitutes social support. Following this, the different types of social support are explored. This section then looks at support networks and different sources of support. Finally, this section explores social support in relation to youth leadership. Section 2.3 examines the theory in relation to resilience, firstly, by defining what resilience is, then looking more closely at the concept and history of resilience. Following this, risk and protective factors are considered, including stress and coping and the role of relationships. Finally, this section looks at resilience as it pertains to youth leadership. Section 2.4 examines youth leadership. This section looks at defining youth leadership, leadership theories and the different styles of leadership. Following this, different education models used in youth leadership curricula are explored. This section also explores gender, adversity, civic engagement, ethics and values. Section 2.5 conceptualises a model for youth leadership integrating resilience, and social support with youth leadership development. This section puts forward a tentative model upon which this study is based.

2.1 Adolescent Development

Introduction

This section of the literature review will outline what adolescence is and the history of adolescence. Following which, the role normative changes play during adolescence will be explored, including: physical, emotional, intellectual, moral and social development. This section then looks at how
maladaptive changes lead to non-normative development, which can lead to internalising or externalising behaviour. Finally, this section will explore the role relationships play for the developing adolescent. Adolescent development is an important consideration when exploring youth’s capacity to engage in youth leadership.

2.1.1 Adolescence: Definition and History

During the 15th century the term adolescence first appeared. This term was a derivative of the Latin word adolescere, which means to grow up or to grow into maturity (Muuss, 1990). Further back however Aristotle is noted to have proposed stages of life that are not too dissimilar to what people would be familiar with today. He described three successive, 7-year periods, that of infancy, boyhood, and young manhood all of which are prior to the person’s attainment of full, adult maturity (cited in Lerner & Steinberg, 2004). The study of adolescence was brought to the fore by G. Stanley Hall in 1904 during the industrial revolution, a period which placed greater emphasis on education. The introduction of the term may also have been an attempt to curtail young people from joining the workforce, primarily due to job scarcity. Adolescence is considered a transition in development between childhood and adulthood. It is the period from puberty at about 12 or 13 years until adulthood at age 22 to 25 years of age (Hall, 1904). This period is often differentiated as early, middle and late adolescence. Hall (1904) described adolescence as Sturm und Drang – ‘storm and stress’. This connotation put forward that adolescence was a period of challenge for parents where young people push boundaries, have arguments as they try to assert their independence and become troublesome for their parents. Mead (1928, p.32) however contested Hall’s claim and highlighted a study of Samoan children who she describes as having ‘experienced a very gradual and smooth transition from childhood to adulthood’. She highlights that from an early age, these children took part in tasks or chores that had meaningful connections and increased responsibility. Indeed these views represent both spectrums of the scale. Arnett (1999) however, attempts to strike a balance between Hall’s troublesome view of adolescents and Mead’s more idealised picture by arguing that while the majority of young people go through
this transition without huge levels of difficulties, some young people do experience difficulties.

It can however be considered unrealistic to describe a period of seven or eight years as a transition. Particularly, as young people are maturing earlier, some as early as 9 or 10, while remaining economically dependent on their parents for longer, some into their twenties (Coleman & Hendry, 2010). Alsaker (1996) maintains, however, that two years or more of biological change and maturation at the beginning of adolescence represents a major life transition. Furthermore, it can be argued that there is largely transition throughout life such as, transition from adolescence to adulthood including school to work, domestic transition with relative independence, and housing transition involving a permanent move (Jones, 1995; Coles, 1995).

2.1.2 Normative Development

Normative adolescent development incorporates a wide range of experiences that lead to a young person who can withstand the pressures and expectations of life while also managing to develop relationships and transition successfully. There are many factors including physical, emotional, intellectual, moral and social which impact on human development (Kellmer-Pringle, 1986). As Maslow (1943) points out physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem needs and self-actualisation are important components of positive development. Kellmer-Pringle (1986) also highlights the need for love and security, new experiences, praise and recognition, and responsibility are key in normative development. Furthermore, the relationships an adolescent has with family, friends, school and community influence their development.

2.1.2.1 Physical Development

Dramatic physical changes occur during adolescence including growth spurts, appearance of secondary sex characteristics, brain development, reproductive system development and sexual maturation (Feldman & Elliott, 2000; Coleman & Hendry, 2010; Newman & Newman, 2006; Santrock, 2007). For males rising testosterone levels is associated with the development of external genitals,
increase in height, ejaculation, voice changes and the development of facial, armpit and pubic hair (Hiort, 2002; Cameron, 2004). Testosterone is also linked to increased sexual desire and activity (Cameron, 2004). In females an increase in oestrogen leads to breast development, uterine development, hips widen, increase in height, development of armpit and pubic hair, and the onset of menstruation (Cameron, 2004; Newman & Newman, 2006). Early and late maturation can lead to some negative emotions. A feeling of unpreparedness was outlined by girls who mature early and feelings of anxiety or embarrassment by those maturing late (Brooks-Gunn & Ruble, 1982). Simmons and Blyth (1987) describe how boys that mature early see themselves more positively than late-maturing peers, as well as this they had more positive relationships with their peers. On the other hand boys and girls who mature late can be less confident because of poor body image when comparing themselves to already developed peers (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Simmons and Blyth (1987) also found that girls who matured early had more problems in school, were more independent and more popular with boys than late-maturing girls. Initially, they found early maturing girls to be more satisfied with their bodies however, as they aged early maturing girls were less satisfied and late maturing girls were more satisfied, this was due to early maturing girls being ‘shorter and stockier’, while late maturing girls tended to be ‘taller and thinner’. Other research has indicated that early maturing girls are more likely to smoke, drink, be depressed, have eating disorders, seek earlier independence, have older friends and attract earlier attention from males leading to earlier sexual experiences (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003, Sarigiani & Petersen, 2000, Waylen & Wolke, 2004). These studies bring attention to the importance of timing of onset of puberty as well as satisfaction with bodily changes. These can have knock-on emotional effects and implications for young people in dealing with these changes.

Physiologically the brain matures in the adolescent years, in particular the areas of the frontal lobes, corpus callosum, parietal lobes and temporal lobes (Giedd, 2004). The greatest changes that occur during adolescence are responsible for functions such as self-control, emotional control, judgment, decision making, planning for the future and understanding consequences (NIMH, 2001; Giedd,
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2004). These changes may help to explain why adults find teenage behaviour so perplexing, such as decision-making that does not consider consequences, risk taking, and a lack of emotional control. During adolescence a process called ‘pruning’ occurs which removes neurons that are not being used, while neurons which are being used remain (Begley, 2000). The brain becomes more efficient as a result of this process as it strengthens the connections used regularly and removes those that are not. Young people who learn to control impulses and develop key life skills such as communication, listening, critical thinking are laying neuronal foundations that can be built upon for life (Giedd, 1999). Murphy & Johnson (2011) argue that sensitive periods for leadership development occur early in life. Sensitive periods are periods when skills are more easily developed. A sensitive period does not preclude future development however it does lay the ground work for future development to occur. Bearing this in mind adolescence is a time when there is a great opportunity to strengthen development toward enhanced social skills, emotional resilience and leadership potential.

2.1.2.2 Emotional Development

For ease of discussion, emotional development will be explored under three headings; self-esteem, locus of control and autonomy.

2.1.2.2.1 Self-Esteem

Rosenberg (1965, p.15) has described self-esteem as ‘a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the self’. In a similar vein, Harter (1990, p.255) described self-esteem as ‘how much a person likes, accepts and respects himself overall as a person’. How a person feels about themselves can have a profound effect on their development. Psychological changes accompany pubertal development, including a preoccupation with the body (McCabe & Ricciardelli, 2003). These biological changes can be difficult for young people to deal with and social pressures can influence how young people feel about themselves and their bodies. Girls tend to be less satisfied than boys with their appearance and body image (Newman & Newman 2006, Phillips, 2003; Harter, 2006). Girls appear to start feeling more self-conscious about their body image.
between the ages of 13-15 years and the expectation that girls should be thin, developed etc., can take its toll on their self-esteem. Newman and Newman (2006, p.305) outlined three particular influences ‘social pressures to be thin; an internalised thin ideal body type; and higher than average body mass’ as particularly influential on a young girls unhappiness. They further argue that many of these aspects can lead to low self-esteem, eating disorders, and an unhealthy attitude about themselves. Research by Chubb et al., (1997) found that girls score significantly lower on self-esteem scores. Boys on the other hand tend to accept physical changes more positively and are generally receptive to the increase in height and muscles (Phillips, 2003). Self-esteem issues for boys may be around growth spurts and the deepening of the voice (Newman & Newman, 2006). The maturation of the secondary sex characteristics including facial and body hair can impact boys both socially and psychologically, however in general are associated positively with ‘becoming’ a man (Newman & Newman, 2006).

Further to this, a correlation has been found between low self-esteem and low life satisfaction, resentment, irritability, loneliness, anxiety, depression and suicide (Rosenberg, 1985). Early and late onset of maturation can have a knock-on effect on self-esteem and can lead to anxiety for some young people (Phillips, 2003). A profound connection has been found between perceived physical attractiveness, self-esteem and social acceptance (Nell & Ashton, 1996; Harter, 2006; Zubic, 2009). Davison and McCabe (2006) demonstrate that low self-esteem for females may be due, in part, to the perception that other people might be evaluating their bodies. They also found a strong association between having a poor body image and poor relationships with the opposite sex. As well as this a negative body image also affected relationships between girls. Brown and Gilligan (1992) identify early adolescence as a crossroads in female’s lives resulting sometimes in girls displaying disconnection, reduced self-confidence and a drop in self-esteem.

Media plays a strong role in contributing to the image of the ‘ideal’ body. The messages sent out to young people can leave them dissatisfied and in constant search of the perfect body. Bessenoff (2006) found that exposure of females to
advertisements with thin women lead to decreased body satisfaction, lowered self-esteem, negative moods and increased levels of depression. Although self-esteem appears to decline in early adolescence, especially for girls, it also appears to fluctuate throughout life, in particular decreasing during and just after many life transitions (Robins et al., 2002). School performance has only moderately been linked to self-esteem, however it has been found that adolescents with higher self-esteem may display greater initiative, which can lead to positive or negative outcomes (Baumeister et al., 2003). A study by Harter and McCarley (2004) found that low empathy, low-esteem, high narcissism and sensitivity to rejection were linked to adolescent violent thoughts. Influences both internal and external as seen, can play a critical role in a person’s self-esteem. Conversely to this, Bachman & O’Malley (1977, 1979) found a correlation between high self-esteem and academic success in high school. While Griffore et al., (1990) found that self-esteem was associated with an internal locus of control and positive sense of self-attractiveness.

2.1.2.2 Locus of Control

Locus of control is the perception a person has of the control they have over events that occur in their life (Rotter et al., 1962). Both internal and external factors contribute towards having a locus of control. An internal locus of control is the perception of events either positive or negative being as a result of one’s own actions and as such within ones control (Rotter et al., 1962). An external locus of control on the other hand is the perception of events either positive or negative being unrelated to one’s own behaviour and as such beyond personal control (Rotter et al., 1962). There have been many correlations between the internal locus of control, some of which include exerting self-control, being independent, taking responsibility for one’s actions and reduced anxiety (Chubb et al., 1997; Rock 2009). On the other hand an external locus of control tends to lead to believe that others, fate and chance determine events (Chubb et al., 1997). Locus of control is important to consider in light of leadership as it can lead to people feeling they are in control of their lives and can lead others to achieve great things. To be a leader they need to believe they have the power to make a change and bring others with them. Conversely, other
people can feel they have little or no control over their lives and leave their future up to faith feeling a sense of futility over the future events in their lives.

2.1.2.2.3 Autonomy

Emotional autonomy may accompany identity achievement. Steinberg (1993) illustrates that one step towards emotional autonomy is detachment from and de-idealization of parents. The development of emotional autonomy and identity can yield individuals who are less dependent on parent or peer approval (Eccles nd). Most arguments in adolescence are around the core perception of autonomy, as they ‘struggle’ for more freedom about time due home, staying overnight and holidays (Seiffge-Krenke, 1995).

As illustrated in the quote above although the adolescent may seek independence they can take some time to adapt it. Research shows that individuals can handle criticism and setbacks more constructively if they have achieved emotional autonomy (Atwater, 1992). Indeed autonomy and independence are considered vital by Rock (2009) in enabling people to feel like they have control over events in their lives and their ensuing satisfaction with that they are involved in. He argues that people who feel like they have a say in their life are much happier than people who feel their lives are more controlled, similar to the locus of control discussed above. Research in animal studies reveals that where there is no autonomy the animal can ‘learn helplessness’ (Seligman & Maier, 1967). In this study dogs were repeatedly hurt and exposed to inescapable situations. After some time the dogs stopped trying to avoid the pain. Finally, when opportunities to escape are presented learned helplessness prevented them from taking action to escape. This illustrates one impact from not having a sense of control over life events. In the context of adolescent development, where there is an absence of perceived control over one’s life the person may either seek to achieve control and rebel
against those forces of control or abdicate any responsibility towards their life trajectory and display apathy, as seen with the learned helplessness experiment.

2.1.2.3 Cognitive Development

Cognitive development or intelligence appears to be related, in part, to the stimulation a child gets, which activates the development of neurons in the brain (Perry, 2007). Studies show that children who are deprived of stimulation for example some whom grew up in institutions, or were maltreated or neglected by their parents suffer in terms of their intellectual capacity and measured IQ (Rutter, 1981; Clarke & Clarke, 2003). In normative youth Piaget (1952) describes cognitive development as resulting from the development of schemas which help the individual organise and adapt information they receive from the environment. Following this, the individual can assimilate information into a schema, where assimilation is not possible new information is either accommodated in a new schema or an existing schema is modified. This process requires equilibration which involves cognitive balance between assimilation and accommodation. When disequilibrium occurs it motivates the individual to restore equilibrium by learning and accommodating or assimilating more information. Furthermore, Piaget highlights the importance of interaction with the environment to gain knowledge and experience. Piaget’s understanding of cognitive development in the adolescent in relation to formal operational thought serves to aid in appreciating the development of logic and reasoning during this period. As the adolescent moves toward idealistic feelings whereby they see that the logical way is right and that the illogical way is wrong their inability to differentiate between the adolescent world and the real world is what generates their egocentrism. In many ways this egocentrism serves to yield the idealistic reformer which can spur their desire for change in society. This desire if harnessed can result in positive contributions to their communities.

Further to this, Vygotsky’s (1962) work considered that knowledge was both situational and collaborative, and distributed through their environment and communities. He was concerned with the influence that social and cultural factors impacted on development. Vygotsky brought about an important
concept, the zone of proximal development, which highlights that some tasks which are difficult for an individual can be mastered with guidance and assistance of peers or adults. This brings to light the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. This further highlights the important role parents, peers and teachers play in educating young people. Thus, exposure to positive role models, mentors, programmes and opportunities may be critical in enabling youth develop as young leaders. Furthermore, when considering intelligence Clarke & Clarke (2003) found that intelligence is not static for youth with low IQ and that exposure to an improved environment and stimulation that the measured IQ could make considerable grounds towards normal levels. Similarly, Rutter (1981) describes studies in which continued schooling in late adolescence leads to additional IQ gains. These points are important to consider when exploring adolescent youth development and education programmes.

2.1.2.4 Moral Development & Empathy

Moral development is essentially thoughts, feelings and behaviours regarding standards of right and wrong (Muuss, 1996; Coleman & Hendry, 2010; Santrock, 2007). Moral development encompasses both an intrapersonal, dimension, that is one’s own values and sense of self, and an interpersonal dimension, one’s interactions with others (Gibbs 2003). Hoffman (1980) found that as adolescents develop and interact with more broad experiences they begin to see that there are contradictions between moral concepts and there is considerable debate between what is right and wrong. Piaget (1932) through the exploration of children’s games and their attached rules found that younger children 10-11 year olds see things in a fixed sense, while older children see that it is possible to change rules if others agree to it. Kohlberg (1984) argues that moral development is based on moral reasoning including both internal standards and external standards. By giving examples of particular dilemmas he set out to understand the reasoning behind people’s decisions which was much more important to him than a ‘right or wrong’ answer. Where people get their moral standards from is based on the relationships which they have with others as well as the social systems that surround us e.g. the law, prevailing attitudes,
sense of social justice. He found that there are three levels, pre-conventional morality where, similar to Piaget, there is the sense of fixed rules which must be adhered to. Conventional morality where people ought to be ‘good’, live up to the expectations of others and their actions should have good intentions behind them. Post-conventional morality sees that morality is more than standards. At this level people investigate standards but ultimately come up with their own personal code. If this code is based on human rights they may use conscience over law to determine their actions, however this can however lead to personal consequences if they operate outside of the law. As adolescents move from pre-conventional towards post-conventional reasoning they develop their moral fibre and how they see the world including their ability to challenge the laws and ultimately society.

As well as this Gilligan and Belenky (1980) found that when people are faced with dilemmas that have direct personal relevance they are less able to apply their moral-reasoning ability; something that was also highlighted by Kohlberg (1984). Walker et al., (1991) found by presenting moral information higher than the individuals level that an imbalance is created that motivates the person to reconsider their moral thought. They also found that individuals prefer stages above their own and can move to higher levels of moral thought by exposure to models in advance of their own.

Moral development can also encompass a person’s capacity for empathy. During adolescence opportunities may arise to build skills, develop relationships and connect with community. A key component in successful interaction with others is how the person relates to others including their ability to empathise (Goleman, 2006a). Higher levels of empathy have been linked with pro-social skills, improved problem solving, conflict resolution and better overall relationships (Wagaman, 2011). Perry (2007) describes how children who are shown little empathy, fail to form close bonds and may have experienced early childhood trauma that can limit their capacity for empathy. Failure to empathise can result in poorer relationships and an inability to appreciate the feelings of others, something which may lead on to deviant behaviour, lack of victim empathy and violence (Perry, 2007). In extreme cases the development of sociopathic tendencies (Perry, 2007). Conversely, the
empathy brings a power with it that is capable of enabling a person to understand and respond to the emotions of others; something which can impact very positively on their relationships with others (Goleman, 2006a).

2.1.2.5 Social Development

Social development or social intelligence emerges from interactions with other people. It encompasses the ability to pick up on cues as to how others feel and use these cues to influence the situation in a positive way (Goleman, 2006a). Selman (1980) outlines social cognition as the process by which people conceptualise and learn to understand others, thoughts, feelings and social behaviour. Vygotsky unlike Piaget felt that social learning came before development. He states: ‘every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people and then inside the child’ (Vygotsky, 1978, p.57). This is similar to Bandura’s (1977a) theory on social learning which illustrates that people learn predominantly from mirroring what other people do. This process of social learning involves paying attention, remembering what has occurred, being able to reproduce what was seen and having the motivation to carry out that behaviour (Bandura, 1977a).

Research by Merten (1996) found that adolescents that are disliked and rejected by their peers may be deficient in social skills such as the ability to recognise people’s needs and interpret their verbal and non-verbal cues. Kloep and Hendry (1999) bring attention to the fact that insufficient time is given towards social development to enable adequate social adjustment. Selman’s theory (1980) enabled the development of four necessary steps to enable those finding developing friendships difficult, namely 1. Defining the social problem as perceived by the young person, 2. Generating different problem solving strategies, 3. Choosing the strategy which appears most appropriate from the perspective of the adolescent, 4. Evaluating the results, so if the outcome is unsatisfactory an alternative can be sought.

Social environment plays a large part in how the adolescent sees his or her world. Egocentrism, Elkind (1967) argues is the ability of the adolescent to
perceive that others are thinking about them. This is essentially a difficulty in differentiating between what others are thinking about and their own preoccupations. A prime example of which is preoccupation with how they look and how they consider that others are also preoccupied with how they look. Elkind delineates that teenagers continually construct and react to anticipated reactions of others, which can be fantasised or imaginary, potentially explaining a lot of adolescent behaviour e.g. self-consciousness. Elkind suggests that young people construct a personal fable essentially believing that their story is unique and is of critical importance to others, this may include fantasies of omnipotence and immortality. This can lead to fantasies, of over or under achievement based on the assumptions of other peoples comments. Fantasies may in fact lead to situations where opportunities occur or potentially damaging experiences depending on the reality of the performance. The social construct in which people live, as well as the individuals will and desire for change, can give rise to youth gaining opportunities and taking on leadership roles.

2.1.3 Non-Normative Development

Non-normative development can incorporate mental, emotional, physiological or psychological dysfunction. Jenson & Howard (1998) argue that troubled young people come to the attention of family intervention services as a result of the youth’s problematic behaviour rather than abuse or neglect. However, such mistreatment they highlight can be both a cause and a consequence of such behaviour. Problems that may arise during adolescence include juvenile delinquency, drug and alcohol use, depression, self-harm, suicide, eating disorders, obesity, stress and coping (Cicchetti & Toth, 2006; Santrock, 2007). These problems may be due to a combination of biological, psychological and social factors (Santrock, 2007). When considering biological factors a focus is placed on the brain and genetics as determinants of the problem, these are often treated with drugs. Psychological factors such as emotional experiences, distorted thoughts and difficult relationships can impact adolescent development, as well as early stressful experiences (Santrock, 2007). Social factors can influence psychological problems such as lower socioeconomic
status leading to disruptive behaviour (Santrock, 2007). Adolescent problems can be described as internalising where they turn their thoughts inward e.g. anxiety or depression, or externalising when problems are turned outward e.g. juvenile delinquency (Cicchetti & Toth, 2006). There is a wide range of problems that emerge in adolescence, varying in severity and degree to which they last. Some problem behaviour such as arguing and fighting is common among younger adolescents while truancy, depression and drug use appear more common in older adolescence (Newman & Newman, 2006). Non-normative development may also emerge from neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse including early childhood trauma which can lead to psychopathology, emotional disturbance, deviant behaviour or sociopathic tendencies (Perry, 2007; Levine, 1997).

2.1.3.1 Externalising (Acting Out) Behaviours

Externalising behaviour problems manifest in an outward behaviour and reflect the person negatively acting on the external environment (Campbell et al., 2000). While acting out and risk taking are normal in adolescence, some young people experience difficulties such as drug/alcohol addiction, problems with the law and aggression. The European Schools Project on Alcohol and Drugs (2007) results for Irish young people aged 15-17 years revealed 78% drank alcohol in the last 12 months, 47% were drunk in the previous 12 months, 23% used cigarettes in the last 30 days, 20% used cannabis in their lifetime, 10% used other drugs and 15% used inhalants in their lifetime. Ireland is comparable to Europe on many of these scores, however exceeds Europe on drunkenness. Smoking, drinking and taking drugs have a pleasurable aspect, reduce tension, relieve boredom and help some people escape their reality (Ksir et al., 2006). This behaviour can become maladaptive leading to drug dependence and exposure to serious or fatal consequences can often be overlooked (Hales, 2006). Risk factors in alcohol or drug dependence include genetic factors, family influences, peer relations and personal characteristics (Jang, 2005). Conduct disorder and hyperactivity such as ADHD are also externalising behaviour problems and are prevalent in 5% and 2% of young
Irish children and adolescents, respectively (Irish College of Psychiatrists, 2005).

Research by Hayes and O’Reilly (2007) involving 30 young offenders found over 50% were addicted to drugs, 20% had intellectual disability and 83% had ‘at least one psychiatric disorder’. The report also found that the majority did not receive treatment for any of those disorders. In the USA 10% of young people aged 10-18 years are arrested each year (Office of Juvenile Justice and Prevention, 1998), of which 8 out of 10 cases of juvenile delinquency involve males (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999). Some predictors or risk factors for delinquency include; low self-control, low parental monitoring, authority conflict, acts of aggression, cognitive distortions, being male, low educational expectations, older sibling delinquency, peer influence, low socioeconomic status and high crime neighbourhood (Santrock, 2007). In Ireland the number of young people referred to Garda Youth Diversion Programmes was 21,941 in 2007 for 27,853 incidents (Annual Report of the Committee Appointed to Monitor the Effectiveness of the Diversion Programme, 2008). Theft, drink related offences, public order, minor assault, criminal damage, traffic offences, burglary and vehicle offences are the most common offences for which young people are referred (An Garda Síochána Annual Reports, 1999-2002). Masten (2001) and Masten and Reed (2002) found that a close relationship with parents, intellectual functioning and bonds to pro-social adults serve as protective in keeping adolescents from engaging in antisocial behaviours and facilitate resilience. Youth externalising behaviour is clearly an issue in Ireland; however exploration of leadership in deviant populations is beyond the scope of this research.

2.1.3.2 Internalising (Somatic) Behaviours

Internalising behavioural problems more centrally affect the young person’s internal psychological environment and commonly manifest as withdrawal, anxiety and depressed behaviours (Campbell et al., 2000). Australian research indicates that 70% of health problems of adolescents are due to mental health problems and substance use disorders (McGorry, 2005). Approximately 20% of children and adolescents experience serious emotional distress; depression
represents 2%, deliberate self-harm 1%, obsessive-compulsive disorder 1%, anorexia nervosa 0.5%, anxiety 5%, (Irish College of Psychiatrists, 2005). They also reported that as well as insufficient availability of services that only a minority of young people may actually be engaged in services to help them. Depression, anxiety, self-harm and eating disorders including obesity are a consequence of low self-esteem, dissatisfaction with self, lack of early interventions, lack of positive self-concept as well as many other variables including genetic, family life, diet etc., (Seroczynski et al., 2003, Yager 2005, Reachout, 2010). A study of 4,583 teenagers in Ireland, reveal a 9.1% lifetime history of deliberate self harm (Morey et al., 2008). Females (13.9%) more commonly self-harm than males (4.3%). Depression is also linked to an increase in suicidal ideation (Werth, 2004). The leading cause of death among young men aged 15-24 years old in Ireland is suicide (National Office for Suicide Prevention, 2007). Females attempt suicide more often however research shows that males are more likely to succeed because they tend to use more lethal means (National Centre for Health Statistics, 2002). An important consideration for youth experiencing mental health problems continues to be the presence of stigma which acts as a barrier to accessing help (Secker et al., 2001; Schrank & Slade, 2007). Internalising disorders are important to consider in adolescent development particularly as they can present as a barrier for young people to engage in opportunities due to low self-regard and prevent them from realising their full potential. Internal self-criticism and a lack of self-compassion can lead to dissatisfaction and a discontent which can prevent positive development and an inability to contribute to their family, community and self. This research will use the adolescent well-being scale as a measure to identify young people with low and high levels of risk for emotional well-being issues. These young people will be tracked to explore how normative development and adversity relates to youth leadership, resilience and social support.

2.1.4 Relationships

Relationships are of immense importance to the developing adolescent. This section will explore both relationships within and beyond the family unit. It
should be noted that relationships will also be revisited within the context of social support theory and resilience theory.

2.1.4.1 Relationships within the Family

2.1.4.1.1 Parents

Parent-adolescent interaction is very influential as will be explored further in both the sections on social support and resilience. The family may be considered its own social system, in which reciprocal influences lead to the development of relationships that have a strong and lasting impact (Santrock, 2007). The interaction within the family can be viewed as mutual socialisation, highlighting the influences parents can have on children and vice versa (Patterson & Fisher, 2002). A common misconception as discussed earlier, describes adolescents as full of conflict, disagreement and struggling through their teenage years. Research by Hill (1993) and Dolan (2003) demonstrates that in the vast majority of cases relationships are good with both parents and adolescents viewing them as supportive. Some families do experience difficulty during this time, but most adapt quite well (Hill, 1993). Research by Drury et al., (1998) highlighted that a breakdown in communication in families comes down to a failure to understand the other person’s point of view. Furthermore, Youniss and Smollar (1985) bring attention to how the relationship is redefined between adult and adolescent during this transition. They describe the relationship as one that is highly interdependent comprising of connectedness and separateness. The family relationship is critically important as it is here the seeds and influences are sown which ultimately facilitate the development of the young person.

Research by Grych (2002) found that marital satisfaction of parents was related to more affection, warmth and responsiveness towards their children. Stress caused by family reconstitution, such as ‘values and beliefs about marriage, family and parenting are shifting as adolescents grow up in family circumstances which are less stable than was the case for their own parents’ (Coleman & Hendry, 1999, p.4). Parental changes such as career change, health concerns, economic burdens and marital satisfaction can contribute to the
adolescent-parent relationships (Silverberg & Steinberg, 1990), as well as parenting styles; from authoritarian and authoritative to indulgent and indifferent (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

As adolescents develop they often seek more autonomy and independence (Brendtro, 2009). They can start questioning rules, rights and responsibilities in the home which can lead to conflicts. Issues such as what they wear, household duties and who they date or hang out with can emerge. Eccles (nd) found that in the main parents and adolescents tended to agree more than they disagree regarding core values linked to education, politics, and spirituality. Research by Hendry (1993) found that parent-adolescent relationships move toward greater equality and reciprocity as the adolescent ages.

2.1.4.1.2 Siblings

As will be dealt with in later chapters on resilience and social support siblings can be contribute substantially to the developing adolescent, either positively or negatively. Sibling relationships comprise of some of the closest relationships that young people can have in their lives (Gilligan, 2009), they can however also be a source of stress and tension (Dolan, 2003). Edwards et al., (2006) found that birth order, age gap and gender make-up were linked to intelligence, educational achievements and personality type. The arrival of a new brother or sister can be either received with joy and delight or at the other end of the spectrum seen as a threat and jealousy may emerge (Sanders, 2004). How siblings feel about each other and their relationships with their parents can impact their self-esteem and how they feel about themselves. Sibling relationships can be a source of warmth, love and kindness, or fierce rivalry, competitiveness and aggression (Sanders, 2004). However even a ‘hated’ sibling Edwards et al., (2006) note can be a source of protection for a young person, standing up for them if another person threatens them. As a young person enters adolescence, space and independence become increasingly important. Friction may occur in the defence of this autonomy particularly if invaded by a sibling (Sanders, 2004). Siblings can contribute immensely to the sense of identity and feelings of relatedness that young people experience. The biological and social ties siblings have with each other can be some of the
longest and most enduring connections (Edwards et al., 2006). However, dependency on siblings may decrease in adolescence as the young person explores their identity and may rely more on peers for this (Sanders, 2004).

2.1.4.1.3 Extended Family

An important contributing factor to the positive development of young people is the kinship within their lives. As seen in Werner & Smith’s study (1992) the development of strong bonds between caregiver and child, including the availability of care giving from the wider family especially grandparents promotes the establishment of role models and intergenerational bonds. Relationships with grandparents and the extended family can guide their development as well as the connection to a larger network of support and encouragement. Gilligan (2009) also brings to attention the importance of the extended family in the life of the child. Particularly where there may be poor relationships with the immediate family. He argues that the extended family can be a source of support which helps the young person to deal with their identity and their values and beliefs in relation to their family. Their engagement with their extended family can provide them with access to opportunities to engage in a variety of activities that may help shape their interests.

2.1.4.2 Relationships beyond the Family

2.1.4.2.1 Friendships

Friendship and the social interaction that ensues can form the basis of a large degree of social learning in adolescence. In the main, young people enjoy sharing ideas and being involved in activities which brings them into contact with groups holding similar values (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). The quality of relationships can also yield benefits such as emotional support, social learning, assistance and improved self-esteem (Kirchler et al., 1991). A complex web of meanings, reputations and identities result from peer groups and friendships (Lees, 1993). Friends quite literally reason together and tell each other everything so that they can understand their lives and their identity (Younnis & Smollar, 1985). Shucksmith and Hendry (1998) found that many young people go through an experimental stage, whether it is because of pressures from peers
or pushing their boundaries. However they argue that this experimental phase appears to pass as youth mature and become more confident. Shucksmith and Hendry (1998) also argue that lower levels of conformity may be due to a greater sense of identity and less dependence on what peers think. Erikson’s (1968) well known work on identity proposes that human behaviour is motivated by a desire to connect with other people. He illustrates how identity versus identity confusion can occur in adolescence where they take on new roles and statuses which can either lead to a positive identity or confusion in relation to who they are. This he argues can also be strongly influenced by peer acceptance or rejection.

Close friendship groups develop by choice and by mutual preference for characteristics and collaborative activities, and in a sense allow the young person a reaffirmation of chosen identity in mid-adolescence. (Coleman & Hendry, 1999, p.144)

As seen here peers are of immense importance in helping young people to carve out who they are and what is important to them - their identity.

2.1.4.2.2 School

The school environment can play a major role in the young person’s ability to socialise, achieve academically and pursue extracurricular activities, which in turn may impact all other aspects of their lives. The person-environment theory (Schneider, 1987) highlights that people’s behaviour, motivation and well-being are influenced by how well the individual and social environmental fit together. This theory suggests that people will not do well if their social environment does not meet their psychological needs, this will then impact on interest, behaviour, motivation and performance (Eccles nd). Eccles et al., (1996) argue that inappropriate educational environments may be responsible for negative behavioural changes during transition. The transition from primary to secondary school can lead to an experience called top-dog phenomenon where essentially the young people are moving from being top of the school to the bottom (Santrock, 2007).
Eccles (1997) highlights key features that can affect the young person moving from a smaller to larger school such as a more bureaucratic system, a more controlling system, a system that is less personalised and more rigid in terms of grading and tracking. These changes she argues will be difficult for some while others relish in learning to adapt. Schools can also provide young people with opportunities which develop their interests and passions. These factors illustrate the dichotomy that the school environment can offer, one which can be very positive or quite challenging.

2.1.4.2.3 Community

The ecological context in which adolescents develop is an important consideration. The culture that develops in an area, arises from the interactions of people over several years yielding behaviours, beliefs and patterns that are passed on from generation to generation (Kottak 2002, Triandis 2000). Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory (1979) draws attention to how essential the environment is in the development of teenagers including their capacity for reciprocity. Lerner argues that human development can only be understood as a function of its reciprocal relationship to the changing context and ‘that organism and context are always embedded in each other’ (Lerner, 1986, p.59). Scarr (1986, p.566) argues that factors are ever changing and there is no predictable or predetermined state or stage to go through and essentially ‘everything determines and is determined by everything else’. This highlights the interdependent nature of adolescents and their communities. Greenberger (1984) argues that community connectedness and closeness go hand-in-hand with the development of autonomy of an individual. Here the community can help the individual realise their independence and support them in their development as well as their mutual contribution to the community.

Lerner (1983) highlights with the ‘goodness of fit’ concept that the developmental outcome is dependent on the fit between the person and their context. A good match in the relationship of characteristics in the social context can yield positive developmental outcomes. Conversely, if the context does not meet the needs of the young person it may lead to impaired development and weakened capacity to build relationships. This is similar to the person-
environment theory by Schneider (1987). Lerner argues that ‘at a given point in development neither children’s attributes per se nor the demands of the setting per se are the key predictors of their adaptive functioning’ (Lerner, 1983, p.289). Instead he proposes that what matters most is the goodness-of-fit between the child’s attributes, their home, their peers and their school. If the characteristics of an individual and the social demands are incompatible there will be negative adjustment, a lack of development or even maladjustment. The community, culture and context of an adolescent’s existence play a strong role in their capacity to adapt and ability to engage with society.

Section Summary

Adolescent development as seen is a time of change, development, opportunity and uncertainty. This section outlined the history and definition of adolescence then looked at how normative development occurs which includes physical, emotional, cognitive and moral development. Following this, youth development during adversity was explored which can be categorised into either externalising or internalising behaviour. Finally, this section took into consideration the critical importance of relationships. Bearing this in mind, social support will be explored next.

2.2 Social Support Theory

Introduction

Social support is considered a vital component to the ability of people to negotiate through life successfully. This section explores the theory in relation to and looks closely at what constitutes social support. Following this, a discussion on the different types of social support and the importance of quality of social support is presented. This section then looks at the benefits of social support as well as the challenges. In addition, social networks and sources of support are discussed. Finally, social support is connected to youth leadership.

2.2.1 Social Support Defined

Cassel (1974) established that social support is the process whereby acts of assistance can be exchanged between people. Social support is considered
important to the well-being of individuals, as they can access support and help in times of stress. Cobb (1976, p.300) defined social support as ‘the individual belief that one is cared for and loved, esteemed and valued, and belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligations’. Being able to access social support is critical in assisting adolescent development. Particularly as adolescents encounter challenges, having people to share these challenges with others, seek advice and support from ensure that they do not have to deal with these experiences alone. Social support as Cutrona describes it is ‘acts that demonstrate responsivity to another’s needs’ (1996, p. 17). This kind of support helps to ‘buffer against stress’ and strengthens a persons’ ability to cope in crisis. Young people learn from their experiences with others (Bandura, 1977a). They can encounter numerous events during their teenage years which lead to uncertainty wherein support from others offers important assistance in navigating through these events successfully. Social support as found by Dolan et al., (2011) can improve a young person’s sense of hope and positively impact their well-being. As such social support is a very tangible component of the connections between people and the benefits of these connections. The support of others can provide a medium to be challenged, take risks, grow and develop, as well as be bolstered against negative events.

2.2.2 The Concept of Social Support

Social support has been further examined and broken down into different components by a number of researchers in an attempt to better understand this concept. Cutrona (2000) describes social support across four domains; sources, types and amounts, contexts and qualities. This indicates that different stressful incidents in life call for different types of support. For example, the support required if experiencing economic difficulties is different to that required when there is a death in the family. As well as this different sources of support may be preferred at different time points. For young people, sources of support include parents, peers, siblings, extended family and other adults (Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). These sources facilitate young people in being able to assess support either in times of crisis or on an ongoing basis. Having access to different sources of support enable youth to have choice in relation to who
supports them depending on the situation. As well as this the quality of perceived support can vary depending on the situation or the person. Furthermore, this young people can assess both formal and informal sources of support depending on their need. Canavan & Dolan (2000) describe a ‘central helping system’ as being the make-up of informal social support between family members and amongst friends. In addition to this, formal support such as professional help can be availed of when informal supports are limited or in times of crisis when additional support may be necessary (Garnder, 2003).

Another important consideration within the concept of social support is the notion of perceived and received support. Support that is perceived is as valuable, if not more so, than support that is actually received (Uchino, 2009). Having the perception that support is available can be a sufficient support even if it is never acted upon. Cohen et al., (2000, p.30) highlights the importance of this distinction by saying ‘support reduces the effects of stressful life events on health, through either the supportive actions of others or the belief that support is available’. Furthermore, Uchino (2009) brings attention to the fact that perceived support can depend in part on the personality or individual factors of the person these can include optimism and extraversion which results in less loneliness and anxiety. As well as this the early family environment is influential with secure attachment being important in increasing perceived support, while low family support can result in poorer coping strategies (Rutter, 1979; Smith & Carlson, 1997; Uchino, 2009). Received support as Uchino (2009) argues is based more on situational factors that are required in response to stress. In addition he highlights that emotional support and belonging support may be most useful in uncontrollable events while advice support may be most useful in controllable events e.g. interview preparation.

Indeed there are several benefits to having good social support, in particular health benefits. Research by Bruhn and Wolf (cited in Galdwell, 2009) highlights the health benefits of social support in a small community in the USA. Here the incidence of death from heart disease was half the national average despite having a largely Italian diet and a high level of obesity. The research found that the low incidence of heart disease was due to the powerful
social structure which helped those who were unsuccessful, built strong emotional ties and had strong connections within the community. Furthermore, research has indicated that the quality of life of patients post-operatively from diseases such as coronary artery disease and cancer have been linked to good levels of social support (Lindsay et al., 2000; Uchino, 2009). As well as this research indicates that people with low levels of social support report more symptoms of depression, have more mental health problems and heart disease (Uchino, 2004; Lakey & Cronin, 2008).

2.2.3 Types of Social Support

When considering the types of social support a number of researchers have outlined different types of social support with similarities in description giving a broad picture of social support. For ease of discussion each type of support will be dealt with here separately using Cutrona’s (2000) outline of support types namely; concrete, emotional, esteem and advice.

2.2.3.1.1 Concrete Support

Concrete support comes in the form of tangible or practical support (Cutrona, 2000). It involves physical acts of helping, these may be in the form of financial assistance or time e.g. help with homework. Practical support may be overlooked by professionals particularly for young people experiencing adversity where the practical assistance of helping finance a school uniform or gym gear may help engage the young person in school or sports (Dolan & Brady, 2012). Cobb (1982) refers to this kind of support as material support which involves practical assistance such as supplying goods and services that may be needed by someone. For House (1981) the concept of instrumental support is similar to this kind of support in that it is very practical or concrete and takes the form of money, time, transport etc.

2.2.3.1.2 Emotional Support

Emotional support encompasses support which can be quite sensitive. It involves dealing with feelings and only a select few may be chosen to give this type of social support (Dolan & Brady, 2012). Cobb (1982) outlines emotional
support as the belief that one is cared for and loved. It involves being there for someone, listening and supporting them when they are upset and providing love and reassurance (Cutrona, 2000; Dolan & Brady, 2012). This kind of support can provide the young person with the sustenance they need to deal with crises or daily challenges. Emotional support enables a person to either talk about what is on their mind or help them to act upon what is bothering them (Dolan & Brady, 2012). Cutrona (2000) highlights that emotional support perhaps has the greatest currency of all the types of support as it can be used successfully in any situation while other types may not. For example it may not be appropriate to offer advice if someone is upset and needs comforting. For House (1981) he sees emotional support as including empathy, caring and love and that it is generally provided by friends and family. It is a more intimate form of support. Attachment and emotional closeness could be considered to be part of this aspect of support so that the young person feels secure enough to share what is troubling them with someone else (Weiss, 1974).

2.2.3.1.3 Esteem Support
Cobb (1982) sees esteem support as leading to the belief that one is valued. While Cutrona (2000) describes esteem support as how one person recognises or values the worth of another, this form of support is also considered belonging support. Esteem support comes from beliefs that others have for example if someone believes in a young person’s ability to do something it is this belief that enables the young person to believe in themselves (Dolan & Brady, 2012). The belief that others have, can strengthen the young person’s beliefs about themselves and what they can do. They can start thinking they are able to do something and can result in realising this belief. This form of support is also known as appraisal support and involves affirmation and positive feedback (House, 1981). Weiss (1974) described this kind of support as reassurance of worth by recognising the competence of others.

2.2.3.1.4 Advice Support
Advice support or guidance is very useful when a person is trying to make a decision or trying to complete a task that they have limited experience in relation to (Dolan & Brady, 2012). Advice support helps to steer a young
person and is an important aspect of the support received as it can include providing information and facts (Weiss, 1974). It does however need to be delivered tactfully and Cutrona (2000) cautions against advice being given ‘too freely’ as this can have the unintended result of the person feeling like they are being ‘told’ what to do and feeling undermined as a result. Advice support when solicited can prove to be very useful in helping a young person as they make decisions about their everyday lives including bigger decisions which will affect their future. Advice support Cutrona adds can provide reassurance. Cobb (1982) refers to this type of support as instrumental support which incorporates counselling, advice and guidance to enable the young person gain better coping skills. As well as this House (1981) considers informational support to include advice and suggestions that help the person make decisions or deal with difficult situations.

2.2.4 Quality of Social Support

The quality of support available can be considered a determining indicator of a young person’s well-being (Dolan 2010). Important in the quality of support are four key aspects which according to Dolan & Brady (2012) these include perceived closeness, reciprocity, durability and admonishment. Closeness is important in that closeness creates feelings of comfort and ease which enable a person access their support when needed and not feel like they are a burden. Reciprocity involves the exchange of help equally between people, this ensures that one person does not feel obliged to another and there is considered to be mutual benefit from the relationship (Eckenrode & Hamilton, 2000). Reciprocal relationships ensure that there is a give and take which helps to maintain balance and sustain the relationship over time. Weiss (1974) highlights the importance of providing assistance to others and having the opportunity to nurture others is something central within the context of reciprocity. The quality of support can also be a function of the durability and reliability of the relationship, a relationship which is regular, dependable and consistent adds to the sense of durability of the relationship (Tracy & Biegel, 1994; Dolan & Brady, 2012). Weiss (1974) draws an important parallel between reliability and the assurance that one can be counted on in times of stress. Finally,
admonishment refers to giving feedback in a good willed way such that it is non-criticising. This aspect is important to the quality of the relationship for example if a person is criticised and made feel bad or undermined it can further their belief that they are no good and ultimately affect their sense of self. Another factor to consider is that support networks may not always result in good quality support for example family members can often be a substantial source of stress and abuse in the lives of young people (Dolan, 2003; Perry, 2007).

2.2.5 Social Support Benefits & Challenges

The early work of Weiss (1974) drew attention to the value of social support as a buffer to stress and as central to coping. Research which spans over 30 years illuminates that social support plays a pivotal role in successful coping (Eckenrode & Hamilton, 2000). Social support assists resilience by buffering against stress and facilitates the development of positive mental health and better psychological adjustment (Rutter et al., 1998). There is strong evidence that young people have an ongoing need for social support during their adolescence (Cotterall, 1996; Darling, 2002). Similarly, Sarason et al., (1983, p.137) found that ‘high social support scores were associated with lower levels of anxiety, depression and hostility, as well as experiencing more positive and desirable events in life, greater self-esteem, an internal locus of control and a more optimistic view of life as well as greater ability in persisting in tasks that are not easily solved’. Social support helps to reduce stress by improving the fit between the person and the environment (Cobb, 1982). In having supports a person can feel more confident and reassured when making decisions when others back them up thus reducing stress (Cutrona, 2000). A longitudinal study found that social support was a frequently used coping resource, and was statistically associated with positive mental health and lower frequencies of mental health disorders and alcoholism (Cederblad et al., 1995). People who receive more emotional support or perceive that emotional support is readily available are happier, healthier and better able to cope with life’s challenges (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). The receipt of support or the perception of its availability helps people to cope with challenges, doubts and upsets that if left
unattended can have serious negative effects on physical, psychological and emotional health (Burleson, 1990).

Indeed, when exploring social support challenges must also be acknowledge. For one, not all forms of social support are positive. Indeed some social support can result in negative effects such as the support being over protective, anxious or involve harsh criticism which can damage a young person’s sense of themselves (Dolan & Brady, 2012). As well as this when help is given begrudgingly or when it results in personal costs to the young person or their family, this support is poor in quality and can be considered toxic (Dolan & Brady, 2012). Another important consideration is the context in which support is given. For young people who experience adversity and a number of risk factors or stressors they may find it difficult to access help (Dolan, 2010). This may be due to a number of reasons some of which could be because it is difficult for their pride, they may not know how to access help or they can feel so low that they think no-one would care to help them (Dolan, 2010). A person could also have such low self-esteem or self-efficacy that they may not be able to approach sources of help (Cutrona, 2000).

### 2.2.6 Social Networks

Social networks are the complex system of ties to family, friends and community (Cobb, 1982). Social networks are also described as the web of social relationships that surround individuals. These networks are generally made up of family, friends, neighbours and professionals. Weiss (1974) highlights that social integration and a sense of belonging to a group is important in accessing social support. Historically as Leary & Downs (1995) point out, human survival would have been dependent on integration into a social group. Being part of a group would have had benefits such as protection and food, while isolation would probably have led to death or starvation quite quickly. As such isolation would have become strongly linked to lower self-esteem, sense of perceived control and a larger degree of negative affect. Dolan (2010) highlights that it must not be assumed that there is a positive association between network size and the level of support a person may get. Just because
the social network is large does not necessarily mean they will get more support. Hall and Wellman (1985) describe the link between social support, the social network, and health and well-being. The model describes how social support arises from the social network. Social support in essence arises from the network and is how help is provided to people so that they can cope with difficult or stressful events. The capacity for people to deal more effectively with life’s stressors can also impact on their health and well-being, and quality of life (Hall & Wellman, 1985). There is however a darker side to social networks and as described earlier the social network may be the source of problems and distress (Perry, 2007; Dolan, 2003). The network surrounding the young person in some cases can be considered toxic and yield little benefit. Young people may indeed find themselves criticised, bullied and ostracised by their social group.

In more recent times popular social networks occur online for young people and adults alike. This hub engages people in an interactive way of communicate that involves sharing of pictures, jokes, videos and advice etc. This form of support network has been found to give shy youth an outlet in which to express themselves, which maintains their level of comfort and can enhance their perception of social support (Baker & Oswald, 2010). Some young people however may be exposed to cyber-bullying and harassment which can have a negative impact on them (Sengupta & Chaudhuri, 2011). Cheung et al., (2001) found that increasingly young people spend time online to enhance their social influence, social presence and social action. This is an important consideration in the context of youth leadership.

2.2.7 Sources of Support

As well as requiring all types of support, the sources of support and their relationship within the network is considered of equal importance (Cotterral, 1996). Cutrona (2000) outlines that for a young person support is best provided within relationships which include at least one reliable person who provides all forms of support, is dependable, close and offers the opportunity for reciprocity. When it comes to relationships, measures of support cannot be discriminated from closely associated concepts such as low conflict,
companionship, intimacy and social skills (Cohen et al., 2000). Positive, stable and secure relationships may fulfil basic biological needs as well as provide much needed support through life’s stressors. This following section links up with the section on relationships as covered in Section 2.1 on Adolescent development.

2.2.7.1 Relationships within the Family

2.2.7.1.1 Parents

Parents are one of the greatest sources of social support to young people (Ghate & Hazel, 2002; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). For the majority during childhood parents provide consistent, regular emotional support which ensures secure attachment (Rutter et al., 1998; Perry, 2007). This early parental nurturing and support enhances the child’s social adjustment as well as promotes psychological and emotional health (Rutter et al., 1998; Perry, 2007). Conversely, however when this is not present it can cause maladjustment, anxiety, poor physical health and psychopathology (Perry, 2007). Pinkerton and Dolan (2007) found that young people most frequently cited their parents as a source of support even if they were experiencing adversity, mental health problems or strained relationships with their parents. The quality of support available to young people from their parents in their study was also viewed as good and plentiful. Despite the image of teenagers as troublesome, very few require professional intervention (Feldman & Elliot, 1993). Social support offered from parent to child can also be reciprocated from child to parent. A study by Canavan and Dolan (2002) found that parents identified young people as an important source of practical and emotional support. The parents in this study also saw themselves as ‘close’ to their children despite challenging relationships. The involvement of fathers in their children’s lives has been shown to have positive outcomes for young people (McKeown et al., 2003; Branje et al., 2004). As well as this the lack of father’s involvement can have a negative impact which will be explored in the chapter on resilience. Indeed parental support of each other and their marital satisfaction may also influence a child’s perception of the support they can access (Acitelli, 1996).
McCubbin and McCubbin (1992) highlight two interesting functions of support systems within the family. Firstly, the support system acts as a buffer protecting the family from the effects of stress and/or stressor. Secondly, individuals and families have been known to recover much quicker from stress and physical health problems when support systems have been available and promote the resilience and adaptability of the family system.

### 2.2.7.1.2 Siblings

Sibling relationships can yield good reciprocal support however they can also yield a large degree of rivalry and aggression (Branje et al., 2004). Longitudinal research indicates that the quality of a sibling relationship can be high in childhood, decline in early adolescence and then increase later in adolescence and adulthood (Cicirelli 1995; McHale et al., 2006). Dolan (2003) found that siblings were frequently nominated as a source of support; however the quality of support offered by siblings was the poorest when compared to other sources of support. This may be due to difficulties siblings experience themselves in the family or perhaps due to rivalry and tension. Research suggests that younger adolescents are more likely to model their behaviour on and learn from older siblings, while older siblings are more likely to de-identify from their younger sibling (McHale et al., 2001). Branje et al., (2004) found that a higher initial level of sibling support was related to lower initial levels of internalising problem behaviours for both older and younger adolescents and for externalising problems in older adolescents. They also found that sibling support was related to more problem behaviour, for boys with younger brothers they had demonstrated higher problem behaviour. Adolescents, particularly boys, whose brother displayed more problem behaviours displayed more adjustment problems themselves. Sibling support also appeared to encourage modelling of ‘bad’ sibling behaviour. This indicates that siblings can provide a buffer against problem behaviour or contribute towards poor behaviour.
2.2.7.2 Relationships beyond the Family

2.2.7.2.1 Friendships

For young people, the ability to cope and be resilient requires access to active support from a number of sources. Friendships are of particular importance to teenagers (Gilligan, 2009). Studies of early child development indicate that children who are more likely to engage in comforting distressed/crying peers were better liked by peers than those who showed little concern for the crying peer (Farver & Branstetter, 1994). Studies also indicate that children who lack friends, especially those actively rejected by peers, are at risk for a host of social, emotional and behavioural problems both during childhood and later in life including poor school performance, early school leaving, delinquency, substance misuse and emotional disturbances (Kupersmidt, 1990). Pinkerton and Dolan (2007) found that one in five young people referred to neighbourhood youth projects did not have a close friend. Friends were however, consistently seen as providing strong social support and ample positive support which was considered of good quality. A continuing belief throughout adolescence that emotional support is readily available through friends and family has been found to be associated with several indices of personal happiness, social adjustment and academic success (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). A young person’s ability to provide emotional support to peers is also important in shaping the quality of those social relationships (Farver & Branstetter, 1994). The capacity to provide emotional support is central to a young person’s social competence (Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990). Acceptance within a peer group is associated with the ability to provide emotional support and the ability to recognise and understand the emotional states of others. Those better able to understand other people’s emotional states, appreciate what another person is feeling as well as the causes for that emotional state are more popular among peers (Edwards et al., 1984; Garner et al., 1994). Zahn-Waxler and Radke-Yarrow (1990, p.113-114) outline that the competence to provide emotional support depends on three sets of skills: 1. a cognitive capacity to interpret the physical and psychological states of others, 2. the emotional capacity to experience affectively the states of others, 3. the behavioural capacity that enables a person try to alleviate the discomfort of
others. Waters and Sroufe (1983) outline that part of social competence also requires that a person can change their response as necessary. Burleson and Kundel (1996) highlight that the capacity of an individual to provide this comforting or emotional support is dependent on the individual’s ability to know appropriate interaction strategies, listen, understand the topic and have a willingness to provide support.

2.2.7.2.2 Other Adults
Other adults external to the immediate family can be a strong source of support to young people such as a coach, teacher or mentor. Relationships beyond the family enable young people ‘engage in more complex and sustained interactions’ (Friesen & Brennan, 2004, p. 301). Where a young person is experiencing adversity the presence of at least one reliable adult responsive to their needs can improve the ability of the child to deal with problems particularly where tangible advice and support is offered (Cutrona, 2000). The Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) mentoring programme which was established in the USA in 1904 has demonstrated positive benefits to young people including improved school attendance and reduced risk taking behaviours (Tierney et al., 1995; Rhodes, 2002). A randomised control trial carried out in Ireland demonstrated that emotional well being, other adult support and total social support significantly improved as a result of involvement in the BBBS mentoring programme (Dolan et al., 2011). These findings indicate that additional adults in a young persons’ life can convey the benefit of offering additional supports to a young person which they may not have access to in the home. Even if a young person is well supported, additional support from another adult can have the effect of recognising skills and talents that they have and lead to enhanced self-belief (Cutrona, 2000; Dolan & Brady 2012).

2.2.7.2.3 Community
The communities in which people live can be a source of plentiful support or stress for individuals (Gardner, 2003; Brennan, 2002). A supportive community is one which is well integrated and creates the space for the development of supportive relationships where everyone feels accepted and included (Brennan, 2002). Socially integrated communities can provide social capital for its
members (Putnam, 2000). Social capital refers to the connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). As Putnam highlights there can be many virtuous individuals in a community but if they are isolated it does not necessarily result in a rich social capital. Flanagan & Levine (2010, p. 160) highlight that civic engagement ‘helps youth to form social networks, build social capital and connects them to educational and occupational opportunities’. Communities that offer increased opportunities for active involvement in formal groups and enable its members to connect, leads to increased accessibility of resources (Brennan, 2002; SRDC, 1996). This interaction between the members of a community and the use of their resources can lead to vibrant communities as well as improvements in education, environment, health, safety and the economy (Putnam, 2000; Brennan, 2002). The ability of people within communities to share their resources reciprocally is what leads to stronger communities and better outcomes for children (Putnam, 2000). Some communities however can also lead to negative influences on child and adolescent development such as those with high crime rates (Gardner, 2003). The ability of a community to support its young people is important if it is to create young people capable of taking charge of their lives and contributing to society. Indeed different communities will have different requirements in terms of support and resources.

2.2.8 Connecting Social Support to Leadership

As adolescents develop the amount, type and quality of social support required and available will vary particularly as they go through physical, sexual, emotional and intellectual changes (Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). Social support plays a role in supporting young people who consider engaging in leadership opportunities. By nature of the fact that social support offers advice and emotional support as well as esteem support which can encourage youth to have belief in themselves (Cutrona, 2000), it follows that these supports would be beneficial to young people engaging in leadership. Critical to the success of a young leader is their ability to access support so that they can overcome barriers they may face and do not become over burdened with their
responsibilities. As well as this, a leader who can access a support network can also access resources which may support their particular area of leadership thus generating external support for their cause (Flynn & Staw, 2004). In this context it is also important to consider the influence that a leader with or without social support has on those they lead. A study by Lyons and Schneider (2009) found that leadership style can impact stress outcomes. They found that transformational leadership was associated with higher social support perceptions and enhanced task performance compared to the transactional conditions. Furthermore, Rock (2009) suggests that leaders who promote supportive relationships, are motivating, encourage autonomy, provide certainty, act in a way that promotes fairness and who encourage reframing of stressful tasks may be more effective than traditional leaders. Suganuma and Ura (2001) examined the effects of two types of support; instrumental and emotional on stress reactions in leadership situations. They found that instrumental support intensified recipients stress reactions, while emotional support reduced them. Instrumental acts include attempts to influence others and the success of this may be dependent on the social relationship with a supporter.

All aspects of youth leadership may be considered civic engagement, therefore the contribution civic engagement makes to social support will also be explored under this heading. Civic engagement can act as a source of social support for young people. Although the extent to which civic engagement enhances social support is largely unknown, Dolan (2010) highlights four benefits that can develop as a result of youth’s engagement in civic activities. These include deepening existing relationships and assessing new ones, reciprocity of support, increase in self and external sources of esteem and respite from focusing on one’s own difficulties. Youth involvement in peer mentoring and intergenerational mentoring are two clear ways of seeing how altruism and social support networks can be enhanced by this type of civic engagement (Philip, 2003). Flanagan & Levine (2010) argue that civic engagement brings with it benefits to social networks and social capital. In a similar vein, Dolan (2010) outlines a conceptual model which connects social civic engagement with social support, resilience and well-being in youth. This model outlines
how engagement in civic activities can enhance new or existing social relationships, as well as enable youth focus on contributing to others which in turn focuses their mind away from themselves and their problems. This can also lead to recognition from others and build their capacity to be resilient. Promoting active citizenship among young people has the benefit of both improving communities and promoting the social, psychological and intellectual growth of the young person (Zaff et al, 2003; Johnson et al., 1998).

Section Summary

This section explored the concept of social support, what it means to be supported as well as the different types of social support. The contribution that social support networks and different sources of support give to young people was also explored. Finally, this section looked at the benefits that accrue from having good social support and linked social support with youth leadership and civic engagement.

2.3 Resilience Theory

Introduction

Resilience is concept that has gained increasing traction over recent years with origins emerging from studies in psychopathology. This section sets out to explore the literature in relation to resilience, defining what resilience is and looking more in depth at the concept of resilience and what this means. Furthermore, this section will aim to help the reader understand resilience and how risk and protective factors contribute to a person’s resilience. This section then explores the influence of community and relationships on resilience. Finally, how resilience relates to youth leadership is explored.

2.3.1 Resilience Defined

The amazing capacity of young people to adapt and recover from highly traumatic or stressful situations and thrive despite extremely deprived communities has led to the emergence of research in the field of resilience. Resilience research asks the question ‘what is it that enables these young people to do well despite their experiences?’ Masten (2001, p.228) outlines resilience
as ‘good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development’. Resilience has also been defined as ‘the quality that enables some young people to find fulfilment in their lives despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, the problems or adversity they may have undergone or the pressures they may experience’ (Stein 2008, p.36). Other definitions highlight that resilience is not an individual characteristic but more a process which involves dynamic interaction with their environment. Ungar (2004, p. 24) see’s resilience as ‘the result of negotiations between individuals and their environment to maintain a self-definition as healthy’. In a similar vein, Benard (2006, p.198) describes resilience as ‘a self-righting capacity for healthy growth and development’. This highlights resilience as the capacity rebound or in some cases morph to do better after challenges. Masten (2001) argues that resilience is a normal process of human development and adaptation. According to her resilience is the ‘ordinary magic of everyday interactions between families and communities’ (Masten, 2001, p.9). It is the power of humans to be resourceful and is not a collection of special qualities. This resourcefulness and ability to interact with one’s environment may be a key contributor to resilient people. As well as this Supkoff et al., (2012) view resilience as a developmental process bringing together the accumulated history of the person and underpinned by principles from other developmental processes such as brain development or social skills development. The distinction between the terms resilience and resiliency must be pointed out; ‘resiliency’ is the ‘capacity’ or ‘tendency’ to rebound which may reflect the individuals traits and ‘resilience’ is the ‘act’ or process which enables rebounding (Napoli, 2007; Lipsitt & Demick, 2012). This distinction between resilience as a set of characteristics and it being a process is at the heart of much of the emerging research on resilience (Ungar, 2012; Clarke & Clarke, 2003)

2.3.2 The Concept of Resilience

Resilience is about doing well in life despite facing adversity. Resilience can be seen as the combination of factors which protect against or perpetuate negative effects. Masten et al., (1990) highlights that an interesting aspect of resilience is that it can be either preventative or responsive. They consider it preventative in
the case where a person develops coping strategies to avoid poor outcomes through adversity, or responsive where it facilitates recovery from traumatic life events such as victimisation or death of a parent. Unlike initial scholars, who argued that human behaviour was constant, something which was a product of early childhood experience, Clarke & Clarke (2003) found that in fact people have tremendous capacity to adapt to their circumstances and display resilience. They argue that both personal characteristics and the effects of the social context interact to either promote or diminish resilience. As well as this they highlight that each person has a huge capacity to act as a change agent in their lives and this can span the entire life and as such interactions throughout life are important to consider. They go on to describe four parameters which they feel interact such as biological and social/environmental trajectories, interactional/transactional processes where individuals play a part in influencing their own development and chance encounters which can result in a diverting of the life path which can occur at any stage.

Resilient young people appear to draw on personal, social or environmental resources to adapt successfully to minimise negative consequences that other less-adaptive individuals experience (Chaskins, 2008). Similarly, Ungar et al., (2007) sees resilience as both an individual characteristic and an environmental quality both of which provide the resources necessary for positive development in adverse situations. Their work further argues that it is simply not something that people ‘have’ but rather is a ‘process’ that families, schools, communities and governments facilitate (Ungar, 2012). Resilience as Ungar sees it is more than personality traits and is dependent on the quality of their social and physical ecology, and their interactions with same. This brings to the fore the important role that families, schools, communities and cultures contribute towards resilience.

Garmezy (1983) and Werner and Smith (1992) proposed three categories of resilience factors which include: individual disposition attributes, family support and cohesion, and external support systems. Specifically individual characteristics were outlined to include sociability, communication skills, intelligence, self-efficacy and talent (Olsson et al., 2003). A family characteristic including at least one parent or stable substitute is critical for
young people in their capacity for resilience (Smith, 1999; Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012). External support systems including peers, teachers, neighbours, coaches or anyone else also feed into their capacity for resilience (Garmezy 1991). Ungar (2008) highlights further the importance of cultural and contextual nuances in resilience and the interplay between the child, their culture and their context are all important considerations in a persons’ capacity for resilience. Resilience can be measured by the degree to which someone reports being supported, connected, meaningfully engaged, having the life skills and social competencies to maintain their health and well-being (Benard, 2006).

2.3.3 Understanding Resilience

A longitudinal study which followed children growing up with risk factors from birth to adulthood in Kaui, Hawaii was carried out by Werner and Smith (2001). The study found that as the children grew up they became more similar to their peers who displayed less risk factors. They found that only one out of six of the adult participants was doing poorly — ‘struggling with chronic financial problems, domestic conflict, violence, substance abuse, serious mental health problems, and/or low self-esteem’ (2001, p.37). These findings indicate that when the whole life is considered - protective factors have a more positive impact on the life course of children who grow up under adverse conditions than stressful events or risk factors. It illustrates that there are factors present which protect children from adversity and furthermore that the life course is amenable to change at any time and is not completely determined in early childhood. Research in neuroscience further confirms the remarkable capacity of the brain to adapt beyond the original thinking which was that the brain was fixed and unchangeable (Doidge, 2007).

Research by Werner and Smith (2001) highlighted that resilience came from three clusters of protective factors; in the individual, in the family and in the community. Research indicates that risk factors only predict about 20 to 49 percent of a given high-risk population (Werner & Smith, 2001). Conversely, protective factors appear to predict positive outcomes in the range of 50 to 80 percent of a high-risk population furthering the case for strengths based approaches (Werner & Smith, 2001).
2.3.4 What Enables Resilience?

Common aspects described within resilient people include: creativity, the ability to tolerate emotional or physical pain and the ability to discover new ways to approach life (Flach, 2003). Resilient people generate new perspectives on difficult or negative events and often attempt to give them meaning. This reframing negative events has the benefit of enabling people lead happier more successful lives (Flach, 2003; Rock, 2009). In a similar vein, Benard (1991) believed that contributions to resilience include: social competence, problem solving, autonomy and sense of purpose. Young people who are considered in the best position to overcome adversity are those with strong social support networks, are involved in activities that promote their positive development and skills development as well as someone to talk to outside the family and an opportunity to contribute to others (Newman 2004, Bredtrot 2009). Gilligan (2009) highlights that key social ingredients comprise of social roles played out in everyday life, a secure base which comes from their emotional ties with people, identity which comprises who they are, self-esteem as it pertains to how they feel about themselves and self-efficacy. As illustrated above it simply is not just a set of competencies that a person has, more accurately it is how these interact with the environment and the situation at hand creating an elaborate system which can be highly adaptive or maladaptive (Ungar, 2012).

Research indicates that children who experience early childhood trauma or have a parent who has a mental or emotional disturbance may not gain the appropriate level of care which can seriously impact their development (Perry, 2007; Masten, 1989). However contrary to this, some children in these situations appeared to do well despite incredibly poor beginnings in life. Perry (2007) argues that the capacity of a child to respond to positive intervention lies in whether there was any exposure to nurturing parenting early on. This he argues lays positive neural connections which can later be built upon through interventions. His describes the case of a sociopath whose behaviour developed due to extreme emotional neglect in the first few weeks after birth. This consistent exposure to neglect failed to enable his brain develop empathetic responses to others as his own needs were not met. As such he missed a critical
developmental period where he had no ability to associate with other people’s pain or suffering.

Resilience does not occur in isolation, it is an interactive process whereby environment and relationships cooperate with the individual to produce situations of resilience (Kent, 2012). In the case above the environment and relationships in the child’s life interacted in such a way as to lead to mal-adaptation and resilience did not ensue. Clarke & Clarke (2006) further outline that in many ways the predictable outcome of a person’s life path may be difficult to alter as desire or ability to escape may not be present. They also highlight that there may be other constraints which prevent change such as social pressures and genetic effects. However, the beauty about resilience is that no story is completely told – ‘man is like a novel: one does not know until the very last page how it will end’ (Zamyatin cited in Clarke & Clarke, 2003, p. 165). Rutter (2012) argues that there is a balance between risk and protective factors, however finds that resilience research ought to establish that risk comes from the environment and not the individual. The contribution of risk and protective factors to resilience will be explored next.

2.3.5 Risk factors

Risk factors are any set of circumstances in a child’s life that lead to an increase in possibility that a child will develop behavioural or emotional problems (Garmezy 1983, Arthur et al., 2002). Risk factors can include characteristics of the individual, their families, and their environment (Smith & Carlson, 1997). Children are especially vulnerable to developmental risks in early childhood from prenatal problems, developmental delays, disabilities and temperament (Garmezy, 1991). Familial factors that can be stressful for children include out-of-home placement, family conflict, psychopathology, separation and deviance (Smith & Carlson, 1997). Neglectful and abusive parenting is also considered a risk factor for both internalising and externalising symptoms (Smith & Thornberry, 1995). Environmental and social conditions such as joblessness, poverty, social isolation and dangerous neighbourhoods have also been identified as risk factors for child development (Stern & Smith, 1995). Rutter (1979) found that four or more simultaneous factors were associated with a
tenfold increase in the rate of disorder compared with having no risk factors present. It appears to be the accumulation of risk factors that produces more consistently negative outcomes. Smith and Carlson (1997) argue that it is both stressors and risk factors that have the potential to threaten child and adolescent well-being. Risk factors can be considered stressors however some stressors may not be risk factors.

Ungar et al., (2007) reveal several significant risk factors that influenced youth in their international study of 14 communities, these include poverty, war, social dislocation, cultural disintegration or genocide, violence, marginalisation, drug and alcohol addictions, family breakdown, mental illness of the child or parent, and early pregnancy. Risk factors, as seen, can be overwhelming. Indeed exposure to risk factors can also ignite someone into action to advocate for social change and social justice (Checkoway, 2005). As well as this Clarke & Clarke (2006) found that factors which may prevent escape from disadvantage include: individual irritability, low IQ, low emotional security, few emotional ties and chaotic family. Risk factors do provide some guidance in relation to what leads to adversity for young people. However Newman (2002) brings attention to the fact that child welfare services may have become overly pre-occupied with risk factors without giving due regard to factors which keep children healthy and safe.

2.3.6 Protective factors

Conversely, protective factors are those characteristics that minimise the chances of impaired development, ‘either directly or by mediating or moderating the effect of exposure to risk factors’ (Arthur et al., 2002, p. 576). Hjemdal et al., (2006) place a firm focus on protective factors as instrumental in yielding resilience. They argue that it is these protective factors and processes that enable a good outcome despite the experience of stressors. Ungar et al., (2009) outline several characteristics of resilient children broken down into individual, interpersonal and family attributes, environmental characteristics and social and cultural context. They emphasise the importance of cultural and environmental influences in the interaction and that resilience is not just made up of individual characteristics, which is similar in thinking to

A healthy temperament, a safe and nurturing family and psychological well-being were found to be predictive of individual success after exposure to abuse, violence, poverty, war or parental mental illness (Garmezy 1983, Werner & Smith 1992). Masten (2001, p.234) highlights that ‘global factors associated with resilience which include: connection to competent and caring adults in the family or community, family and community belonging, cognitive and self-regulatory skills, positive views of self and motivation to be effective in the environment’. Locus of control, self-efficacy, learned resourcefulness, thriving and sense of coherence were also outlined by VanBreda (2001) as protective and contributing to resilience. As well as this Clarke & Clarke (2006) outlined factors such as: individual attractiveness, problem-solving ability, networks of social support, schools where children are valued and learning is encouraged, a peer group which is pro-social and a capacity for purposeful planning as enabling escape from adversity.

2.3.7 Community Influence on Resilience

The ecological context that young people grow up in, as seen, influences their capacity for resilience and well-being (Ungar et al., 2007). Some of these influences as mentioned are directly influential such as family, peers, school while others are more indirect such as cultural norms and macro-level policy (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Young people’s involvement in their communities can be a risk or protective factor depending on the community. Positively it can be an environment where they can develop their problem solving ability, their social skills, their sense of purpose as well as social capital (Kegler et al., 2005, Putnam, 2000). Conversely, growing up in communities that are overtly negative can impede the resilience of some young people (Stern & Smith, 1995).

Research by Brennan (2008) highlights that an interactional process occurs between community and youth whereby the community provides the opportunity for young people to become resilient, conversely the young people can also contribute to building a more resilient community. As groups work on
issues important to them community agency emerges which is essentially the
capacity of people to manage, utilise and enhance those resources available to
them in addressing local issues, this in turn is considered a foundation of
resilience (Brennan & Lulloff, 2007; Brennan, 2006; Brennan, 2008).
Socioeconomic vulnerabilities, social weaknesses and social support impact the
community agency which in turn impacts the capacity of the community to be
resilient and has a knock on effect on the well-being of the people in that
community (Brennan 2008). Brennan (2008) highlights that for youth to
become resilient within the communities they need to be empowered to become
part of the community development process. This furthers the emergence of
agency and helps to achieve resilience in the wider community.

Research by Chaskin (2008) outlines how community risk and protective
factors can influence the community’s capacity for resilience. He illustrates that
there are two kinds of factors that are important in the community. First, the
structure of the community and second the processes through which
communities function including social capital, resources and how these
resources are used. These can in turn then affect the individual’s capacity for
resilience. Barter (2005) further highlights the important role that building
community capacity can have in promoting children’s health and well-being.
Protective factors are clearly important as outlined furthermore, the extent to
which these protective factors are displayed may also influence a young
persons’ capacity for leadership and civic engagement.

2.3.8 Stress & Coping

Stress emerges at various stages during life, how a person responds to this
stress and their capacity to reframe adversity through developing positive
coping strategies is of pivotal importance to their capacity for resilience (Rutter,
1981). Cumulative stresses over a short period of time can place a lot of
pressure on the system as a whole to cope. Central to success in dealing with
these challenges is how the person adapts and responds to the situation (Rutter,
1981). Seiffge-Krenke (1995) described a model whereby individual’s internal
resources and social resources or relationships are what respond to a stressor
which leads to either an adaptive or symptomatic outcome. As well as this
Newman (2004) describes that coping appears to be broken into two types; problem-solving and emotion-focused. Problem-solving coping is the development of skills to enable a person take control of various situations that may emerge. Emotion-focused coping is supportive and helps to reduce emotional stress. Furthermore, Seiffge-Krenke (1995) finds that people with less depressive symptoms are more likely to use problem-focused coping, while those who rely on avoidance and emotion-focused coping make up those with higher symptoms. Indeed it is important to note that not all stress is bad, some stress is beneficial and promotes independence, action and responsibility (Haggerty et al., 1996). Charles Darwin emphasised the need to be adaptive and stated that ‘it is not the strongest of the species that survive, or the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change’ (cited in McCallum, 2001). It is this adaptive and resilient behaviour that will be a key focus of this research.

2.3.9 Relationships

Resilience as mentioned above is the interactive process between an individual and their environment or relationships. This section will explore how family and peer relationships contribute to resilience.

2.3.9.1 Family

It cannot be denied that parental involvement in their teenager’s lives is highly influential. As was seen in the section on adolescent development, most youth-parent relationships are good (Ghate & Hazel, 2002; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). The quality of the relationship can contribute to the development of resilience within the youth or the lack of same. Research by Farrell and White (1998) found that the father’s relationship with the young person was a significant factor in determining whether a child would later abuse drugs. Pettit et al., (2001) also found that parental relationships offered a protective function. As well as this they found a link between parental supervision and behaviour problems, with a lack of supervision being related to poor behaviour problems. Delinquency may in fact become an acceptable choice for young people who are trying to meet their need for belonging, acceptance, social connection and a
healthy sense of self, particularly if fathers are unavailable to meet their recreational needs (Robertson, 1999). As well as this, Rutter (1981) draws attention to the impact of maternal deprivation on the developing child. He argues that long-term maternal deprivation and poor bonds can have a role in delinquency, depression, conduct, language and cognition disorders. Disruption of bonds, deprivation of stimulation, emotional, nutritional or social privation and distorted relationships Rutter (1981) finds can lead to delinquency. Rutter further highlights the importance of a loving relationship, attachment and the development of stable bonds which are continual and a stimulating environment as instrumental in normal development. This highlights the critically important role of parental relationships on a young person’s capacity for resilience and their ensuing life path. Research by Amanto and Fowler (2002) found that a high level of support, sufficient monitoring and avoidance of overly harsh punishments have been linked to positive child development.

High risk young people may face challenges in asserting a degree of personal agency in constructing an identity that is mentally healthy. However adults are viewed by teens as important in providing structure and activities that offer opportunities to experience themselves as powerful, worthy of notice and respect, which impacts their sense of self and their identity (Ungar, 2004). Ungar also found that young people considered non-resilient often most wanted someone they chose to exercise limited control over them. Furthermore, Ungar argues that a teenager’s decision to allow others to help them is based on how their expected success or failure would impact their well-being, highlighting that parents/guardians may often find that the rules change frequently. Ultimately teenagers want their parents/guardians to know they were happy and mature through pro-social means. However when these paths are unavailable they can achieve a mature status through antisocial behaviour for example; criminal activity, sexual promiscuity, drug use and other risk taking behaviours (Ungar, 2004). Gerard and Buehler (1999) argue that poor parenting is the strongest predictor of poor mental health and behavioural problems in children. The role of siblings within the family unit and their contribution to resilience should not be underestimated, despite being complex, the support and perspective siblings provide can be very important. Gilligan (2009) argues that
siblings can understand, perhaps like no one else, what it is like to grow up in their family. They can ‘help make sense of obscure details of personal history as well as offer practical help and advice’ (2009, p.43). The role of siblings as was seen in the section on social support can be a pivotal supporting structure to young people and counter to this, a source of stress.

2.3.9.2 Friendships

As was explored in the section on social support, friendships can offer substantial support and similar world view to young people. Friends support young people in viewing themselves as competent and contribute to their self-esteem (Seiffge-Krenhe, 1995). Newman (2004) highlights a study in which positive peer relationships and external networks offer young people the opportunity to develop self-esteem and self-efficacy. Peers also have the potential to contribute negatively to the developing adolescent resulting in their involvement in activities which may not benefit them e.g. antisocial behaviour, gang involvement, drugs and alcohol use. Contrary to this, Felsman (1989, p. 66) explored how being part of a youth gang in Colombia may in fact be a protective. He concluded that the protective element comes from the fact that ‘children do not band together to fight and steal, rather they band together to meet primary physical and emotional needs not being addressed elsewhere’. Ungar (2004) draws attention to the fact that for some young people their problem behaviours may indeed be reciprocal to maintaining their well-being when other options are scarce. These provide more unconventional notions of protective factors that bring an added slant when thinking about young people at risk. Friendships therefore, can be of particular influence in a young person’s life.

2.3.10 Connecting Resilience to Youth Leadership

While a broad array of research has occurred to assess resilience and its importance in the normative development of young people who experience adversity, there is a lack of research which assesses the relationship between resilience and youth leadership. One relevant piece of research which focused on transforming violence in young offenders to resilience, found for one
particular cohort that there was a 53% reduction in antisocial behaviour incidents after the programme (Broadwood & Fine, 2011). This research however did not focus directly on the link between resilience and youth leadership. As there is an increasing focus on strengths based and resilience-led practice this creates the need to explore whether youth leadership, which is largely strengths based, conveys any benefits in relation to youth ensuing capacity for resilience. There have been a few brief articles targeted towards adults in relation to resilience and leadership. Kaufman (2006) outlines five steps to becoming a more resilient leader; 1. Keeping your eye on the big picture, 2. Making time for reflection, 3. Learning to say no, 4. Deciding what really matters, 5. Aligning goals and activities. A person’s adaptability to change and capacity to remain motivated when times are challenging appear to be useful in youth leadership, as well as resilience. As will be outlined in the chapter on youth leadership certain skills are necessary to be an effective leader and these are comparable to many of the attributes deemed necessary to be resilient in the face of great difficulty (Benard, 2006; Goleman, 2002).

Section Summary

Resilience as can be seen here plays a pivotal role in the healthy development of a young person, but particularly for those experiencing adversity. This section discussed the literature on resilience focusing on the concept of resilience and the components that enable resilience. Furthermore, this section highlights the importance of considering exposure to risk and protective factors which can lead to resilient or maladaptive behaviour. Relationships and how they impact resilient behaviour was then considered. Finally, this section looked at resilience as it pertains to youth leadership.
2.4 Youth Leadership

Introduction

Youth leadership offers the opportunity of communities to harness their resources to solve problems in new and innovative ways. This section distinguishes youth and adult leadership and goes on to define youth leadership. To gain a good understanding of what influences youth leadership both the theories and styles of leadership will be explored. Further to this, different education models are analysed and components deemed important in developing young leaders are explored. Following this, the influence of gender and adversity are visited. Finally, a distinction is made between civic engagement and youth leadership following which the benefits and limitations of youth leadership are explored.

2.4.1 Distinguishing Youth & Adult Leadership

Youth leadership as distinct from adult leadership focuses on the methods by which leadership can be explored, taught or experienced by young people. These methods include experiential learning (Kolb, 1971) or learning by doing (John Dewey cited in Tanner, 1991) which enable young people develop key skills at a young age. Adult leadership on the other hand is learned in the context of practicing leadership (MacNeill, 2006). Bearing this in mind youth leadership must not only develop skills but also provide opportunities for youth to apply them in meaningful and authentic ways (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; MacNeill 2006). By meaningful MacNeill highlights that decisions must have true impact and consequences, and authentic as referring to real decisions that need to be made for organisations and communities. Indeed much of the adult literature supports and is the foundation upon which youth leadership has developed giving way to emerging approaches, styles and opportunities. However a critical distinction is that youth leadership has a tendency to plan for leadership to be in the future, instead of encouraging young people to take an active leadership role in the present (MacNeill, 2006; Dolan, 2010; Kahn et al., 2009). There are many ways that young people can be leaders. Kahn (2009) highlighted that youth leadership is tied to other areas such as youth development, citizenship, youth action, youth engagement and youth
participation, all of which offer opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles. It is vital therefore that young people be exposed to the opportunities that enable them to experience leadership as well as opportunities that build their desire to become leaders.

Zeldin and Camino (1999) highlight a caution that there is the potential to weaken youth leadership by describing everything as youth leadership when it is not defined properly. This ambiguity, Conner and Strobel (2007) argue may be considered beneficial in enabling flexibility to tailor to the strengths and needs of young people. Van Linden and Fertman (1989, p.8) stated that ‘understanding and appreciating the complexity of leadership is a prerequisite to supporting and challenging teenagers to be the best leaders they can be’. Youth leadership is a growing phenomenon with many programmes available, however few of which have been rigorously evaluated leading to an absence of evidence based youth leadership programmes (MacNeill, 2006; Ricketts & Rudd, 2002; Klau, 2006; Avolio et al., 2009). This study aims to, in some way, redress this imbalance.

2.4.2 Youth Leadership Defined

The exact concept and term leadership is used widely for many different approaches to facilitating change and is often interspersed with management and authority. A multitude of different definitions of leadership exist. Northouse (2004) outlines how some definitions view leadership as the focus of group process, i.e. the leader is the centre of group change and activity. Central to leadership from Northouse's perspective are the following components: leadership is a process, leadership involves influence, leadership occurs within a group context and leadership involves goal attainment. Based on these components he proposes leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse 2004, p.3). To do this however a set of skills are required to ensure the process is directed effectively. Whitehead (2009) argues for a definition of an authentic leader as one who: (1) is self-aware, humble, always seeking improvement, aware of those being led and looks out for the welfare of others; (2) fosters high
degrees of trust by building an ethical and moral framework; and (3) is committed to organisational success within the construct of social values.

The work of Heifetz (1994) highlights that leadership is the ability to mobilise people to face problems, and that communities make progress on problems because leaders challenge and help them to do so. To exercise leadership he argues means providing a vision and influencing others to realise it through non-coercive means. Some other examples of definitions include Chemers (2002) who proposes leadership to be the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. While Wheeler and Edlebeck (2006, p.89) described youth leadership as ‘learning, listening, dreaming and working together to unleash the potential of people’s time, talent and treasure for the common good’. Others have described it as a set of competencies that enable people to lead (Eldeman et al., 2004; Zeldin & Camino, 1999). Kahn et al., (2009, p.6) defined the development of youth leadership ‘as young people empowered to inspire and mobilise themselves and others towards a common purpose, in response to personal and/or social issues and challenges, to effect positive change’.

However, most notable is the recommendation for consistency in the use of the term and the need for embedding theory in its use (Conner & Strobel, 2007; MacNeill, 2006). If leadership is defined as a process through which a set of learned skills and competencies facilitate this process, the position outlined by van Linden and Fertman (1998) that every person is capable of becoming a leader, highlights the potential of programmes to teach these skills.

It is important also to distinguish between youth leadership and youth development at this point as these terms have been used interchangeably. Edelman et al., (2004) highlights that youth development is a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence through activities that help them become competent to be successful or deal with challenges. Youth leadership on the other hand focus on the ability of young people to lead others or get others to work together toward a common goal or vision (Wheeler & Edelbeck, 2006).
2.4.3 Theories & Styles of Leadership

Northouse (2004), Van Wagner (2008) and Kahn et al., (2009) compiled a list of major theories on leadership. These include the Great Man/Trait Theory, Contingency Theory, Situational Theory, Behavioural Theory, Participative Theory, Transactional or Management Theory, Transformational or Relationship Theory and Servant Leadership. An important shift has occurred over time through the conceptualisation of these leadership theories, as each was critiqued as not holding true in different situations. Only those considered relevant to youth leadership development will be discussed in this section.

The Behavioural theory proposes that leaders can be ‘made’, that successful leadership is based on definable, learnable behaviour (Skinner, 1971; Skinner, 1984). People can learn to become leaders by observation and teaching.

Transactional theory believes that people are motivated by reward and punishment (Bass, 1998). Transactional leadership focuses on the exchanges between leaders and their members. For example promotions given on the basis of goals attained.

Transformational theory proposes that people will follow a person who inspires them, one that has vision, enthusiasm and energy (Bass, 1980, 1998). Burns (1978, p.20) saw transformational leadership as a process where leaders and followers engage in a mutual process of ‘raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation’. The core of this theory is that both the leader and follower benefit. As well as highlighting that values and ethics are important. This approach to leadership links in strongly with the team member’s needs and motivations. Hernez-Broome (2004) described transformational leaders as providing a compelling vision of a better future which inspires trust through self-confidence and conviction. This in turn results in performance beyond expectations.

Servant Leadership is an approach which sets out to turn followers into leaders by developing their potential instead of using their leadership role to control others (Daft, 2011). Servant leaders give up control and make a choice
to serve their followers (Greenleaf, 1970). Greenleaf (1970) highlights that the servant leader puts service before self-interest by helping others develop and understand their greater purpose. Servant leaders transcend self-interest to serve the needs of others, help others grow and develop, and provide opportunity for others to gain materially and emotionally (Daft, 2011, p.156). Greenleaf (1970, p.7) highlights that the servant leader ensures that other people’s greatest needs are being met and aims for their followers to ‘become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants’.

Leadership Styles

Different leadership styles have been elucidated over time. Kurt Lewin (1939) identified leadership styles of autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. These categories detail how leaders involve the group in decision making. Autocratic leadership style holds decisions centrally and appears controlling. Democratic leadership style enlists the views of others and involves participation. Laissez-faire leadership style is easy going and offers little or no direction. How decisions are made and a sense of involvement can be pivotal in keeping people within a team committed to its goals. Democratic decision making can ensure participants feel listened to and that their opinion matters. The autocratic style of non-consultation can be excluding and authoritative, while the laissez-faire approach can be too freedom giving.

Goleman et al., (2002) described six styles of leadership and highlighted that it is important to have the capacity to move between these styles should the situation or need arise. These styles include visionary, coaching, affiliative, democratic, pace-setting and commanding. He also highlighted the benefits and drawbacks to each demonstrating the importance of balance and adaptation to the required situation or context to be an effective leader. This demonstrates that with self-awareness leaders can mould themselves into an appropriate leader given the situation, once they know how. Goleman (2006b) stressed emotional intelligence as being more important than intellectual ability when it comes to how people succeed in the world. He illustrates that a person’s ability to relate well with others, express empathy, build capacity, belief and opportunity were critical to leadership success. Some of the theories mentioned
above such as transactional, transformational and servant leadership also act as styles of leadership.

### 2.4.4 Youth Leadership Education Models

Taking the assumption that leaders can be made, as argued by van Linden & Fertman (1998), this then implies that there are certain ingredients essential in the making of great leaders. This section will explore current available youth leadership educational paradigms.

An education model for teaching and developing leadership in youth outlined by Ricketts and Rudd (2002) conceptualised a model to include five dimensions: 1. Leadership knowledge and information. 2. Leadership attitude, will and desire. 3. Decision making, reasoning and critical thinking. 4. Oral and written communication skills. 5. Intra and interpersonal relations. Their focus frames some of the skills required by a leader. This model does however fail to include the ability to collaborate or problem solve. Furthermore, it focuses solely on skills without giving consideration to opportunities to practice these skills.

Research by Roberts (2009) outlined the SEED’s model which represents important attributes required for a leadership programme. These include S: social and emotional competencies that include self-awareness, social awareness and social skills, E: emotional resilience; the ability to cope with shocks or rebuffs that may be short or long-term, E: enterprise, innovation and creativity; the ability to shape situations, imagine alternatives, remain open to new ideas, problem-solve and work in teams, D: discipline: both inner discipline to defer gratification and pursue goals, as well as the ability to cope with external discipline. This model focused strongly on skills, characteristics and discipline however similar to the previous model gave little attention the practice of leadership.

Work by Brendtro (2009) highlights an extension of Maslow’s Hierarchy that for growth and development to occur a person needs four components:
Attachment or belonging; to provide safety and significance. Achievement or mastery; brings knowledge, competence, and esteem. Autonomy or independence; builds efficacy, power, and self actualization. Altruism or generosity; fosters morality, virtue, and self-transcendence. Brendtro has successfully applied this model to youth in leadership and also youth in crisis. This model has many of the components of what is needed for a young person to develop i.e. the ideal conditions for them to be in such as belonging as well as the commitment to action through altruism and achievement. However it is missing the skill set that young people require to be able to engage in some of these processes.

Research carried out by Heifetz (1994) and Klau (2006) outline three components required for leadership development: 1. The need for both technical and adaptive challenges, technical being straightforward problems with clear answers, adaptive challenges having no clear solution and involving values, attitudes and behaviour. 2. Case in point learning which provides on the spot opportunities to explore group dynamics and group learning. 3. Below the neck learning provides practical experiences that challenge participants out of their comfort zone including reflective practice, which offers the space to reflect on what has been learnt and put it into practice in their lives. This model illustrates the importance of reflection for learning to occur, as well as the adaptability of thinking in action. This model focuses very much on the facilitator teasing out the learning for the group through group dynamics, however it also fails to look at the skills and opportunities necessary for the young people to put their reflection and learning into practice.

Research by Boyd (2001) found that the combination of experiential learning and service learning significantly increase youth’s knowledge of leadership skills, such as decision-making, setting goals, working with others and community service. This model more closely fits the combination of experiential learning and individual leadership projects which relate to providing opportunities for leadership. However, it did not look in depth at the leadership skills required of a young person failing to focus on communication skills and commitment to action.
The work of Kahn et al., (2009) outlined a number of key elements important for leadership including authentic opportunities, meeting needs, challenge, support and reflection. This model illuminated the necessity of a programme to have real opportunities for leadership something considered to be a crucial component. However, the model failed to illustrate the particular types of skills that someone faced with authentic leadership opportunities would need to deal with them.

Research by Zeldin and Camino (1999) developed a framework called CO-SAMM – Cause and Outcome, (collective action or having a mission), Skill and Action (skills and mastery), Membership and Modelling (connected and healthy leadership role models). This model looked more at the action and commitment to action aspects as well as having opportunities or causes to lead. It also looks at skill but is not explicit on the types of skills necessary.

An education model by Van Linden and Fertman (1998) summarised youth leadership in five dimensions: leadership knowledge, attitude, communication skills, decision making and stress management. They summarised three stages of youth leadership development as awareness, interaction and integration. This approach looks at the skills and attitudes necessary however does not explore the application of those skills.

Finally, research by Wang and Wang (2009) propose a model which incorporates individual and team leadership. Within the individual leadership are components such as self-confidence, learning skills and critical thinking, within team leadership are a sense of responsibility, inspiring and encouragement, interpersonal skills and decision-making. This approach focuses on skills and attitude, however fails to consider opportunity and action.

Many of these educational paradigms bring attention to the importance of skills development, with fewer focusing on opportunities to exercise those skills and the motivation required to achieve action. It is important that youth leadership programmes be framed in the context of theory, so that they are best placed to enable young people to meet the challenges of real leadership opportunities. A
tentative conceptual model which brings together the components illustrated here and gaps identified will be presented later in this chapter.

2.4.5 Youth Leadership Programmes

A meta-analysis of youth leadership development literature by Ricketts and Rudd (2002) highlights the lack of research and application of teaching adolescents leadership. Avolio et al., (2009) carried out a meta-analysis of adult leadership interventions and found that leadership interventions do impact on a variety of outcomes with theories focused on behavioural change having the greater impact. A growing body of research indicates that there is value to youth participation in leadership programmes, however few have been proven, thus highlighting further the need for research in this area (Rickets & Rudd, 2002; Murphy & Johnson, 2011; Min & Bin, 2010). Chapter 4, the context chapter will outline the current available research in respect of youth leadership programmes.

2.4.6 Supporting Youth People in Becoming Leaders

When considering how to support young people in becoming leaders three distinct areas emerged from the literature namely; leadership skills, environmental conditions and action. Each of which will be discussed next.

2.4.6.1 Developing Leadership Skills

Skills and competency development are fundamental to the belief that leaders can be made (van Linden & Fertman, 1998; Northouse, 2004). In the context of skills, concepts such as social and emotional intelligence, collaboration, articulation, and insight and knowledge will be explored.

2.4.6.1.1 Social and Emotional Intelligence

Research shows that a leader's emotional resonance with others is a better predictor of effective executive leadership than their general intelligence (Hernez-Broome, 2004; Goleman et al., 2002). Emotional intelligence in leaders involves; self awareness - understanding strengths and weakness, self
regulation - being in control over your emotions, motivation - using inner drive to accomplish tasks, empathy - understanding another person’s point of view and social skills - relating well to others (Goleman, 2006b). Boyatzis and Goleman (2001) built on these aspects, outlining four components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Similarly, Roberts (2009) also highlights that social and emotional competence is a critical component to youth leadership. In many ways to be capable of leading other people one must know themselves well, they must know their own strengths as well as their weakness. In so doing, they can build on their strengths and maximise their potential while also enabling other people, strong in areas they are weak, to contribute and receive recognition for it (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Self-control and self-awareness helps reduce the chance of developing cognitive distortions such as taking things personally, mindreading or magnify situations (Department of Human Services, 2008). Having self-control and self-management means that youth can understand when things are not working and know how to deal with them appropriately (Covey 1989, 1991). Mumford et al., (2000) also highlighted the importance of social judgement skills such that it is important to understand situations and respond appropriately. Young leaders must have a strong ability to relate to others, this will help them in ensuring their cause or vision is relevant to the people they lead (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Carnegie (1936) illustrates that the number one way of getting people around to your way of thinking is by relating to people. He demonstrates how people are more open to new ideas and sometimes doing things they would never consider if at first a person spends time relating to them, is interested in them and understands them. Kouzes and Posner (2007) highlight that leaders need to understand their followers, including their hopes and dreams, enabling them better enlist their support towards a common ideal. Ultimately, what this means is that the leader must spend time on personal development and building an awareness of how they are in their interactions with others as well as how they relate their vision to others.

2.4.6.1.2 Collaboration

Being able to work with other people in a way that ensures that everyone feels there is fair and just recognition of their time and commitment as well as their
ideas is something that is vital to sustaining an effective team (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). In any establishing team the group dynamics of forming, norming, storming, performing and adjourning apply (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). As the team comes together there is the initial settling period, followed by a phase where the team normalise to one another, this is then followed by a stage of uncertainty as people try to find their roles within the group, once established the group can then move on to contributing meaningfully and once complete reviewing and recognising the work that was done. As part of any group process there are times of conflict and disagreement, the role of the leader is to enable the team work well together particularly under conditions where there are differences of opinion. The leader requires skills in conflict resolution, team building, problem solving and decision making (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Rickets & Rudd, 2002; Boyd, 2001; Mumford, 2000). Covey (1989) highlights the importance of teamwork in finding solutions to problems by bringing people together which can produce better results than each person could individually. All of these skills help the team to work cohesively together towards their common goal. By having a leader who is sensitive to the challenges of enabling different personalities to work together as well as recognising the contribution of each team member, mean that the team can then work well despite challenges that it faces (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

### 2.4.6.1.3 Articulation

Being able to share a vision with others to gain their support requires good communication skills both oral and written (Rickets & Rudd, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). This means that the leader must be able to develop a convincing argument which encourages others to support their ideas. Covey (1991) highlights further the pivotal role communication skills play in leadership in their ability to get their point across clearly and effectively. Gardner (1987) drew attention to the fact that communication skills are probably the most pivotal skill to have in leadership as it is the ‘all purpose instrument of leadership’ as this enables them to share ideas and influence others. Being able to communicate effectively with other people means that the leader needs to have a clear vision and know how to communicate this effectively to others (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). For example, Dr. King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech.
communicated a vision by enabling people to see and feel how their own interests and aspirations were aligned to the vision he illustrated (cited in Shriberg et al., 2005). His speech illuminated an ideal world worth working towards. This enabled others to share his vision of the future and generated and action necessary for change. Articulating a vision is vital to enlisting the commitment of others. It is also what enables a road map be created, ‘If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll probably end up somewhere else’ – Campbell (1974). This highlights further, the importance of clarity in communication of the end goal. Furthermore, a person with a great vision who is unable to communicate it is not going to be effective in gaining support for their cause. Similarly, a person who has great communication skills but no vision is not going to have the road map to where they want to go. Exposure to a multitude of experiences where young people get to practice their communication skills helps to shape the brain for good communication skills into adulthood (Begley, 2000; Giedd, 1999). Harnessing these skills early in adolescent development enable young people overcome the challenges of speaking in public, gain confidence in their opinion and contribute to society.

2.4.6.1.4 Insight and Knowledge

Developing knowledge of a particular subject matter is important in leadership. To be able to lead people effectively it is necessary to be able to demonstrate some level of adeptness in the particular area (Shriberg et al., 2005). Being able to think critically about a topic requires that there is a good understanding of the topic. Trust and confidence in the leader are essential for the team to perform and this is highly related to the leader’s knowledge (Politis, 2003). Mumford et al., (2000) also highlight that knowledge is a core skill to leadership, this is strongly linked to being able to problem solve which forms part of what can be considered technical skills outlined by Katz (1955). Within the context of insight and knowledge it is also important for a leader to work within an ethical frame of reference (Gardner, 1995). Ethics in leadership are an important aspect of knowledge, as to have a good knowledge of what is right and what is wrong in leadership requires a level of moral judgement which can only come from the insight into the consequences of decisions (Northouse, 2004, p.302). Ethical leaders strive for fairness, take on responsibility, fulfil
commitments, serve others and show courage by standing up for what is right (Zauderer, 1992). Ethics in leadership means that leaders model their actions on solid ethical principles incorporating honesty and integrity. Honesty and integrity are considered the foundation of trust between leaders and followers (Daft, 2011).

2.4.6.2 Environmental Conditions

When considering leadership the environmental context in which it occurs is important. Situational Theory illustrates that different situations may call for different types of engagement (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).

2.4.6.2.1 Authentic Opportunities

Participation of young people can be either authentic and genuine or merely tokenistic as illustrated by Hart (1992). Using a ‘Ladder of Participation’ he describes how young people can either be at the top levels of the ladder i.e. youth completely initiate action and lead, or youth share in the decision making with adults, compared to at the lower levels where young people are involved in activities in a tokenistic way, they are decorated or manipulated to make organisations ‘seem’ like they are doing the ‘right thing’. Galdwell (2008) highlights how people who gain access to opportunity at a young age succeed by virtue of their exposure to practice which develops their skills. He describes how the circumstances in Bill Gates life meant that he had access to opportunity which enabled him to build up his technology skill set from a very early age. As well as this he highlights that it was the opportunity and exposure that Mozart had from a young age that meant he had built up the skill to compose works of art by his early 20’s. In a similar vein, young people are encouraged to seek out and seize the initiative by Kouzes & Posner (2007) to become effective leaders. Kahn et al., (2009) also highlights the importance of authentic opportunity, for young people to take on responsibility of leadership they need to be given genuine opportunities where they get to practice real leadership and learn. Buckingham and Clifton (2001, p.224) theorised that ‘two assumptions guide the world’s best leaders, firstly each person’s talents are enduring and unique, and second each person’s greatest room for growth is in
the areas of his or her greatest strength’. This encourages young people to look to areas they are genuinely interested, where they can grow and stand a stronger chance of translating their interest into youth leadership.

Within the context of opportunity, having the opportunity to give beyond oneself is an important component of leadership. Work by Brendtro (2009) highlights that generosity is important for young people in their development and also in leadership. He highlights that without giving young people do not get the opportunity to see how they can contribute positively to others. In essence, it is this altruistic action that encourages young people to get involved in their communities. Giving, is thus an important part of leadership, particularly as much of leadership is giving time, ideas, support, commitment and attitude to enable others follow (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Generosity can also be seen as how people judge others, their tolerance, forgiveness and ability to understand others (Smith, 1997). Within the context of giving gratitude is also an important component. When it comes to gratitude, Kouzes & Posner (2007) highlight that recognising people’s contributions is of the utmost importance. By giving personal recognition to team members it creates a sense of appreciation which is encouraging and motivates the team to commit to working towards the goal. Gratitude in leadership is important as often a simple thank you or recognition in front of others can yield the equivalent release of dopamine as a financial win-fall this activates the neural reward circuity (Rock, 2009).

2.4.6.2.2 Mentor Access

When considering environmental conditions access to a mentor can be seen as an important component of this. Having access to a mentor for a leader can assist in helping them overcome challenges, doubts and inspire them to continue on their path (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Camino and Zeldin (2002b) outline the importance of youth-adult partnerships which confer further benefits to human capital. As well as this they argue that there is a complex set of skills, behaviours, actions and attitudes to be developed which are best nurtured through hands on learning between youth and adults. Some of the support conveyed by mentors is covered through social support. However, having
access to a mentor and guide can also be a significant contributor in particular as they share their wisdom, support and expertise (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000; Ellen & Gary, 2003). A component of this is receiving which is being open to receiving support, help and advice when necessary (Unchino, 2009).

2.4.6.3 Action

Commitment to action involves motivating others and mastering the leaders skill set. Action is an important element as people can have the skills necessary and the opportunities to exercise them, however unless they take action there can be no leadership.

2.4.6.3.1 Motivating

Motivating others refers to forces either internal or external to a person that stimulate enthusiasm and persistence to pursue a certain course of action (Draft, 2011, p.200). Motivating others is of particular importance to a leader, particularly if they are to achieve their goal. Kouzes & Posner (1995) highlight that leadership is an ‘affair of the heart’, it requires passionate commitment so the goal can be achieved. Without engaging people in the belief that something is worth working towards it will be difficult to mobilise followers. A key part of motivating others is also inspiring them. Inspiring others involves persuading them to pursue a shared vision (Shriberg, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Inspiring and motivating others is a difficult task, it requires good communication skills but more than this it requires a belief that the cause is worth working towards (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). For leaders to motivate others, they need to have an understanding of the needs of those they are trying to lead (Shriberg et al., 2005). Belief that the efforts of the team are not in vain, that they will accrue some greater benefit is needed to ensure the team weather challenges that invariably arise in working towards a shared goal. Coyle (2009) highlights that igniting a passion is a key component to engaging someone in wanting to go further with something. This, he argues can be as simple as seeing what someone else does, hearing about something or doing something that sparks an interest which leads to commitment (Coyle, 2009).
Further to this, meaning and purpose can help to fuel a team member’s motivation (Frankl, 1985; Gardner, 1990; Covey, 1991). Frankl’s (1985) emphasis on meaning as a driving factor in behaviour cannot be understated. As he illustrates for many in World War II having a sense of meaning or purpose was the difference between surviving and dying. Having meaning, he believes, maintained levels of humanity and dignity as well as helped to inspire others to survive against the odds. He illustrates this further with this quote ‘he who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how’ (Nietzsche cited in Frankl, 1985, p.97). Similarly, for any leadership cause whether it is one that faces severe adversity or one that looks at community or social change, to inspire others into action requires creating a vision that has meaning and purpose, and appeals to the values of others (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Within this is the need to be a good role model, so that the actions of the leader are worthy of following and that the leader is trustworthy as seen by setting a good example (Zeldin & Camino, 1999). All of which help determine whether a follower is motivated to give their time, energy and commitment to the leaders cause.

2.4.6.3.2 Mastering

Having the ability to stick at something until one has mastered it requires persistence, reflection, an ability to learn from mistakes and commitment (Coyle, 2009). Coyle (2009) takes this further by highlighting that for a person to gain proficiency in any area they need the equivalent of 10,000 hours of application or ‘deep practice’ in that area which leads to them mastering that skill set. When considering people proficient in their field for example, an athlete, musician or scientist to be adept requires persistence, commitment and critical reflection (Coyle, 2009). Roberts (2009) refers to determination and its relevance to leadership in that determination enables a person to meet and overcome challenges, which can be frequent for leaders. Great leaders do not give up, they have persistence and determination that enables them to push on through any challenge. Churchill is noted to have given the shortest speech to a group of school students simply and powerfully – ‘Never, never, never, never give up’ (cited in Shriberg et al., 2005, p.145). Mastering involves this level of persistence and commitment, it requires the ability to stick at something despite it being difficult and it also requires the person having the ability to reflect on
what is being done so they can learn how to do it better (Brendtro, 2009; Gardner, 1995). The importance of reflection is once again reiterated by Kouzes & Posner (2007) as they highlight the need to learn from experience by conducting post and pre mortems which encourages critical analysis and improvement, and ultimately the ability to master a new skill set.

2.4.6.4 Gender

Despite the unacceptability of overt gender discrimination and growing awareness that females are capable leaders, females remain underrepresented in positions of leadership (Agar, 2004; Brown, 2005). Rosselli and Taylor (1997) highlight that youth leadership education for young females is critical to develop leadership skills, particularly, as unlike their male peers they often attribute success to external forces rather than themselves. Furthermore, Gilligan’s (1981) research on moral development finds that females come from a care perspective and focus on interpersonal relations of care, responsibility and interdependence. Males on the other hand tend to have a justice perspective focusing on abstract rights and separateness. These differing perspectives can have implications in terms of their ensuing leadership decision making. Ryan and Haslam (2005, 2007) find unequal representation of females at top levels in organisations, females tend to find themselves leading units that are in difficulty and may experience the ‘glass cliff’ effect. A lack of formal and informal supports, absence of role models, mentoring and exclusion from professional networks, increased tokenism, isolation, alienation and prejudice all contribute to these occurrences (Ryan et al., 2007). These challenges stress the need for more female leadership initiatives to develop the skill, overcome the lack of support and include greater exposure to mentoring opportunities and equality.

2.4.6.5 Adversity

Moving from a deficit model of working, towards an asset’s based approach yields potential benefits for marginalised young people and those experiencing adversity. Research by Bennis and Thomas (2002, p.39) argue that it is the way that people deal with adversity that enables them to inspire confidence, loyalty
and hard work in other people. Their study found that ‘the most reliable indicator and predictor of true leadership was in an individual’s ability to find meaning in negative events and to learn from even the most trying circumstances’. The experience of adversity, whether resulting in internalising or externalising behaviour can have a profound effect on well-being, mental health and ability to do well in life as discussed in the section on adolescent development. Bennis and Thomas (2002, p.40) believe that ‘the skills required to overcome adversity are the same ones as the skills required to make for extraordinary leaders’. As such leadership can provide young people experiencing adversity with the opportunity to effect change and influence their surroundings as well as offer respite from their own personal hardship (Cotterell, 1996).

2.4.6.6 Other Factors for Consideration

Indeed there is a plethora of research which cannot be contained in this literature review for example, leadership in delinquent youth, leadership in LGBT youth. Furthermore, Neff’s work on self-compassion and Lustig’s work on cultural competence are also beyond the scope of this review.

2.4.7 Distinctions between Youth Leadership and Civic Engagement

All forms of youth leadership may be considered civic engagement, however not all civic engagement may be considered youth leadership. For example Haste and Hogan (2006) illustrate that there are three modes of civic engagement including voting, helping and making one’s voice heard which those motivated to civic action engage in. They found that 75% of young British people are engaged in civic action illustrating that young people are eager to have their voices heard and participate in civic life. This figure would not translate over to the number of youth in positions of leadership. Similarly, Finlay & Flanagan (2009) look at four areas of civic engagement; voting, volunteering, civic media use and motivation to serve others. Camino and Zeldin (2002a) outline various pathways for young people to participate civically including public policy consultation, community coalitions, youth infusion in organisational decision making, youth organising initiatives and
service learning. Youth leadership was defined earlier as ‘learning, listening, dreaming and working together to unleash the potential of people’s time, talent and treasure for the common good’ (Wheeler & Edlebeck, 2006, p.89). Leadership enables people work together to achieve a common goal. Civic engagement on the other hand can encompass all aspects of youth leadership which is ultimately about serving society. However, actions such as voting and volunteering do not necessarily constitute leadership.

2.4.8 Benefits of Youth Leadership to Community

The benefits of youth leadership to civic engagement are enhanced community action and an awareness of how young people can affect change in their communities (Best & Dustan, 2008). These benefits Shugurensky (2003, p.12) argues are rich and encompass both social connection and related physical well-being. Anderson et al., (2006) found in their study that those who participated in youth leadership training were more likely than those who did not to feel an improved sense of support from their local communities. As well as this Dolan (2010) associated many positive benefits with civic engagement including: deepening existing relationships and accessing new ones, reciprocity of support, increase in self and external sources of esteem and respite from focusing on one’s own difficulties.

Gardner (1987 cited in SRDC, 1996) recognises that young people are born into a society that is huge, impersonal and intricately organised. Far from calling them to leadership, it appears indifferent. This highlights that it is difficult for young people to feel that any action that they might take will affect change in their society which appears unwieldy. A report by Southern Rural Development Centre (1996) argues that we should see young people as both a resource and as actors in their community. They highlight that young people can make significant contributions, however if left out young people it can mean that the capacity of the community to resolve its own problems is limited. By involving young people in leadership opportunities communities essentially breathe life into their resources. A call to action of young people as contributors to their environment has the potential not only to impact the community on a physical
problem solving level, it also has the capacity to build social networks, social support and enhance the resilience of the young people involved (SRDC, 1996).

2.4.9 Limitations of Leadership Development in Young People

Leadership and leadership programmes are not the answer to all problems, indeed they too have limitations and drawbacks. Limitations in terms of programmes include tokenistic opportunities, programmes which have lack a theoretical underpinning or expressed outcomes, programmes that claim to be leadership when in fact they are something else (Klau, 2006; Kahn, et al., 2009). With leadership comes added responsibility, less time for detail and the need to trust in those delegated to (Grensing-Pophal, 1997). Increased responsibility as well as a reduced amount of time to be able to spend on detail can be limiting for leaders resulting in key pieces of information being overlooked. Limitations to leadership are the unfortunate exposure to leadership with an absence of value on human rights and human life, leading to racism and genocide which has been seen throughout history (Ervin, 2003). Other limitations to leadership may include the attitudes of others, disability and sexual orientation (Edelman et al., 2004; Johnson, 1999; Wilson-Kovacs et al., 2008). As well as this, the tall poppy syndrome which can see leaders be criticised because of their achievements can limit youths desire to be leaders (Gordon, 1999; Haley, 2007).

Section Summary

This section explored the current available literature in relation to youth leadership with reference to some adult leadership theories. This comprised of investigating definitions of youth leadership, the theories and styles in relation to leadership, and current youth leadership education models. This section also looked at the components necessary to develop young leadership namely; skills, environment and action. As well as this the influence of gender and adversity were explored. Finally, a distinction was made between civic engagement and youth leadership, following which the benefits and limitations of youth leadership were explored. The available research in respect to youth leadership programmes will be discussed in the Chapter 4.
2.5 Conceptual Model

Introduction

The conceptual model presented in this section looks to explore the interrelationship between social support, resilience and youth leadership. While also building on the educational paradigms described earlier in relation to the components useful for youth leadership development in the areas of skills development, environmental conditions and also commitment to action. This section looks at the rationale for having a youth leadership conceptual model, part of which revisits adolescent development, social support and resilience in relation to youth leadership. Following this, a tentative conceptual model is presented which incorporates; skills, environmental conditions, action, resilience and social support as they relate to youth leadership. This conceptual model aims to provide a framework to evaluate the youth leadership programme outlined in Chapter 4. This model should not be viewed as static, it is dynamic and incorporates a high degree of interdependence between the variables.

2.5.1 Youth Leadership Conceptual Model Rationale

This leads us to a point where we can summarise key concepts developed thus far in this thesis. The rationale for the development of this conceptual model is that there is currently no model which a) looks at the relationship between social support, resilience and youth leadership and b) which looks in depth at all the necessary components to developing young leaders. It must be noted that not all aspects of the tentative conceptual model are tested out completely as the study focuses mainly on the overarching concepts of connecting youth leadership with resilience and social support.

Part I

Part I of the conceptual model brings together concepts of adolescent development, resilience and social support and how they relate to youth leadership development. The model presented joins together these concepts in a way that explores their relevance in normative adolescent development and in the development of a young person experiencing adversity. The association
between these concepts will be tested in the research to explore the correlation between these elements and add to the lack of literature that currently exists in this area.

Table 2.1 Key Factors from each Theoretical Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Area</th>
<th>Key Factors</th>
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| Adolescent Development | • Adolescence as a transition period  
                          • Normative Development encompassing physical, emotional, social and moral development  
                          • Non-normative development including internalising and externalising behaviours  
                          • Relationships influence on adolescent development |
| Social Support    | • Understanding the concept of social support  
                          • Types of social support: emotional, esteem, concrete and advice  
                          • Social support networks  
                          • Sources of support in relationships with: parents, peers, siblings and other adults as well as community  
                          • Connecting social support and leadership |
| Resilience        | • Understanding the concept of resilience  
                          • Risk and protective factors  
                          • The influence relationships have in resilience  
                          • Cultural context  
                          • Community resilience  
                          • Connecting resilience to leadership |
| Youth Leadership  | • Understanding the distinction between youth and adult leadership  
                          • Leadership theories and styles explored  
                          • Youth Leadership education models  
                          • Supporting skills development in young people  
                          • Benefits of youth leadership  
                          • Limitations of youth leadership  
                          • Making the distinction between youth leadership and civic engagement |

2.5.2 Adolescent Development and Youth Leadership

During adolescence there is an inherent degree of uncertainty, change and development. As explored earlier in this chapter normative adolescent development involves physical, emotional, social and moral development. For adolescents who experience adversity this may disrupt their development and lead to either internalising or externalising maladaptive behaviours. When considering adolescence as a transition period there are many opportunities to
cultivate positive well-being if youth are encouraged to focus on their strengths and abilities, and build on them. Similarly, for youth experiencing adversity, opportunities may present themselves where they gain some reprieve from their stresses which ultimately enhance their resilience and support network. If a focus on adolescence is taken which looks at young people with potential and sets out to cultivate that, whether in normative development or maladaptive development, then young people stand a stronger chance at finding the good and the great in themselves and living up to that potential. Having an understanding of neuroscience which indicates that exposure to simulation can lay new neural pathways in adolescent brains. This highlights the opportunities this period presents in terms of making substantial positive changes. Engagement in activities which actively set out to lay new neural pathways to enhance skills in communication, conflict resolution, social and emotional intelligence, sense of self etc., harnesses this sensitive developmental period intelligently for the benefit of the individual and society. Such exposure to real opportunities can lead to the development of skills which are beneficial for the rest of their lives.

2.5.3 Social Support and Youth Leadership

Social support as described earlier is considered crucial to the positive development of young people. Without proper sounding boards and people to bolster youth in relation to necessary supports such as practical, emotional, esteem or advice supports, young people would find it hard to navigate their way through the myriad of challenges that face them in adolescence.

Normative Adolescent

For normative adolescence, it is hypothesised that these young people enlist their social support to become leaders. Having good social support suggests that young people may be more likely to take up opportunities that they see as they are encouraged by their support network. They may even be more likely to see opportunities that others might not because they have people encouraging them and so have a greater sense that they could take on an initiative. Their social support network offers advice and encouragement to them when they consider
taking on leadership roles. They also obtain practical support which enables them to take on leadership roles for example, financial support and transport to and from activities. As well as this, they enlist emotional support when their leadership journey becomes a challenge. For the normative adolescent this process involves having a support network that is accessible and one that is responsive to their needs. As seen in figure 2.1 for the normative adolescent by enlisting social support they may feel they have greater agency and self-belief when taking on a leadership role. Conversely, leadership can also strengthen their social support as the young leader accesses additional people for support through their leadership network or uses their current network to a greater degree.

*Youth Experiencing Adversity*

Young people facing adversity can find that their involvement in leadership enables them access a range of social support in the form of their peers, facilitators or the community which may not have been available to them previously. Many young people who contribute to their community receive positive recognition for the work that they do. This in turn can yield a perception of availability of additional supports in the community, whether accessed or not and impact ultimately on the young person’s sense of support. For young people experiencing adversity engagement in youth leadership may in fact offer them social support that they otherwise would be without. As seen in figure 2.1. they may access a larger network who they may not have previously had the opportunity to meet and access supports from such as mentors, programme participants etc., Alternatively, their life situations may lead them to be in leadership roles for example, young carers who take on leadership roles in the home (OMCYA, 2010). These roles are not typically seen as traditional leadership roles however their contribution, responsibility and interactions as a result may yield greater access to additional formal and informal social support and enable greater resilience. Furthermore, research into child labour in Brazil has found their engagement in labour to be a contributor to children’s capacity to function normally and is not always a sign of significant adversity (Trzesniak et al., 2012). As seen in figure 2.1 by virtue of
the life situation this can confer the role of leader and bring associated benefits in social support.

In this study social support is considered important for young leaders so they can access resources, seek help and assistance when necessary thus enabling them to lead more effectively. As part of this research the association between leadership and social support will be further investigated.

**Figure 2.1 Connecting Youth Leadership, Resilience and Social Support**

![Diagram](image.png)

### 2.5.4 Resilience and Youth Leadership

Resilience as described earlier is essentially the capacity to ‘bounce back’ when exposed to significant risk factors or stressors. This ability to recover after challenge or particularly stressful situations is something that is important not just in life but also in leadership. Leaders are faced with challenges when working as part of a team, from making difficult decisions to sometimes getting it wrong. Resilience in leadership is of the utmost importance particularly for young people who may be faced not only with the challenges of dealing with other people but also the challenges of dealing with their own doubts and uncertainty about their leadership capability. Samuel Beckett put it aptly when he said ‘try again, fail again, fail better’. It is this idea of continually learning from mistakes and starting again that make for successful leaders, and resilient people; the two in many ways are akin.

*Normative Adolescent*

For the normative adolescent this model theorises that resilience is enlisted by young leaders in their capacity to deal with the challenges of leading a team, such as challenging their team, ensuring commitment and motivation, the
management of personalities, uneven workloads, disagreements, etc., Resilience can also be enabled through the process of becoming a leader in that the exposure to mentors, skills, ideas and opportunities for learning can enable greater capacity to withstand stressful situations and adversity in the future. As seen in figure 2.1 the very involvement of the young person in a leadership role may enable greater resilience by virtue of having a goal or vision to work towards and having a team of people to enable them work towards that goal. Conversely, the fact that a young person can be resilient may lead them to greater opportunities whereby the can fulfil leadership roles. For example, they may be seen by people in their schools or communities as being capable of taking on a leadership role and so recruited to such a position.

*Youth Experiencing Adversity*

In terms of the young people experiencing adversity, their very life experience can enable resilience, for example being in a position where the young person had to care for siblings or parents could lead to enhancing their resilience (OMCYA, 2010). Furthermore, other traumatic events may have occurred in their life through which they developed resilience and commitment to withstand whatever comes their way. Figure 2.1 highlights this further in that a young person may have an enhanced capacity for resilience because of the leadership they need to display everyday in their life. Conversely, their resilience in the face of adversity may mean they put themselves in situations where they can then get involved in civic society or youth leadership and gain youth leadership status from their resilience. Therefore the leadership opportunities may indeed offer a young person respite from their adversity. This research will investigate the association between resilience and leadership in young people.

**Part II**

**2.5.5 Towards’ a Tentative Conceptual Model of Youth Leadership**

Coming from the perspective that leaders can be made, this then implies that there are certain components that are particularly useful in the making of great leaders. Part II builds on the previous critique of the available education models and outlines a model that joins up the thinking in relation to youth leadership
development. The model brings together the underpinning theories to an active model of youth leadership incorporating skills development, environmental conditions and action.

2.5.6 Leadership Skills

As described in the section on youth leadership it was illustrated that a number of skills are considered important in the role of young leader. As such youth leadership offers young people the opportunity to develop their skill set, work closely with others, lead change, and use their creativity to benefit themselves and society. This model illuminates the skills which the literature points to being important in youth leadership development. The model also illustrates that while skills are important they are not the only thing necessary to develop a leader. Therefore, at the base of the pyramid are skills (see figure 2.2) these include social and emotional intelligence, as Goleman (2006a, 2006b) illustrates are important in a person’s capacity to understand themselves as well as relate to others. Collaboration is the next important skill set within the component and includes the ability to work in a team, problem solve, resolve conflicts and make decisions. Following on from this, is the ability to articulate, within this component are communication skills both oral and written including presentation skills. Insight and knowledge are the final set of skills for the base layer of the pyramid within this component are critical thinking, having evidence or knowledge to support decisions as knowledge directly impacts decision making. Finally, working from an ethical or moral framework is also considered important in terms of having insight and knowledge of the consequences of actions.
2.5.7 Environmental Conditions

Similar to Bronfenbrener’s (1979) consideration of the context in which youth develop, the context in which young leaders develop is of equal importance. Having the right environmental conditions in this model can be conceptualised as having the availability of opportunities for leadership and having access to mentors who can guide an individual through their leadership journey (see figure 2.3). Youth with skills but little or no opportunity to exercise those skills and demonstrate agency cannot then be considered leaders. Like a seed they have potential but without soil to grow will fail to realise this potential. Therefore, authentic opportunity as discussed earlier is a vital component to youth leadership development, in particular, that it is not tokenistic but is meaningful and offers the space for genuine experience to be gained. This then enables the young person to experience giving to their community or larger society in some way. As well as this, access, a mentor or a guide can provide substantial benefit in the form of support, advice and guidance to a young leader, particularly when dealing with situations that they may not have encountered before. This enables the young person to experience receiving from someone else.
2.5.8 Action

The final component of this model is action. Once a young person has the skills and the opportunity to exercise those skills, they then need to move into action. Youth leadership is by its very nature action oriented (see figure 2.4). Without action there can be no leadership. Within the context of action motivating others to follow their lead is a large component. They must inspire others to give up their time, energy and resources in pursuit of a goal. This requires that they instil a purpose in the goal they are seeking to achieve, that is it must be meaningful to the followers. They must also role model behaviour that is worth following and could even be considered transformational in some ways. Once the young leader has a team to collaborate with they can begin mastering their skill set as a leader. This requires persistence in the face of challenges and uncertainty. This persistence can help to realise a desired goal. Furthermore, critical reflection which encourages growth and improvement are pivotal to youth learning to master new skills. This model may be seen akin to a mountain as there are many stages to travel, however each is interlinked and ultimately express the ideal situation for a young leader to make the most of their skill set, their environment and what they do with it their action.
Figure 2.4 Action
Figure 2.5 Youth Leadership Conceptual Model

Part I

Normative Adolescence Development

Youth Leadership

Environmental Conditions

Part II

Skills

Enlisting Social Support

Enabling Resilience

Youth Leadership

Enlisting Social Support

Enabling Resilience

Social & Emotional Intelligence
- Self-awareness
- Relate to others
- Confidence

Collaborate
- Team build
- Problem solving
- Conflict resolution
- Decision making

Articulate
- Communicate
- Oral/Written
- Presentation skills

Insight & Knowledge
- Critical Thinking
- Evidence/Facts
- Ethics

Action

Mastering
- Persist
- Reflect

Motivating
- Role Model
- Purpose

Authentic Opportunity
- Participation
- Giving

Mentor Access
- Guidance
- Receiving

Young Person Experiencing Adversity
2.6 **Summary**

This chapter has explored in detail the literature from four thematic areas, namely adolescent development, social support theory, resilience theory and youth leadership. The section on adolescent development included components on the history and definition of adolescence, normative development, non-normative development and relationships. The section on social support theory explored the concept of social support, the types of social support, the quality of social support, social support networks, sources of support and connected social support to youth leadership. The section on resilience theory explored the concept of resilience, risk and protective factors, communities influence on resilience, relationships and connected resilience to youth leadership. The section on youth leadership explored theories and styles of youth leadership, youth leadership education models, distinctions between youth leadership and civic engagement, as well as the benefits and limitations of youth leadership. Finally, this chapter presented a tentative conceptual model which hypothesises the interconnection between youth leadership, resilience and social support forming the basis of this research. The tentative conceptual model also illustrates core components deemed important in the development of a young leader including skills, environmental conditions and action. In the next chapter the methodology of the study will be discussed.
Chapter Two: Literature Review
Chapter Three: Methodology

3 Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used to address the research questions of this study. The rationale, aims and objectives are outlined in Section 3.1 as well as a table which illustrates how the objectives are connected to the research tools. Following this, Section 3.2 describes how the study was designed, this includes considering epistemological approaches, outlining the research approach taken to meet the objectives of this study and details the instruments used for data collection. Finally, Section 3.3 outlines how the study was implemented and this includes the sampling, ethical considerations, implementation process and the limitations of the methods chosen.

3.1 Section One: Rationale, Aim and Objectives

This section will look at the rationale for this study which includes exploring the value of youth leadership and whether it has a viable contribution to make to the development of resilience and social support. As well as this the importance of evidence-based/informed practice will be explored. Following this rationale the research will outline the aim and core objectives to this study.

Youth leadership as discussed in Chapter 2 is a growing area of interest for practitioners and researchers. Unlike adult leadership which has been well documented, youth leadership has surprisingly few examples of robust research which illustrate the outcomes of involvement. Evaluated youth leadership programmes are in the main qualitative and those which involve quantitative approaches fail to look at the longitudinal influence these programmes have (Conner & Strobel, 2007; Lee et al., 2008; Anderson et al., 2007). The potential of youth leadership to have a profound and lasting impact on a young person, their skills, their sense of self and their capacity to contribute meaningfully to their community is an area of untapped exploration, particularly in Ireland. Furthermore, whether involvement in the youth leadership programme confers
any additional benefit to a young person’s capacity for resilience or ability to access social support is largely unknown.

The need is growing to ensure that programmes young people are involved in demonstrate their outcomes at funder levels. As well as this, practitioners want to ensure that the time they spend working with young people can yield results. As such the opportunity to explore the capacity of the youth leadership programme to achieve its goals and to contribute further to increasing a young person’s resilience and social support is timely. Working in an evidence-based/informed way has become increasingly the focus of youth development work in Ireland. However, to-date there is a lack of research pertaining to what constitutes effective practice in youth leadership in Ireland.

Evidence-based practice has been defined as the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of the best available scientific evidence in professional decision making (Sackett et al., 1997). Essentially what this means is that interventions in an evidence-based framework should have sufficient empirical evidence to support their ability to achieve their desired outcomes (Rosen & Proctor, 2002). Rosen & Proctor (2002) elaborate evidence-based practice to comprise three aspects: 1) intervention decisions are based on empirical, research-based support, 2) critical assessment of empirically supported interventions to determine their fit to and appropriateness for the practice situation at hand and 3) regular monitoring and revision of the intervention based on outcome evaluation. Particularly attractive is the ability to stand over a programme and demonstrate to funders and programme recipients a like that participation does confer a benefit to those involved.

Evidence-based practice guides professional decisions with two distinct principles (Courmoryer & Powers, 2002 cited in Roberts & Yeager, 2004). Firstly, that practice is grounded on previous research which demonstrates empirically that distinct activities with a particular group produce desired outcomes. Secondly, that every group should undergo separate evaluation to assess the extent to which the predicted outcomes are realised as a result of the programme and the facilitator’s actions. This focus on evidence-based practice provides a valuable guide to the researcher in exploring the influence this
particular youth leadership programme has on the young people involved. The study will focus on exploring the connection, if any, between youth leadership programme involvement and the capacity of normative youth and youth experiencing adversity, to enable resilience and enlist social support.

3.1.1 Situating the Author in this Study

The author’s interest in the topic for this study comes from working as a youth worker in Foróige, the National Youth Development Organisation in Ireland. As well as this, other work as both a volunteer and youth worker has led the author to work closely with young people in the youth work setting with a focus on enabling them to overcome challenges, and build a positive focus in their lives in a strengths and skills based way. The author is currently the manager of Foróige’s Best Practice Unit – a unit which is committed to developing needs-led, outcomes focused and evidence based programmes. Her role is overseeing the development of a range of programmes and their evaluations. These programmes include: youth leadership, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, relationships and sexuality, health and well-being and youth offending behaviour. This exposure has developed her interest in research and evaluation further. Specifically, the topic of leadership is of interest as the author is in a position of leadership within the organisation and is interested in how to enable young people to cultivate the necessary skills to be effective leaders at an early age. This, the author feels can help young people to maximise their potential and enable them to follow their hearts to positively impact themselves and others. All this drives the author’s interest in being able to explore whether youth leadership involvement has any connection with enabling greater capacity for resilience and greater ability to access social support.

Observational Component

As part of the work of the Best Practice Unit, the researcher spent time researching internationally evaluated programmes to inform the youth leadership programme development prior to commencement of this research. Part of this process involved consultation with staff, volunteers and young people. As well as this, the programme was piloted in a number of sites and
feedback to enhance and improve the programme was taken on board. Observation of how the programme was run and delivered occurred to ensure the programme was meeting the needs of the young people and yielding positive outcomes in an innovative, creative and engaging way.

### 3.1.2 Aim & Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the connection, if any, between leadership, resilience and social support among youth. To realise this aim, the researcher will track the perceived leadership skills, resilience and social support of young people who receive a youth leadership programme and a comparison group, who do not receive the youth leadership programme, over the course of the programme and beyond for a further six months.

The research objectives are five-fold:

1. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support among a set of young people, including those who are about to participate in a youth leadership programme and a comparison group who will not take part in the programme (time one).
2. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support on completion of the youth leadership programme (time two) and at six months follow-up (time three) in respect of both groups.
3. To establish the difference in leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support between each group at the three time points.
4. To track the changes among those identified with initial lowest and highest perceived well-being prior to participation in the youth leadership programme and again in light of having received a youth leadership programme.
5. To identify key messages for practice, policy and research in light of this study.
3.1.2.1 Matching Research Tools & Objectives

Matching the objectives of the study to the sources of data and methodological tools is outlined in the table below. The assessment tools will be explored in detail later in this chapter.

Table 3.1 Linking Assessment Methodology to Study Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Assessment Tool/Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support among a set of young people, including those who are about to participate in a youth leadership programme and a comparison group who will not take part in the programme (time one). | Young people            | Child and Youth Resilience Measure  
Adolescent Well-being scale  
Empathy  
Leadership Life Skills  
Social Provision Scale  
Leadership scale developed by researcher |
| 2. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support on completion of the youth leadership programme (time two) and at six months follow-up (time three) in respect of both groups. | Young people            | Same assessment tools as baseline analysis  
Compare leadership group over time  
Compare comparison group over time |
| 3. To establish the difference in leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support between each group at the three time points. | Young people Facilitators Young people | Compare leadership group to the comparison group for pre, post & follow-up results  
Focus group  
Photo-voice/Interviews |
| 4. To track the changes among those identified with initial lowest and highest perceived well-being prior to participation in the youth leadership programme and again in light of having received a youth leadership programme. | Highest risk 15 & lowest risk 15 young people | Interviews  
Quantitative data from questionnaires |
| 5. To identify key messages for practice, policy and research in light of this study. | Facilitators Young people | Focus groups & Interviews  
Quantitative data – multiple regressions |
Chapter Three: Methodology

Table 3.2 Mapping the Conceptual Model to the Measurement tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conceptual Model</th>
<th>Measurement tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills - Social &amp; Emotional skills</td>
<td>Empathy Measure (Sect Q23-25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding Self Measure (Sect Q10-12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership skills (Sect 3 - Q31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills – Collaboration skills</td>
<td>Life skills questionnaire – Decision making, problem solving, goal setting, critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>thinking, team work (Sect 3 – 1-10; 17-28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership skills (Sect 3 - Q29, 36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills – Articulation</td>
<td>Life skills questionnaire – communication skills (Sect 3 – Q11-16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills – Insight &amp; Knowledge</td>
<td>Leadership skills (Sect - Q37, Q38, Q39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental – Conditions Opportunity</td>
<td>Community Involvement questions – (Sect 2 – Q 7, Q44, Sect 3- Q39)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Leadership skills (Sect 3 - Q35)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action – Motivating</td>
<td>Leadership skills (Sect 3- Q32)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action – Mastering</td>
<td>Leadership skills Q30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Child and Youth Resilience Measure (Sect 2 – Q1-9 &amp; Q13-22) &amp; Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support</td>
<td>Social Provision Scale (Sect 4 – Q1-16) &amp; Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normative Adolescence Youth Experiencing Adversity</td>
<td>Adolescent Well-being Scale (Sect 2 – Q26-43) &amp; Interview Questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Section Two: Designing the Study

This section outlines how the study is designed with the specific population and objectives in mind. Three important aspects of methodological consideration are explored. Firstly, the theoretical considerations for this research, namely the positivist and interpretative research paradigms and triangulation are considered. Then both the qualitative and quantitative approaches are explored as well as how the author established a research position for the study. Finally, information on the data collection instruments is outlined, as well as how they were designed to meet the studies requirements.
3.2.1 Epistemology & Research Approach

When considering which approach to take for this particular study the researcher explored the epistemological arguments behind both the positivist and naturalist paradigms to inform the methodological approach. A decision was then made on the basis of what would best address the research objectives. The epistemological standpoint of the researcher directs the type of methodology employed. Therefore it is important to consider Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p.21) argument of how one leads to the other - ‘ontological assumptions lead to epistemological assumptions, which in turn give rise to methodological consideration, which lead to issues of instrumentation and data collection’. Exploring both the positivist and interpretative approaches helps the researcher to determine the approach that is most appropriate for this research.

Research paradigms represent how the researcher sees the world. It is essentially their worldview and represents for that person the nature of the ‘world’, their place within it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107-108). Paradigms as argued by Voce (2004) are a framework within which to build theories, this then shapes how you see the world, and gives rise to an understanding of how things are connected. As will be seen upon exploration of these paradigms the researcher felt that using both approaches had merit in this particular study as the positivist approach would add breadth to the study and the interpretive approach would add depth and richness.

The reason for considering the positivist paradigm is that it provides tangible quantitative evidence which is generalisable and unbiased (Robson, 2011). The positivist paradigm holds that the truth is out there waiting to be discovered, that essentially facts exist independently and this kind of analysis must be expressed in law-like generalisations (Cohen et al., 2003). This view is that knowledge is hard, objective and tangible (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Positivism sees science as providing the clearest possible ideal of knowledge. Despite the scientific methods proven success, it can be argued that positivism is less successful when it comes to the study of human behaviour, which by its very nature is complex, varied and as such difficult to examine (Cohen et al., 2003). As well as this the mechanical breakdown used by the positivist
approach has been the target of much criticism because it attempts to define life in measurable components as opposed to internal experiences and excludes choice, freedom and individuality (Nesfield-Cookson, 1987). These are important considerations when researching whether a programme yields positive results. An attractive aspect of the positivist approach is that it enables generalisations to broader populations and inferences to be made from the results obtained. It is objective and free from subjective interpretation which can reduce or limit potential researcher bias. Challenges naturally occur when considering the inherent complexity of measuring human behaviour and the ability of the researcher to capture it adequately. The research methods developed within the positivist paradigm encompass quantitative techniques.

The naturalistic approach, on the other hand, argues that people actively construct their social world (Cohen et al, 2003). In this context, the naturalistic or interpretive paradigm sets out to gain an understanding of the subjective world of human experience, while retaining integrity but getting a view from inside to heighten understanding (Cohen et al., 2003). The individual’s behaviour can only be understood by the researcher once the individual shares their interpretations of the world. This approach is seen as subjective rather than objective. Cohen (2008, p.20) sees that these ‘situations are considered fluid and changing rather than fixed and static, events and behaviour evolve over time and are richly affected by context’. The benefit of employing this approach is that it enables the researcher gain a more intimate view of what happens for the participants and adds substantially to understanding what it must be like to be involved in the youth leadership process. There has been much criticism of the naturalistic or interpretive approach with the argument emerging that this approach has gone too far and abandoned all scientific procedures of verification and generalisability (Cohen et al., 2008). Argyle (1978) argues that if inaccuracy can be found in interviews that are controlled for, then the risk of inaccuracy in interviews that are less controlled is more likely. While Bernstein (1974) indicates that subjective reports may also be incomplete and misleading. Conversely, it is argued that the naturalist approach yields greater understanding of what is going on and why, than the facts and figures produced by the positivist paradigm (De Vaus, 1996, p.11). For the
researcher the ability of the naturalist approach to add a deeper dimension to understanding what it is like to be part of the youth leadership programme and how this may or may not connect to enabling resilience and one’s perception of their social support was appealing.

On reviewing both the positivist and naturalist approaches, the researcher took the decision to employ both approaches. Taking this methodology, the researcher felt would add strength to the study by enabling cross-checking between both methodologies which will be discussed next.

3.2.2 Triangulation

As illustrated above both the positivist and naturalist approaches have their merits and drawbacks. The benefit to using both approaches is that the researcher has more than one source of data from which to inform the research. Using both the positivist and naturalist approach is a method called triangulation. Cohen et al., (2008, p.141) describes triangulation as ‘the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour’. This approach he continues ‘attempts to map out the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint’.

The researcher considered this the best approach to address the research objectives of this study, particularly as using triangulation enables use of the strengths of both paradigms which helps to counterbalance any weaknesses from one particular approach. Exclusive reliance on one method may bias the researcher’s picture of a particular reality being investigated and give a limited view of the complexity of human behaviour (Lin, 1976; Cohen et al., 2008). As such the choice to use a mixed methods approach should limit researcher bias and promote confidence in the findings. The more the methods contrast with each other the greater the confidence that can be expected (Cohen et al., 2008).

In this study triangulation will be achieved by using questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and photo-voice to collect data. Questionnaires will be used to gather quantitative data in relation to leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support. Focus groups will be carried out with programme facilitators to explore their perceptions of the programme and their observed changes, if any, in the young participants. Interviews will be carried out with
Chapter Three: Methodology

high and low risk youth in the leadership programme to explore their experience of the programme and whether it conferred any benefits to them. Finally, photo-voice will be used to illustrate creatively the journey of the participants. These methods of data collection will enable the researcher triangulate or observe the leadership programme from a number of different angles which should enable the researcher gain a comprehensive understanding of the programme and what it does. The use of these tools, and how they were developed and customised for this study, will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.2.3 Quasi-Experimental Design

When considering what research design to use, the researcher explored the option of a randomised controlled trial (RCT) approach which is considered to be the gold standard and one of the more robust approaches in the positivist paradigm. This approach is considered one of the most effective ways of assessing whether or not an intervention is effective. However, the RCT approach has been critiqued as not being appropriate for dealing with complex social issues, it is expensive, not always feasible, can result in disaffection in the control group because of their non-selection for the intervention and in some instances can be considered unethical to ‘not give an intervention to a person in need’ (Robson, 2011). Upon reflection the researcher chose to use a quasi-experimental design. The purpose of this approach is to test the existence of a causal relationship between two or more variables (Bickman & Rog, 2009). This approach is used as randomisation is not feasible in this study. The quasi-experimental design used in this study includes a comparison group which are matched to the intervention group with regard to age, gender and geographical location (Cohen et al., 2008; Robson, 2011). The benefits of quasi-experimental design are that it provides an approximation to the experimental design and supports causal inferences (Robson, 2011). This approach does provide an opportunity to reduce uncertainty between specific causal relationships. It is a stronger approach than post-test only design as it generates data to compare pre and post so changes occurring may be attributed to the intervention (Cohen et al., 2008; Robson, 2011). It is also a stronger approach than the one group pre-test-post-test as the use of a similarly matched comparison group or non-
equivalent group enables comparison and improves researcher confidence in results (Robson, 2011; Cohen et al., 2008). This approach yields greater certainty that the results are attributed to the intervention and not to other events occurring in the lives of the participants than the other designs, however is not as robust as the randomised controlled trial approach (Robson, 2011). A limitation of the quasi-experimental approach is that there is the potential for bias when creating the comparison group, this group may not then give an accurate estimation of what things would have been without the intervention (Robson, 2011). The equivalence of groups can be strengthened by matching, however, where this is not possible the samples should be from the same population or samples that are as alike as possible (Kerlinger, 1970).

3.2.4 Quantitative Research

This study is primarily concerned with measuring self-perception of leadership skills, resilience and social support. As such the quantitative approach is considered an unbiased way of gathering participant responses to standard questions and enable the researcher quantify how a large number of young people perceive themselves. Quantitative research is a systematic, empirical way of investigating properties and their relationships with other variables, it utilises statistics to delineate relationships and theories (Cohen et al., 2008). This approach employed the use of standard measures to form a questionnaire which captured data at three different time points. This data then enables the researcher to measure the difference in self-perceived score and to determine the impact of youth leadership programme involvement.

Quantitative research is utilised predominantly in the positivistic approach as it is concerned primarily with measuring variables, deducing relationships and yielding generalisable results (Cohen et al., 2000, p.9).

In the context of this study, pre-questionnaires were administered to measure initial perception of leadership skills, social support and resilience. The questionnaire generates data through the use of a Likert scale (Likert, 1932) this enables the researcher to compute the perceived change over the course of the
study. The results also feed into the qualitative phase by informing the questions asked.

3.2.5 Qualitative Research

Further to the quantitative approach this study employs a qualitative approach. As the research is concerned with young people and their experiences, which can be difficult to quantify, the researcher believed it was important to use a qualitative approach to ensure nothing was left out and the programme was observed from another angle. Without a qualitative approach the research would lack the capacity to understand what is happening from the young participant’s perspective and how their involvement in the programme is impacting on their world. Qualitative research sets out to answer ‘what is going on and why it is going on’ (De Vaus, 1996, p.11). Qualitative research is often carried out through interviews or observations which enable the researcher gain a perspective from the participants world view.

To help us understand social phenomena in natural settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences and views of all the participants (Pope & Mays, 1995, p.42).

The drawbacks to qualitative research are its subjective nature. This subjective nature of values, attitudes and perceptions, when used alone, may result in bias and misrepresentation of the data. However, in the context of a mixed method approach using a qualitative approach adds another angle and promotes confidence in the findings. The world of young people is complex and dynamic which can be interpreted and experienced in many different ways. The qualitative research approach enables the researcher to gain greater insight into the participant’s perspective and provides a more whole picture of what is happening. It requires the researcher to explore the participant’s perceptions and to carry out thematic analysis to understand what is happening for those involved.
3.2.6 Measuring Leadership, Resilience and Social Support

Some of the methods to measure leadership, resilience and social support will be outlined here. Many social scientists would recommend the use of qualitative data as discussed above. Qualitative studies of leadership such as the Facilitating Leadership in Youth programme illustrate the lived experience of a young person on their leadership journey as well as the benefits they gained from the programme such as increased advocacy and influence over what happened at the centre (Detzler et al., 2007). This approach can be rich with detail however is difficult to replicate or to know whether other young people would experience similar benefits. This makes it difficult to be able to see if there are trends within different groups or populations. The use of the likert scale in terms of self-perceived skills enables a person to illustrate where they are at one point in time and where they are at another. The quantitative approach enables greater numbers to be included in the study and greater confidence in the ability to replicate the results across similar populations. Quantitative studies such as the study of 205 Chicano-Latino youth revealed outcomes including increased levels of community service, improved peer-relationships and higher graduation rates than those who didn’t take part in the study (Bloomberg et al., 2003). Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches here will enable the researcher better answer the research objectives.

When measuring resilience, qualitative and quantitative approaches have been undertaken. Qualitative studies carried out by researchers such as Ungar (2012), focus on sharing the personal experiences of young people and how these experiences contribute to resilience. Qualitative studies are incredibly good at looking in depth at small groups of people and how their individual stories and experiences have led to their resilience. Quantitative studies of resilience involve the use of scales and self-perception on a number of items that enable participants to illustrate how they would respond to different situations. This enables comparison to other participants and broad generalisations be made. Ungar as part of the international resilience project has spent time developing quantitative measures for use in resilience studies. These enable more organisations and young people take part and inferences to be made. However,
he does highlight that resilience should not be studied in isolation of the cultural, structural and social forces that are also at play (Ungar, 2005).

Measuring social support has also been done qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative methods demonstrate the varying relationships in the participant’s lives. For example, the qualitative study of parental role modelling and social support for physical activity in adolescents illustrates how parental involvement, setting an example and supporting their child facilitates greater degrees of physical activity (Wright et al., 2010). A large number of studies on social support have also been quantitative. Dolan (2003) and Tracy & Whittaker (1990) warn against the exclusive use of quantitative methods however. Highlighting that if a study assessed social support in terms of the number of contacts a person had, a person could have many people in a large social network and yet receive very little or poor quality social support. On the other hand, someone who may have less frequent contact with fewer people may be in receipt of strong friendships and plentiful practical support. Vaux (1988, p.33) highlights that most quantitative social support measures are designed to measure some or all of the concepts, such as ‘belonging, bonding and binding: attributes of groups, relationships and persons; and processes that are social, behavioural and affective in nature’. Using both methodologies would appear to strengthen the study and yield potentially more rigorous research. In light of this, both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be taken to investigate all three components of this research, namely: leadership, resilience and social support.

3.2.7 Research Tools

The researcher considered a wide range of tools when deciding how best to achieve the research objectives. As discussed above after exploring the positivist and naturalist approaches and the benefits of using triangulation the researcher chose to use questionnaires with young people, focus groups with programme facilitators, interviews with high and low risk youth and photo-voice to depict their leadership journeys. Each of these tools will be discussed individually in detail next.
3.2.7.1 Questionnaire

When considering the objectives of this study and the opportunity to engage a large number of participants, the questionnaire was considered the most appropriate tool due to its relative ease of use. The questionnaire is essentially a list of questions set to specific individuals who respond. Kumar (1999) highlighted that it was important to ensure questions are clear, easy to understand and are not ambiguous. It is important that questionnaires protect against the potential for misunderstanding as the reply will be of little value (Grix, 2001). The benefit of using a questionnaire is that it is a quick way of collecting information which can also afford the respondent anonymity. As well as this, there are a number of other advantages of closed questions including: being easier to code and analyse (De Vaus, 1996). Closed questions do not however enable respondents to elaborate and there is a risk of misunderstanding or that the categories may even limit the participant’s response (Oppenheim, 1992: p.115). Therefore, De Vaus (1996) recommends providing many alternative responses so that respondents have greater choices. Open questions can lead to irrelevant data and take too long to analyse. Closed and structured questionnaires were chosen for this study to enable patterns be observed and comparisons to be made. The reliability, anonymity (honesty) and economic value (low cost in time and money) of the questionnaire adds to its advantages (Cohen et al., 2003). Disadvantages however, are that misunderstandings can emerge, literacy issues may leave people out and often there is too low a percentage of returns (Cohen et al., 2003). In light of these potential disadvantages the questionnaire was piloted beforehand to ensure that potential misunderstandings were minimised. Youth workers were also encouraged to read the questionnaire to young people where literacy was an issue.

3.2.7.2 Questionnaire Design

In the designing the questionnaire a number of standardised measures were used as will be outlined here (See Appendix F: Questionnaire).

Section I included demographics such as gender, date-of-birth, geographical location, ethnicity, average grade in school, academic level in school, year at
school and living arrangements with parents. Collating this kind of information enables correlations to be made between different demographics and other components of the study.

Section II included the **Child and Youth Resilience Measure** (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2009). The advantages of this tool are that it has been used extensively in resilience research and has undergone validity and reliability testing (Liebenberg et al., 2012). This measure contains 28 items, 19 of which were deemed appropriate to this study and included in this questionnaire. The measure is relatively easy to score with all answers on a likert scale. Numeric codes were used to relate to the answers given (Never = 1, Rarely = 2, Sometimes = 3, Often = 4, Always = 5). Five is the strongest indicator of resilience. Limitations include that it restricts the respondent to answering only these questions and may miss other important components of resilience as perceived by the young person.

Another tool used in this section was a short 3-item measure on **Empathy** and a 3-item measure on **Self-Awareness** (Constantine & Benard, 2001). These measures are simple and explore the respondents’ perception of their capacity for empathy and self-awareness. They are short which could be seen as a limitation to these measures. These measures are simple to score using a likert scale from 1-5 similar to the resilience measure. These measures were reliability and validity tested (Constantine & Benard, 2001).

To identify young people experiencing adversity the **Adolescent Well-being scale** (Birleson, 1980) was used. This tool is an 18-item scale which is scored from 0-2 (Most of the time=0, Sometimes=1, Never=2) some of the questions on this scale are reversed which requires care to be taken when scoring. The benefits of this tool are that it indicates that a score of over 13 is indicative of depression and as such enables the researcher to determine which young people may be having difficulty coping or experiencing adversity. A disadvantage to this measure is that it asks some sensitive questions which may be off putting to the respondent. Reliability and validity testing has occurred with this measure (Birleson, 1980; Fundudis et al., 1991).
Section III includes the **Life Skills** measure (Perkins, 2001). This tool looks at skills such as decision making, critical thinking, communication, team work, goal setting and problem solving which are considered important skills for a young leader. Each item on this scale is scored on a likert scale 1-5 with 5 being the highest score. The advantage of this scale is that it has been used frequently and is relatively straightforward. Limitations include that it may leave aspects of youth leadership out. Reliability and validity testing has occurred with this measure (Mincemoyer & Perkins, 2005).

**Leadership Skills** developed by the researcher. This tool contains 11-items which look at opportunities to be a leader, ability to motivate others, self-control, conflict resolution, expectations of self and ability to reflect critically. This tool was developed by the researcher as she felt the other tools did not answer all the questions the researcher had in relation to youth leadership and the conceptual model outlined in Chapter 2. A five point likert scale was used for this measure also. A disadvantage of this tool is that it has not been used or tested previously, however an advantage is that it asks questions that the other tools did not.

Section IV includes the **Social Provision Scale** (Dolan, 2006). This tool asks questions of four sources of support namely; friends, parents, siblings and other adults. It also looks at the four types of support namely; concrete, emotional, esteem and advice. The advantage of this tool is that you can look across the dimensions to determine the influence the source of support or type of support has across the respondent population. It is scored from 1-3 with 3 being the highest score (No=1, Sometimes=2, Yes=3). This tool has undergone reliability and validity testing. A limitation, as with other tools, is that it may not cover all aspects of social support. This measure has undergone reliability and validity testing (Zaki, 2009).
3.2.7.3 Measures

On reviewing the literature in relation to youth leadership, resilience and social support literature, both standardised tested measures and measures developed specifically for this study were used to develop the survey. The survey therefore, contained reliable and valid measures. Crohnbach’s alpha coefficient scores were computed for each of the scales in the survey, this was to measure how consistent items were in measuring a particular conceptual area. A higher Cronbach’s alpha score indicates that the scale is internally consistent and that the items fit well together. The majority of scales indicated a high score. However, some of the standardised measures on types of support indicated a lower score. A decision was made to proceed with the lower scoring scales as these are established standardised measures. For constructed scales, on the basis of previous research and literature conceptually similar variables were brought together into a composite score for both the leadership skills and the community involvement indexes. In these cases the reliability and fit of these items was tested using Cronbach’s alpha, factor analysis, and a review of bivariate correlations was carried out among the items. A decision was taken to keep all items in both these indexes. Where standardised measures were employed from other researchers factor analysis was not conducted, however Cronbach’s alpha was assessed.

3.2.7.3.1 Respondents Characteristics

Characteristics such as gender (male/female), date-of-birth, self-perception as a leader (yes/no), geographical location (Countryside, Town, City), year at school (1st-6th/not in school/college), academic level in school (Honours/Ordinary/Foundation), average grade in school, ethnicity and living arrangements with parents

3.2.7.3.2 Resilience 1 Measure


1) I cooperate with people around me. 2) I try to finish what I start. 3) People think that I am fun to be with. 4) I am able to solve problems without harming myself or others (for example by using drugs and/or
being violent. 5) I am aware of my own strengths. 6) Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me. 7) I think it is important to serve my community. 8) I feel supported by my friends. 9) My friends will stand by me in difficult times.

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.689.

3.2.7.3.3 Understanding Self Measure
This scale adopts 3 items from Constantine & Benard (2001).

1) There is purpose to my life. 2) I understand my moods and feelings. 3) I understand why I do what I do.

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.662.

3.2.7.3.4 Resilience 2 Measure
This item adopts 10 items from Ungar & Liebenberg (2009) Child and Youth Resilience Measure.

1) I have people I look up to. 2) I know how to behave in different social situations. 3) I am given opportunities to show others that I am becoming an adult and can act responsibly. 4) I know where I go in my community to get help. 5) I have opportunities to develop skills that will be useful later in life (like job skills and skills to care for others). 6) I am proud of my cultural background. 7) I am treated fairly in my community. 8) I participate in organised religious activities. 9) I enjoy my community’s traditions 10) I am proud to be a citizen of Ireland.

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.768.

3.2.7.3.5 Empathy Measure
The three items in this scale are adopted from Constantine & Benard (2001) to assess empathy.

1) I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt. 2) I try to understand what other people feel and think. 3) I try to understand what other people go through.

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.795.

3.2.7.3.6 Adolescent Well-being Measure
This scale has 18 items adopted from Birleson (1980) members were asked to respond to the following statements.
1) I look forward to things as much as I used to. 2) I sleep very well. 3) I feel like crying. 4) I like going out. 5) I feel like leaving home. 6) I get stomach aches/cramps. 7) I have lots of energy. 8) I enjoy my food. 9) I can stick up for myself. 10) I think life isn’t worth living. 11) I am good at things I do. 12) I enjoy the things I do as much as I used to. 13) I like talking to my friends and family. 14) I have horrible dreams. 15) I feel very lonely. 16) I am easily cheered up. 17) I feel so sad I hardly bear it. 18) I feel very bored.

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.791.

**Community Involvement**

The community involvement measure adopted items from Ungar & Liebenberg (2009) Child and Youth Resilience Measure (item 1), the researcher developed item 2 and item 3.

1) I think it is important to serve my community 2) In general, how would you describe your level of involvement in your community. 3) Helping others is important to me

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.619.

**3.2.7.3.7 Life Skills Measure**

The life skills measure (Perkins, 2001) had 6 submeasures including decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work and problem solving.

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.918.

**3.2.7.3.8 Decision Making**

This subscale includes 4 items, respondents were asked what they would do when they have a decision to make.

1) I look for information to help me understand the problem. 2) I think before making a choice. 3) I consider the risks of a choice before making a decision. 4) I think about all the information I have about the different choices

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.819.

**3.2.7.3.9 Critical thinking**

The 5 items in this scale asked respondents about how they think.

1) I can easily express my thoughts on a problem. 2) I usually have more than one source of information before making a decision. 3) I compare
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ideas when thinking about a topic. 4) I keep my mind open to different ideas when planning to make a decision. 5) I am able to tell the best way of handling a problem

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.795.

3.2.7.3.10 Communication Skills
This subscale includes 6 items which ask about the respondents’ communication.

1) I try to keep eye contact. 2) I recognise when two people are trying to say the same thing, but in different ways. 3) I try to see the other person’s point of view. 4) I change the way I talk to someone based on my relationship with them (i.e. friend, parent, teacher etc). 5) I organise thoughts in my head before speaking. 6) I make sure I understand what another person is saying before I respond

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.703.

3.2.7.3.11 Goal setting
There are four items in this subscale which focus on statements in relation to goal setting.

1) I look at the steps needed to achieve the goal. 2) I think about how and when I want to achieve it. 3) After setting a goal, I break goals down into steps so I can check my progress. 4) Both positive and negative feedback helps me work towards my goal

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.800.

3.2.7.3.12 Team Work
This subscale includes three items focusing on team work.

1) I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine. 2) I enjoy working together with other people my age. 3) I stand up for myself without putting others down

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.636.

3.2.7.3.13 Problem solving
The problem solving subscale includes 5 items.
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1) I first figure out exactly what the problem is. 2) I try to determine what caused it. 3) I do what I have done in the past to solve it. 4) I compare each possible solution with the others to find the best one. 5) After selecting a solution, I think about it for a while before putting it into action.

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.787.

3.2.7.3.14 Leadership Skills

The leadership skills scale was developed by the researcher and includes 11 items.

1) I am determined when I have a goal in mind. 2) I reflect on what I have achieved. 3) I consider myself to have good self-control in difficult situations. 4) I am known for inspiring other people to action. 5) People follow my lead easily. 6) I have high expectations of myself. 7) I know how to access opportunities to be a leader. 8) I am known for resolving conflicts. 9) I try to do the right thing. 10) I am grateful for things in my life. 11) Helping others is important to me.

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.846.

3.2.7.3.15 Social Support

The social provision scale (Dolan, 2006) includes 8 subscales; friendship support, parental support, sibling support, adult support, concrete support, esteem support, emotional support and advice support.

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.863.

3.2.7.3.16 Friendship Support

Four items on social support are included in this scale.

1) Are there friends you can depend on to help you? 2) Do your relationships with your friends provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness? 3) Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognised by your friends. 4) Is there a friend you could trust to turn to for advice?

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.710.
3.2.7.3.17 **Parent Support**

The parental support subscale includes 4 items.

1) Can you depend on your parent(s)/guardian to help you? 2) Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognised by your parents? 3) Could you turn to your parent(s)/guardian for advice? 4) Do your relationships with your parent(s)/guardian(s) provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.859.

3.2.7.3.18 **Sibling Support**

Four items assessing sibling support were adopted for this subscale.

1) Can you depend on your brother(s)/sister(s) to help you? 2) Do your relationships with your brother(s)/sister(s) provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness? 3) Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by your brother(s)/sister(s)? 4) Could you turn to your brother(s)/sister(s) for advice?

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.876.

3.2.7.3.19 **Adult Support**

The adult support subscale included four items.

1) Can you depend on other adult(s) (e.g. sport coach, family friend) you know to help you, if you really need it? 2) Does your relationship with this adult provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness? 3) Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by this adult? 4) Could you turn to another adult for advice?

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.849.

3.2.7.3.20 **Concrete Support**

The subscale for concrete support included four items.

1) Are there friends you can depend on to help you? 2) Can you depend on your parent(s)/guardian to help you? 3) Can you depend on your
brother(s)/sister(s) to help you? 4) Can you depend on other adult(s) (e.g. sport coach, family friend) you know to help you, if you really need it?

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.555.

3.2.7.3.21 Emotional Support

Emotional Support was assessed using four items.

1) Do your relationships with your friends provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness? 2) Do your relationships with your parent(s)/guardian(s) provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness? 3) Do your relationships with your brother(s)/sister(s) provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness? 4) Does your relationship with this adult provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.598.

3.2.7.3.22 Esteem Support

1) Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognised by your friends? 2) Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognised by your parents? 3) Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by your brother(s)/sister(s)? 4) Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by this adult?

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.613.

3.2.7.3.23 Advice Support

Four items in relation to advice support were adopted for this subscale.

1) Is there a friend you could trust to turn to for advice? 2) Could you turn to your parent(s)/guardian for advice? 3) Could you turn to your brother(s)/sister(s) for advice? 4) Could you turn to another adult for advice?

The Cronbach’s alpha score was: 0.495. While the score is lower than was hoped for, this is an established scale and the decision was taken to proceed with it.
3.2.7.4 Questionnaire Piloting

As mentioned above it was considered important to pilot the questionnaire to minimise misunderstanding and to ensure the respondents understood what was being asked. Questionnaires were piloted with eleven young people to determine whether the questions would derive the information required and were easy to understand. ‘Preliminary testing of the instrument will highlight necessary adjustments that can be made prior to the main data collection’, (Bell, 1995, p.65). The young people were given highlighters to identify any questions they found difficult to understand and they were encouraged to write notes beside any questions they wanted further information or instruction on. They were also asked what they thought of the layout. The questions were modified to include Life Skills measure (Perkins, 2001) and make them more appropriate for the target group after the first pilot. This questionnaire was then piloted again with nine different young people, after which the group assisted in the development of the advertisement to encourage young people to take part in the comparison group (see appendix D).

Questionnaire changes at second piloting included providing additional information on what resilience is in the information sheet. In Section I: Question 9 was changed to include Applied Junior/Leaving Cert under Foundation level. Question 11 was changed from Ethnicity to Ethnic background. In Section III: All of section III was replaced with Life Skills (Perkins, 2001). The layout was also changed so that it was more attractive (Appendix F: Questionnaire).

3.2.7.5 Focus Groups

For the researcher an important component was to consider the views and observations of the programme facilitators. Questionnaires and interviews were considered however focus groups were thought to be more appropriate and less time consuming. The focus group enabled the researcher look in detail at what the facilitator’s experience of the programme was, challenges that arose, how the young people developed and any recommendations they had for future development. Focus groups are useful ways of engaging multiple people’s
opinions on a topic. They are defined as ‘a form of group interview that capitalises on communication between the participants in order to generate data’ (Kitzinger 1995, p.1). The benefits of focus groups ‘lies in the insights that they can provide into the dynamic effects of interaction between people and the way this can affect how views are formed and changed’ (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p.161). The focus group is particularly appropriate in studies of participants’ perceptions and experiences. The focus group highlights what people think and reveals how they think (Kitizinger, 1995). The researcher’s role is to act as a moderator or facilitator and less of an interviewer (Punch, 2000). Focus groups are quick, reliable and give a good range and depth of information. It allows people to explore a topic in a group discussion and enables the facilitator assess reactions, experience or suggestions to the topic. One disadvantage is that they can be hard to analyse. A semi-structured topic guide for the focus group was developed with the collaboration of two youth workers. In the transcripts participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

3.2.7.6 Interview

Interviews were considered the most appropriate tool to use to provide a safe space for the young people from the high and low risk groups to elaborate on their experiences of the programme. Using a focus group could potentially be too exposing for a young person and the questionnaire as already described has its limitations in looking in depth at what is happening. Interviews afford greater depth to be explored between the participant and the researcher in a safe space. The interview has been defined as ‘a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him [sic] on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction or explanation’ (Cannell & Kahn, 1968, p.527). Advantages of interviews are that they allow for greater depth than with other methods of data collection, as well as this any misunderstandings can be rectified to ensure the participant understands what is being asked (Cohen et al., 2003). A disadvantage is that they are time consuming, expensive, and prone to subjectivity and potential bias on the part
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of the interviewer (Cohen et al, 2003). Tuckman (1972) describes interviews as giving access to what is inside the person’s head. It then enables the researcher to measure what the person knows, their attitudes and their values. The interviews were semi-structured in design. This enables the researcher to cover relevant topics with all interviewees, enabling in turn comprehensive data to be collected and comparability of responses. This approach reduces interviewer bias by the use of similar questions in each interview but also allows for flexibility should other important topics arise.

3.2.7.7 Photo-voice

Finally, as part of the data collection methods used, the researcher felt that including a creative and visual component would enable further understanding and illuminate the reality of the young leaders’ journey. This aspect shares with the researcher a very personal story of the journey through the programme in a creative illustration which in some ways tells more than words can. Photo-voice is a creative opportunity of enabling young people a medium to express themselves, and offer some insight into their lives. Typically this approach employs youth taking pictures of things in their lives. However a slight adaptation of this approach was taken in that young people were asked to share their leadership journey by drawing a picture. This approach can be particularly useful for those with low levels of literacy.

Photo-voice is a method by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique (Wang & Burris, 1997, p.369).

This was considered a simple and effective technique to further back-up the other tools, and thus increases reliability and trustworthiness of the findings. The drawings selected were considered good illustrations of the journeys the participants underwent which further highlight the challenges and achievements they experienced.
3.2.8 Validity and Reliability

It is important in research of this nature to consider implications of validity and reliability. Qualitative research has been criticised by researchers of the empirical tradition on the grounds that validity and reliability were poorly controlled (Morse & Field, 1995). Validity is crucial to effective research and can be addressed through ‘honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants approached and the extent of triangulation’ (Cohen et al., 2003, p.105). Validity is important in that it adds weight to the results obtained and suggests that such results are legitimate, well-founded and authentic. Validity is strengthened in this research through the use of triangulation. Morse and Field (1995, p.142) suggest that qualitative research can be ‘both biased and unreliable and may contradict other participants reports’. It is important to consider the purpose of qualitative research as not ‘to determine objectively what actually happened but rather to objectively report the perceptions of each participant in the setting’ (Morse & Field, 1995, p.142).

As such all reports in qualitative research are acceptable data. To protect against invalidity, appropriate instruments were chosen to ensure there was no ambiguity, questionnaires were piloted to ensure readability levels were appropriate, appropriate sample sizes were chosen and questions in focus groups and interviews were chosen that were not leading. As well as avoiding subjective interpretation of the data, appropriate coding was employed to reduce the halo effect and avoid the researcher’s selective use of data.

Reliability in quantitative research relates to ‘dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents’ (Cohen et al., 2008, p.146). In the main, reliability focuses on precision and accuracy, aspiring to be able to generalise results for other populations, i.e. if the research were repeated with a group of similar people then similar results should be found. Three types of reliability exist; stability, equivalence and internal consistency. For stability, the measure needs to be consistent over time and over similar samples, for equivalence it is the extent to which two different items measure the same concept and for internal consistency it is the extent to which correlations exist between different items on the same test (Cohen et al., 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) suggest that reliability in qualitative research
is stability of observation, parallel forms of observation and inter-rater reliability. However it is argued that this is not to strive for uniformity, two researchers studying the same setting may have very different findings but this could be due to the multiple layers of reality (Cohen et al., 2008). Reliability in qualitative research, also referred to as dependability, involves respondent validation, triangulation and persistent observations in the field or reflexive journals (Cohen et al., 2008). Particularly in interviews, it is important to mitigate against leading questions, attitudes and expectations of the interviewer. Misunderstandings or attempts by the interviewer to seek answers that support preconceived notions must be protected against so as to ensure validity and reliability. Reliability can be controlled for by having highly structured interviews with the same format and sequence for each respondent (Silverman, 1993). Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) bring attention to the interpersonal nature of interviews which means that it is inevitable that the researcher will have some influence on the interviewee and thereby, on the data. In the case of focus groups Kitwood (1977 cited in Cohen & Manion 1994, p.282) argues that:

Reliability and validity become redundant notions for every interpersonal situation may be said to be valid, as such, whether or not it conforms to expectations, whether or not it involves a high degree of communication, and whether or not the participants emerge exhilarated or depressed.

3.3 Implementing the Design

Overseeing the implementation of this study was an advisory committee of academics. In describing the implementation of the study design this falls into five categories. Sampling will be discussed first. This will be followed by ethical considerations and then how the research tools were implemented will be explored. Following this details on how the data was collected, which occurred over three time points, time one at baseline, time two post intervention and time three at six months follow-up after the intervention finished. Finally, the methods used to analyse the data generated by the study will be discussed.
3.3.1 Advisory Committee

An advisory committee comprising of key researchers in the field was established to provide academic guidance, support and advice to the researcher. This committee served to oversee the work of the researcher and ensure that she remained unbiased and objective in her viewpoint as well as adhering to ensuring ethical protocols were subscribed to and no over or under emphasis of the findings was made. The advisory committee comprised of Professor Pat Dolan, Professor Mark Brennan and Dr. Bernadine Brady. See Appendix A for details on the advisory committee members.

3.3.2 Sampling

Outlined below are the details of how the samples were selected for each aspect of the study.

3.3.2.1 Quantitative Sampling

Leadership Group

The study population included young people aged 16-18 years old across Ireland involved in Foróige’s Leadership Programme. Fortunately for this study, the sample of convenience was a full population sample also called a census approach. A total of 431 young people were recruited to the study, of whom 267 young people (163 female, 104 male) were involved in the leadership programme and 164 young people (100 female, 64 male) formed part of the comparison group. Issues of stratification therefore, do not arise with this approach as no respondent was excluded. This approach means that it is possible to avoid all errors associated with sampling as everybody in the population was surveyed (Robson, 2011, p.238). Using a census approach ensures there is representativeness from all participants in the leadership programme. It also enables the researcher to gain a good overall view of a population group. As well as this, it involves young people from all aspects of Irish life, in particular minority or disadvantaged groups who are involved in the leadership programme.
Comparison Group

The comparison group of young people i.e. those not involved in the leadership programme were randomly selected to match the leadership group based the following characteristics; similarity of age, gender and geographical location. The facilitators of the programme locally were responsible for selecting the comparison group as they knew young people locally who matched the criteria for selection i.e. young people were from the same age group, same gender, same geographical location and from a same setting. Facilitator’s recruited the comparison group by considering the criteria as outlined, invited young people who fit the criteria to an information session where they gave them information on the purpose of the study and a short advertisement (see Appendix D & E). Where the facilitator was delivering the programme in a project they selected young people who were also engaged in their projects meeting the same criteria. Where the facilitator was delivering the programme in a club setting, the comparison group were also selected from within the club. Where the facilitator was delivering the programme in the school the comparison group was selected from within the school. This was to ensure that the leadership and comparison groups were from as similar environments and as alike as possible. The comparison group included 164 young people (100 female, 64 male) at time one.

3.3.2.2 Qualitative Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for the interviews and photo-voice. To ‘purposefully select informants’ is to select participants that will provide the most useful information to answer the research question (Creswell 1994, p.148), that is those with the highest and lowest adolescent well-being scores i.e. those most and least at risk were interviewed to add depth to the research in terms of perceived social support, resilience and leadership skills. Facilitators were selected using a census approach. All facilitators involved in the leadership programme were invited to take part in one of five focus groups. Four of these focus groups were held regionally and one was held as a teleconference. This was to ensure all facilitators were offered the
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opportunity to participate, from all geographical areas, and included both staff and volunteers perspectives.

3.3.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was sought from the National University of Ireland, Galway Research Ethics Committee. The objective of the Research Ethics Committee is to safeguard the health, welfare and rights of human participants and researchers in research studies. The ethical principle of ‘do no harm’ was adhered to in this study. The ethics application process involved completion of an application form, submission of the aims and objectives of the study, an outline of the tools for the study, sample information and permission forms for the parents/guardians, young people and facilitators as well as the advertisements to recruit the comparison group. Upon reviewing the application the Research Ethics Committee granted full ethical approval for the study (Appendix B).

3.3.3.1 Informed Consent

Information leaflets and consent forms were developed and distributed to intended research participants to ensure that participants were in a position to give informed consent to taking part in the study. Consent is defined as ‘compliance in or approval of what is done or proposed by another’ (Webster, 1996, p.97). Morse and Field (1995, p.62) describe three different levels of consent required when research is being conducted; with special populations such as school children, hospital patients or prison inmates. The first level of consent is from the organisation where the research will take place, the second is from the parent or guardian of the participants and the third is the consent of the participant (Appendix E). It is vital that participants feel that their identity is protected. Therefore, confidentiality and anonymity are of paramount importance, with the exception of areas of concern with regard to Children First Guidelines (DOHC, 1999; DCYA, 2011). Each participant of the interviews and focus groups were given a pseudonym to protect their identity, while participants of the questionnaires were given codes. Every effort has been made to ensure that no participant is identifiable in the research.
3.3.3.2 Negotiating Access

The researcher works within the organisation involved in the study, negotiating access was done through a conversation with the Assistant CEO of Foróige. A number of participants participated through secondary schools. The schools were contacted and invited to participate in the study in September 2010. The schools and projects were forwarded information sheets which outlined the purpose of the study, the student status of the researcher and the commitment to anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research process (Appendix C). Further contact was made to arrange to conduct the research. The comparison group were recruited with the help of an advertisement (Appendix D).

3.3.4 Data Collection

Once all the schools and projects involved consented to the study the consent forms and questionnaires were distributed to the facilitators. Parental and participant consent was sought for the questionnaires and interviews, included here were also information sheets pertaining to the research (Appendix E). Facilitators’ administered the questionnaires when consent forms were returned. The researcher has experience of facilitating groups, and ensured a safe environment for discussion of sensitive topics occurred during interviews and focus groups. The researcher highlighted prior to each interview that information received would be treated with the strictest of confidentiality, with the exception of Child Protection issues in line with Children First Guidelines (DOHC, 1999; DCYA, 2011). The researcher also highlighted that participants anonymity would be protected so that anything discussed would not be identified to themselves.

Table 3.3 Table outlining the phases of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Designing the research tools</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>Time One data collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Time Two data collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Time Three data collection</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
3.3.4.1 Time One Data Collection

Questionnaires

At time one the questionnaires were sent to the facilitators of the programme to administer to the participants. The youth workers administered and collected the questionnaires and returned them to the researcher. Youth workers were encouraged to separate participants to guarantee accurate individual completion. As per the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2004) youth workers were encouraged to provide information to participants both written and verbally as required to support low literacy level respondents. Respondents received thank you cards for their participation. Questionnaires were discarded when there was obvious contamination. Any that were questionable were cross checked with the supervisor. All participants involved in the leadership programme between September 2010 and May 2011 were invited to take part in the leadership research. The leadership programme delivery coincided with academic year therefore the majority of groups commenced the programme between the beginning of September and early November. Facilitators were asked to select the comparison group sample to match the following criteria: similar age, gender and from the same geographical location. This was to ensure that as few variations as possible occurred between the groups. The comparison group were involved in Foróige projects where the facilitators were running the leadership programme in the projects. Other young people in the comparison group came from schools where Foróige staff or volunteers were running the leadership programme in a school. This meant that the leadership youth were compared to as similarly matched young people as possible. This is a quasi-experimental study design to enable the researcher establish the impact on the leadership programme on young people’s leadership skills, resilience and social support, relative to peers who do not experience the leadership programme. It must be stressed at this point that a randomised controlled trial would be neither desirable nor feasible for this study at this time.

Time one data collection occurred between September 15th and November 15th, the longer time period for data collection was necessary due to the fact that
some of the groups did not get started on the leadership programme until early November. All groups completed the time one questionnaires within the first few weeks of commencing the programme. A total of 431 young people were recruited to the study, of whom 267 young people were involved in the leadership programme and 164 young people formed part of the comparison group. A total of 319 young people commenced the leadership programme in 2010, however due to either being absent on the day of the baseline analysis or choosing not to take part in the study (n=3) the study actually recruited 267 young people from the leadership programme yielding a response rate of 81.19%.

Interviews

Young people who had the highest and lowest adolescent well-being scores in the baseline questionnaire were invited to take part in interviews to track their perceptions of their leadership skills, resilience and social support over the course of the programme. A score of over 13 on the adolescent well-being scale is an indicator of ‘risk’ for depression and as such was thought to be useful to identify young people experiencing adversity. Those with a score over 13 were invited to interview as they were considered ‘high risk’ and young people who scored in the 0-4 range were considered to be ‘low risk’ and were also invited to interview. Information and consent forms were given to parents/guardians and participants to sign to ensure they consented to the interviews. Information sheets also acknowledged that they could opt out at any stage. Thirty young people were invited to take part in the interviews. Due to unavailability on the days of interview a total of 22 participants (7 male and 15 female; aged 15-18 years, 11 high risk; 1 male, 10 female and 11 low risk; 6 male, 5 female) took part in the interviews. The interviews were approximately 30 minutes, recorded with a digital MP3 recorder and participants received thank you cards for their involvement. The interviews took place between the early December and early January, due to weather conditions such as snow this hampered a more timely collection of the time one interview data.
3.3.4.2 Time Two Data Collection

Questionnaire

Time two data collection for the questionnaires commenced between the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 20\textsuperscript{th} of May. As with time one the questionnaires were distributed to the facilitators who then invited the same participants as time one to take part. At time two there were 283 respondents to the questionnaires, of whom 184 young people were from the leadership group and 99 young people were from the comparison group. This yielded a response rate at time two of 67.7\% between time one and time two.

Interviews

Time two interviews took place between the 6\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} of June. The same young people were contacted for involvement in the interviews as time one. At this time 21 young people were available at time two for interview. The other participant was unavailable due to summer holidays.

Focus Groups

Five focus groups were carried out with 23 programme facilitators (5 males, 18 females; 6 Foróige volunteers and 17 Foróige staff) in June 2011 after the programme finished. Information and consent forms were given to all participants. The focus groups were 45-50 minutes, recorded with a digital MP3 recorder and participants received refreshments for their involvement. One focus group took place over teleconference due to geographical constraints in getting the group together. The researcher also highlighted that participants’ anonymity would be protected so that anything discussed would not be identified to themselves.

Photo-Voice

All participants who went on to complete module three of the leadership programme (n=117) were asked to illustrate a picture of their leadership journey and outline what it meant to them as part of their reflective journal. Of these 17 participants’ (7 male, 10 female, 16-18 years) pictures were selected to be part of the study. The pictures chosen represent a wide range of the
experiences of the young people involved in the programme, permission was sought to include their drawings.

3.3.4.3 Time Three Data Collection

Questionnaire

Time three data collection for the questionnaires commenced between 1st December 2011 and 1st March 2012. Once again the questionnaires were distributed to the facilitators who then invited the research respondents to partake in completing the questionnaires for the final time. At time three there were 195 respondents to the questionnaires, of whom 140 young people were from the leadership group and 45 young people were from the comparison group. This yielded a response rate at time three of 68.9% between time two and time three and a response rate of 46.6% between time one and time three.

Interview

Time three interviews were carried out between December 13th 2011 and January 16th 2012. A smaller cohort was selected from the initial group interviewed as similar themes began to emerge in the analysis of the data from time two yielding data saturation. With this knowledge in mind, the researcher decided to have fewer interviews and go more in depth with them. A smaller cohort was then selected to include both low and high risk young people. The qualitative collection at this point included 6 young people (5 female, 1 male; 4 high risk, 2 low risk).

3.3.5 Data analysis

On completion of the data collection data analysis commenced. As quantitative and qualitative approaches were used quantitative and qualitative data analysis was employed, each will be dealt with separately here.

3.3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

The statistical package for social sciences, SPSS, was used to analyse the data collected from the questionnaires. This packaged measured and assessed the
relationship between different variables. Numeric codes were used for the closed questions (Never = 1, Rarely = 2, Sometimes = 3, Often = 4, Always = 5). Data was initially entered into Excel, from here it was exported into SPSS. The data was cleaned to ensure that any errors were picked up and explored. Initials and dates of birth were double checked to ensure that the young people could be matched between the different time points. Following on from this, description and frequency analysis were run. Boxplots were run to identify outliers, explore and remove as necessary. Cross tabulation with the use of chi squared tests, where <0.05 is considered significant, was used to deduce the significance of relationships between different variables. ANOVA’s were run to determine significant difference between the averages of different groups, where <0.05 is considered significant. Paired T-tests were run on matched data between the different time points, where <0.05 is considered significant. Mixed Between within-Analysis of Variance was also run to explore the differences between the groups over time.

Missing Data

For all analysis, variables were analysed to determine the level of missing data. In cases where there was extreme missing data the variable was removed. When calculating summative scores attention was given to the possibility of missing data and computed scores were only carried out where sufficient data existed for a case. In general, there was minimal missing data in this study.

3.3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

NVivo was used to analyse data collected from the focus groups and interviews. This package assisted with coding of the themes emerging from the qualitative research. Data collected from focus groups and interviews was transcribed, analysed and emergent themes identified. Coding is important in qualitative analysis as it helps to make sense of the data.

Coding is how you define what the data you are analysing is about. It involves identifying and recording one or more passages... they are then linked with a name for that idea – the code. Thus all the text... that is about the same thing
Qualitative analysis as highlighted by Robson (2011) can be considered constant comparison analysis because the process of coding involves comparing each new chunk of data with previous codes, so similar chunks will be labelled with the same code. Coding involves ‘grouping initial codes into a smaller number of themes, which help with organising the data into major themes, sub-themes and lay the foundation for subsequent analysis and interpretation of the data’ (Robson, 2011, p.475). As highlighted by Burnard (1991) qualitative data analysis is to establish a detailed and systematic recording of themes and link them together in a category system. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p.173) lay out guidelines to qualitative analysis including: ‘familiarity with the transcript, isolation of general units of meaning, relate general units of meaning to the research focus, examine patterns and themes extracted’. It is clear that thematic coding is central to qualitative data analysis. Advantages of this form of analysis include that it is flexible and can be used with all types of qualitative analysis, it is also relatively easy to use compared with other more theoretical approaches, it is accessible and can be communicated without major difficulties and provides a method of summarising key features of large amounts of qualitative data (Robson, 2011). Disadvantages are that the flexibility of the method mean that the data can be broad and it may be difficult to narrow the focus, thematic coding is often limited to description or exploration with little attempt at interpretation (Robson, 2011).

Data analysis for the qualitative strand involved getting the data transcribed. This was followed by reading the data and generating the initial overarching codes. As extracts of the data were coded additional codes emerged. All the data was coded in a systematic fashion which involved determining which code was the most appropriate place for the data and ensuring that data of similar content were coded under the same heading. This provided the opportunity to put some content under different themes, and also enabled the researcher reassess codes if necessary. The result of this form of analysis yielded a
thematic map of the qualitative research which in turn enabled the researcher to analyse and interpret the patterns emerging in the data.

3.3.6 Insider Research Influence

As the researcher manages Foróige’s Best Practice Unit which has responsibility for developing the youth leadership programme her personal involvement is high. Insider research can be considered a strength on the basis that the person has intimate knowledge of the area which can be advantageous in leading to increased honesty in the information gathered (Robson, 2011). As the person has an in-depth view of how things work, they can understand aspects of the project that others might miss (Robson, 2011). However, this can also be considered a weakness as they are too close to the project and may contribute to bias. This closeness may result in the researcher being overly committed to the programme and only focus on the positives and fail to be objective (Cohen et al., 2003). Bias is considered ‘a systematic or persistent tendency to make errors in the same direction, that is, to overstate or understate the true value of an attribute’ (Lansing et al., 1961 cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.281). Cohen and Manion state that ‘the sources of bias are characteristics of the interviewer, the respondent and substantive content of the questions’ (1994, p.282). By being transparent, Cohen et al., (2003) consider that the reader can therefore construct their own perspective which is just as valid. The knowledge that the insider has can be considered an advantage as it could be argued may lead to an increase in depth, honesty and fidelity of the information garnered (Robson, 2011). The researcher reflected on her role as researcher and her position within the organisation. She remained constantly aware of her position and took care not to introduce bias throughout the research. To mitigate against any form of bias the researcher consulted regularly with her supervisor and advisory committee to ensure she always took an objective unbiased view point. To further reduce bias the researcher recorded the focus groups and interviews, then analysed them some time after they were completed ensuring a more reflective view point of occurrences. The researcher was ever conscious of her position and sought to maintain a critical, factual approach to her analysis of the data.
3.3.7 Limitations

While every endeavour has been made to reduce limitations in this study, invariably some limitations must be acknowledged:

1. **The Questionnaire** – while efforts were made to ensure the questionnaire was accessible for young people and broken up sufficiently to keep them engaged; the length of the questionnaire was disconcerting to a small number of respondents. This was particularly the case for the comparison group, some of whom did not complete the questionnaire in its totality. As this was only for a small number of respondents it is anticipated that it will not affect the quality of response.

2. **Study Length & Retention** – the length of the study and the fact that it spanned almost two academic years may have impacted on the retention rate. As some young people had moved on or were no longer engaged in the youth project, programme facilitators found it difficult to track down the respondents to include them in the follow portion of the study. This was particularly true for the comparison group, who by virtue of the fact that they were not engaged in the programme meant they had no incentive to stay. For this group once they moved into another year in school became difficult for the facilitators to find them. For an adolescent 18 months is a lifetime, so much happens, in future studies perhaps more incentives to remain involved including being put in a draw for prizes if they complete all time points may increase the retention rate, particularly of comparison groups.

3. **Self-Selection** - another point of consideration is the self-selecting nature of participants into the leadership programme this may mean that the leadership participants were already of a mindset that places them in a better position than the comparison group. Every attempt was made to take this into consideration during the analysis phase. However, beyond carrying out a randomised controlled trial the decision to get involved in a programme of this nature may well affect the young persons’ motivations to remain with the programme and their ensuing outcomes.

4. **Logistics** - logistically limiting factors included giving the facilitators the control to recruit the comparison group and administer the questionnaires.
As such the researcher had less control over ensuring the group maintained contact and were traceable. Due to the size of the study and the national involvement of young people it was necessary to involve others from a purely logistical perspective. However, the drop off in the comparison group was substantial and despite originally thinking that involvement of the facilitators would strengthen the ability to recall the comparison group over the three time points perhaps use of incentives may have retained a greater number of the comparison group. Due to logistics also all young people did not complete the questionnaire directly before they began the programme, this may have implications in the findings. As well as this, due to the delay in getting the questionnaires returned from the facilitators this resulted in a delay in selecting the high and low risk groups. It was closer to the end of module one that the interviewer had the opportunity to interview these participants and thus may not reflect accurately their baseline perceptions etc., However, the researcher is confident that the experience of the young people over the time period investigated is merited.

5. Sample Size – the sample size in this study was small and may have hindered things from appearing significant which were. Future research is needed ideally with more cases to further examine the influence of the programme.

3.4 Summary

This chapter described the methodology used to address the overarching aim and objectives of this study. Firstly, this chapter set forth the rationale, aim and objectives of the study including the presentation of a table to link the objectives to the research tools. Secondly, the chapter looked at how the study was designed based on the positivist and naturalist approaches which further informed the development of the research tools. These involved both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Thirdly, issues in relation to how the study was implemented were explored these include sampling, ethical considerations, data collection and methods of analysis. Finally, the main limitations experienced by the study are addressed. The following chapter will outline the research context to this study.
Chapter Four: Research Context

4 Research Context

Introduction

The following Chapter will outline the context in which this research takes place. It will outline a number of key areas. Section 4.1 will highlight the history of the development of youth work in Ireland. This section will then describe youth leadership in Ireland as well as internationally evaluated youth leadership programmes. This section will also outline national and international policies. Section 4.2 provides a detailed description of the youth leadership programme’s origins and development. This section also focuses on the aims and objectives of the leadership programme and presents the programme logic model. Section 4.3 describes the service provider – Foróige the National Youth Development Organisation where the youth leadership programme was developed. This section also outlines the settings in which the youth leadership programme takes place.

4.1 Youth Work – History & National Policies

Illustrated below is a brief history of the development of youth work in Ireland. This is followed by an exploration of the development of youth leadership nationally and internationally. Finally, the section looks at national and international policies that have importance in the context of this study.

4.1.1 History of Youth Work Development

British Youth Work, as in many areas of social policy, has been very influential in shaping early youth work in Ireland. With the onset of industrialisation fundamental changes were seen in the family unit, patterns of employment changed, people moved to larger towns or cities for work and peoples leisure time changed. Adolescence was also recognised as its own distinct period of development (Musgrove, 1964). Following on from this, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries there were concerns about the working-class youth. With extra leisure time on their hands and big improvements in the accuracy of national juvenile crime statistics there was the appearance of a huge increase in
crime. This led to disquiet amongst the middle-class about the working class and was the starting point for the first youth work initiatives (Forde et al., 2009). Early youth work was largely church based and was aimed at maintenance and stability of existing social and political structures. These initiatives were aimed at moral and social improvements of adolescents and largely character building with a strong religious element. Citizenship was a key theme with an emphasis on being good loyal citizens and encouraging young people to take responsible roles within society (Forde et al., 2009). In Ireland around this time, before the Free State, early youth work was carried out by the Boys and Girls brigades, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and The Girl’s Friendly Society. Key factors influencing Irish Youth Work were nationalism, the Roman Catholic Church and very limited state intervention.

Initial Irish Youth Organisations included the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA in 1844), the Catholic Young Men’s Society (CYMS in 1849), Boy Scouts (1908), Na Fianna Éireann (1911), Catholic Scouts of Ireland (1927), Girl Guides (1911), and Catholic Guides of Ireland (1928). While in the UK Youth work was placed on a statutory footing in 1939, Irish Youth Work remains in the main in the voluntary sector without statutory status. The City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB) is the only statutory service in the Republic.

4.1.2 Youth Leadership in Ireland

There are two Youth Leadership programmes run in Ireland; one the Foróige (Irish for Youth Development) Leadership for Life programme run by Foróige which will be explored in detail below. The other is Lucca Leadership which is a global leadership programme. Each international programme that is run is based on transformational leadership i.e. leadership that uplifts humanity through creating lasting and effective positive change. Lucca means light and is the name of the town where it ran its first programme in 2003. Their mission is to run programmes in practical leadership which equip people to be effective transformational leaders so that they can make a difference. Courses are designed for ages from 12-30 years old. In 2004, Lucca Leadership began in
Ireland. Since 2003, more than 6000 people have attended Lucca Leadership programmes.

Other youth leadership opportunities for young people in Ireland include competitions run by Rotary Youth Leadership Development and internships run by AIESEC. **Rotary Youth Leadership Development** is a competition which runs annually and is open to young people aged 15-18 years. The objectives of Rotary are to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise. In particular, Rotarians are asked to encourage and foster: the development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service, high ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations, the application of the ideal of service by every Rotarian to his/her personal, business and community life, the advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional people united in the ideal of service.

**AIESEC** is present in over 110 countries and territories and with over 60,000 members, AIESEC is the world's largest youth-run organisation. Focused on providing a platform for youth leadership development, AIESEC offers young people the opportunity to participate in international internships, experience leadership and participate in a global learning environment. What makes AIESEC unique is the youth-driven impactful experience that it offers to its members. AIESEC is run by young people for young people, enabling a strong experience to all its stakeholders. Its focus is primarily on international internships and matching young people with an internship of their choice for between 6 weeks to 18 months.

**4.1.3 International Evaluated Youth Leadership Programmes**

This section will describe internationally evaluated youth leadership programmes and their findings.

Research describing the **Youth Leadership Institute** (Libby et al., 2006) indicates that it provides programmes which outline key concepts including community-based civic engagement, philanthropy, policy advocacy and action research. While the study does not illustrate any quantitative outcomes they call
for additional research on leadership programmes to ensure effective leadership programmes.

Qualitative research was carried out on the **Facilitating Leadership in Youth programme** (Detzler et al., 2007) which works with young people who live in daily violence, discrimination and poverty. The research describes the programme which provides youth with year round support and services, caring and trusting relationships and gradually increases leadership opportunities by participating in decision making as well as facilitating meetings, speaking in public, mapping community resources, creating visual media, participating in the youth council and training other teens. They also outlined qualitative experiences from participants including details of how they benefitted and what they were able to contribute to the programme including increased advocacy and influence over what happened in the centre and programme content.

The **Civic Leadership Institute** provides a three-week residential service-learning programme for academically gifted young people (Lee et al., 2008). The programme helps young people explore complex social issues that are faced by communities and society. The end of programme evaluations and narratives from 230 participants revealed positive perceptions of the programme, particularly the service projects. The participants felt that the coursework combined with the hands-on experiences enhanced their awareness of civic issues, increased their motivation to engage in social issues in their communities, and allowed them gain a new understanding and respect for diversity.

Three American leadership programmes were explored by Klau (2006) using Heifetz model of adaptive leadership (1994). Klau (2006) found that one four-day programme’s constant focus on cheering undermined many of the espoused values of the programme. The programme also appeared to have a lack of clarity on what it meant by leadership and placed a strong emphasis on authority. He further illustrated that no instances of learning from group dynamics were evident, little emphasis on engaging participants emotionally and no formal opportunities to reflect on their actions were incorporated. Promisingly, he did highlight that the programme which engages thousands of
youth annually may be improved through exposure to relevant research and best practice. The next programme he evaluated was a four-day conference with a passionate conception of leadership, which provided the opportunity for small group discussion and debate, however, he highlighted that it did not address issues of ostracism within the group. He felt there was a focus on spiritual heroism which encouraged participants to experience leadership in a personal and adaptive way but there was little focus on group dynamics. However emotional challenge was evident as was reflective practice. The final programme Klau evaluated was found to have little clarity on what it meant by leadership, however, it did focus strongly on group processing, case-in-point learning and reflective practice in relation to race, religion and gender. Klau argued that while it was good to be aware of issues it did not necessarily facilitate translation into how those young people would act as leaders with this knowledge on return to their homes. Essentially, Klau’s work warns against unstructured, shapeless leadership programmes that are not clear on their purpose.

A comparison study of 25 leadership programmes for 12-18 year olds involving 586 young people versus no leadership programme involving 747 young people in pre/post measures in Connecticut found that those involved in the leadership programmes had an improved sense of support from their local communities (Anderson et al., 2007). They also found enhanced social self-efficacy amongst males specifically. Furthermore, those involved in the programme initially scored higher than the comparison group on a variety of youth outcome measures. Those at lower level overall functioning were more likely than those who began the programme at a higher level of functioning to report positive changes. This raises two areas for consideration, the first being that those young people who self select to take part in leadership programmes may have higher skill levels than those who do not. Secondly, that those with lower functioning levels when exposed to leadership programmes may have a greater capacity to develop much needed skills illustrating the importance of accessibility and opportunity for young people.

A study of the Chicano-Latino Youth Leadership Institute which carries out a 2 day leadership institute, involved 205 participants in their pre/post research,
the study revealed outcomes including increased levels of community service, improved peer-relationships and higher graduation rates than those of Chicano-Latino non-participants (Bloomberg et al., 2003). The results also demonstrated increased self-confidence, improved social and leadership skills, expanded sense of community responsibility and ownership, expanded relationships with positive adult and peer role models. This programme however was run over a very short duration.

The evaluation of **Youth Leadership Training Programme (YLTP)** in Tanzania explored the programmes concept, assumptions, approach to training and contents (Stiftung, 2003). The evaluation looked primarily at the implementation and modification of the programme with 17 young people (aged 21-35 years) over 18 months, it also included some qualitative data that indicated enhanced confidence, maturity, communication, critical thinking and ability to create a persuasive argument.

Qualitative research was carried out on the **Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL)** programme which employed a case study of two female teens over the course of three years in California (Conner & Strobel, 2007). The programme uses social science research techniques to study an issue of concern and use their findings to formulate policy recommendations. The focus of the programme however, was not explicitly on leadership skills but focused on communication, interpersonal skills, analytic and critical reflection, and positive involvement in community. The study illustrated how young people diverge in their learning depending on their own unique strengths and preferences. It also highlights the importance of flexibility within a programme to ensure equal opportunities to participate at a higher level with more responsibility, positive reinforcement, self-reflection and goal setting.

Developing effective and ethical leaders in adulthood is a key focus of the **LeadNow** the leadership programme starts their work with 10-13 year olds to achieve this goal (Nelson, 2010). The programme carries out a Social Influence Survey (2009) to ensure they match the child to the programme appropriately and have found that those scoring lower opt out of the training after the initial module. Reports from parents and teachers, as well as repeated social influence
survey indicate a change in self-image. Young people were beginning to see themselves as leaders demonstrating increased positive peer influence and improved verbal responses. This programme is however for a younger audience than the programme being studied here.

A number of evaluated youth leadership programmes were identified by Child Trends (2009). These include; Leadership Excellence (2004), Futures for Children (2009) and Project Venture (2002). Leadership Excellence is for 95 young African-Americans aged 6-13 year olds who experience multiple barriers. The evaluation yielded satisfaction rates which increased for parents but decreased for the young participants over the course of the programme. Improvements in seven developmental assets including; success at school, sense of self, ability to communicate, ability to learn new things, ability to connect with adults, ability to work with others and ability to stay safe, increased for parents but decreased for participants.

Native Americans from elementary to high school are involved in Futures for Children (2009). Annual reports from Futures for Children indicate that 95% of participants graduate from high school, typically 30% of Native Americans tend to drop out of high school. Also 35-40% of participants continue to college or higher learning.

In Project Excel African American youth (mean age 13.3 years) were randomly assigned to a leadership or life skills course which involved 65 young (Lewis et al., 2006). The findings indicate that those involved in the leadership course gained in terms of communal world views, individualism, school connectedness, motivation to achieve and social change activities over time when compared with the comparison group. The limitations of this study were the short time frame, one semester, and no follow-up to determine if these were sustainable changes.

LEAD (leadership, education, achievement and development) involved 146 young African Americans in an intervention using expressive art versus a comparison group. The findings indicate that protective factors, behavioural self-control, self-esteem and resilience increased for the intervention group over the comparison (Shelton, 2009). However this programme’s focus was on the
prevention of youth offending behaviour and failed to discuss or evaluate the leadership aspect of the programme, which places a question over its focus on leadership.

The focus of **Project Venture** (2002 cited in Child Trends 2009) is on preventing substance abuse, developing peer relationships and group skills among high-risk American Indian youth and other at risk youth through outdoors experiential activities, adventure camps, community-oriented service learning and classroom-based problem solving activities. This study involved 2000 young people randomly assigned to treatment or control groups involving baseline, post, 12-month and 18-month follow-up assessment. Findings indicate that, compared with a control group, participants in the programme first initiated substance use at an older age, significantly reduced lifetime alcohol and tobacco use, inhalant use, marijuana and other illegal drug use. Programme participants also demonstrated less depression and aggressive behaviour, improved school attendance and improved internal locus of control and resiliency. Despite this being targeted as a leadership programme it did not yield any information or outcomes in relation to leadership acquisition.

Unfortunately, as can be seen here with the exception of the study from Tanzania, most of the research is American with little available other international research in this area. The evidence thus far supports leadership programmes as being very worthwhile. However, as can be seen there is limited quantitative data to support the acquisition of leadership skills revealing a gap in the research. Notably none of those outlined carried out longitudinal research with the exception of Project Venture which failed to look at leadership acquisition. Furthermore, the interconnection between youth leadership and resilience and social support has not been explored.

## 4.1.4 Policy Context

Detailed here are a number of relevant policies nationally and internationally that inform the landscape of youth work in Ireland, see figure 4.1 for a flow chart of polices.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child brings into a legally binding framework the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for children (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989). In 1989, it was decided that a special convention was needed to recognise the rights of children to ensure their protection, consideration and well-being. This international Convention has now been ratified by 194 countries. Ireland ratified the convention in 1992. Once a country ratifies the Convention they become a State Party to the Convention and must review their national laws to ensure full compliance with the Articles of the Convention. The Convention deals with specific needs and rights of the child. It requires that states act in the best interests of their children and acknowledges that every child has basic rights, including a right to life, their own name and identity, to be raised by their parents and to have a relationship with both parents, even if they are separated. The Convention consists of 54 Articles and two Optional Protocols. Four core principles of the Convention are:

- all rights apply to all children without exception or discrimination of any kind (Article 2);
- the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (Article 3);
• State Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child (Article 6);

• Children’s views must be taken into account in all matters affecting them (Article 12).

Since Ireland ratified the Convention there has been an increased emphasis on listening to young people’s views and opinions by policy makers and service providers on matters that affect them such as mental health, service provision, interaction with healthcare services etc., The UN defines youth as young people from 15-24 years, however in the context of this study the research is exploring young people from 15-18 years.


The Children First Guidelines were put in place to ensure that people put children’s safety at the centre of their work. The guidelines intend to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect, and deal effectively with concerns. These guidelines were developed to improve professional practice in both statutory and voluntary agencies that provide services to children and families. The key principles of the guidelines include: (i) The welfare of children is of paramount importance. (ii) Early intervention and support should be available to promote the welfare of children and families, particularly where they are vulnerable or at risk of not receiving adequate care or protection. (iii) A proper balance must be struck between protecting children and respecting the rights and needs of parents/carers and families. Where there is conflict, the child’s welfare must come first. (iv) Children have a right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously. (v) Parents/carers have a right to respect and should be consulted and involved in matters that concern their family. (vi) Factors such as the child’s family circumstances, gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture and race should be considered when taking protective action. (vii) The criminal dimension of any action must not be ignored. (viii) Children should only be separated from parents/carers when alternative means of protecting them have been exhausted. Re-union should be considered in the context of planning for the child’s future. (ix) The prevention,
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detection and treatment of child abuse or neglect requires a coordinated multidisciplinary approach, effective management, clarity of responsibility and training of personnel in organisations working with children. (x) Professionals and agencies working with adults who for a range of reasons may have serious difficulties meeting their children’s basic needs for safety and security should always consider the impact of their adult client/patient’s behaviour on a child and act in the child’s best interests. (DCYA, 2011)

Youth Work Act 2001

In December 2001 the Youth Work act was enacted. One of the key features of the Youth Work Act 2001 is that it achieved a definition of ‘youth work’. This definition focused on two core components these being: that youth work is based on the voluntary participation of young people, and that it should have an educational nature and that it should be provided by youth work services. As Section 3 of the Act states:

In this Act, ‘youth work’ means a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young person’s through their voluntary participation, and which is: a. complementary to their formal, academic or vocational education and training; and b. provided primarily by voluntary youth work organisations (Irish Statute Book, 2001).

The Act also defines anyone under-25 years of age as a ‘young person’. As well as this the Act named the Vocational Education Committees (VECs) as being responsible for the coordination of youth work via a 3-yearly Youth Work Development Plan. The Act also provided for the establishment of a Youth Work Committee and a Voluntary Youth Council at local level. The aim of the Youth Work Committee is to advise and make recommendations to the VECs on the performance of youth service provision. The role of the Voluntary Youth Council is to advise the VECs on matters relating to the Youth Work Development Plan. The act also formalised the allocation of grants for Youth Work and allowed for expansion of the National Youth Work Advisory Committee. As well as this, it established a statutory position of Assessor of
Youth Work to enable assessment of youth work, to ensure best possible use of public money in youth work programmes and services.

**National Youth Work Development Plan (2003)**

The National Youth Work Development Plan (DES, 2003) outlines three key features of youth work that inform the development of the plan. These are: that it is developmental and educational in nature; it involves the voluntary participation of young people; and it is provided by voluntary organisations. It suggests that the primary concern of youth work is the education of young people in non-formal settings. The NYWDP has four main goals: 1. to facilitate young people and adults to participate more fully in, and to gain optimum benefit from, youth work programmes and services; 2. to enhance the contribution of youth work to social inclusion, social cohesion and citizenship in a rapidly changing national and global context; 3. to put in place an expanded and enhanced infrastructure for development, support and coordination at national and local level; and 4. to put in place mechanisms for enhancing professionalism and ensuring quality standards in youth work.

**National Recreation Policy (2007)**

Building on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 31 recognises ‘the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’, the vision of the National Recreation Policy was: ‘An Ireland where the importance of recreation is recognised so that young people experience a range of quality recreational opportunities to enrich their lives and promote physical, cultural, mental and social well-being’ (OMC, 2007). Seven objections of the policy include: 1. Give young people a voice in the design, implementation and monitoring of recreation policies and facilities. 2. Promote organised activities for young people and examine ways to motivate them to be involved. 3. Ensure that the recreational needs of young people are met through the development of youth friendly and safe environments. 4. Maximise the range of recreational opportunities available for young people who are marginalised, disadvantaged or who have a disability. 5. Promote relevant qualifications/standards in the provision of recreational activities. 6.
Develop a partnership approach in developing and funding recreational opportunities across the statutory, community and voluntary sectors. 7. Improve information on, evaluation and monitoring of recreational provision for young people in Ireland.

The policy also looks at ways of overcoming barriers for young people. The policy also highlights leadership skills among the many impacts to the developmental processes in adolescence.


*Our Children – Their Lives: The National Children’s Strategy* (2000) - was introduced to facilitate coordination of services providing for children so that they would feel listened to, included and have equitable access to health and education facilities.

The vision of the National Children’s Strategy (2000:4) is: ‘An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential.’

The operating principles of the National Children’s Strategy are:

1. **Child-centred** – where the best interests of the child are give due regard.
2. **Family oriented** – the family is normally the best place to raise children. Therefore, external intervention should be aimed at empowering and supporting families in the community.
3. **Equitable** – all children should have equal opportunity and access to services, with particular emphasis being given to those most at risk.
4. **Inclusive** – the diversity of children’s experiences, cultures and lifestyles must be recognised and given expression
5. **Action oriented** – services need to be focused on achieving specific results to agreed standards in a cost-effective manner.
6. **Integrated**: measures should be taken in partnership, within and between relevant players be it the State, the voluntary/community sector and families; services for children should be delivered in a co-ordinated, coherent and
effective manner through integrated needs analysis, policy planning and service delivery.

The National Children’s Strategy works from a ‘whole child perspective’, which recognises the capacity of children to interact with and shape the world around them as they grow up. Nine dimensions of children’s development are outlined including: physical and mental well-being, emotional and behavioural well-being, intellectual capacity, spiritual and moral well-being, identity, self-care, family relationships, social and peer relationships, and social presentation. It highlights that all nine dimensions must be addressed if a child is to enjoy a satisfactory childhood and make a successful transition into adulthood. Based on the whole child perspective, the strategy set out three national goals for children (Department of Health and Children, 2000:11):

**Goal 1** – Children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

**Goal 2** – Children’s lives will be better understood; their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and effectiveness of services.

**Goal 3** – Children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development.

A matrix of the policies, their key messages and impact on youth work are presented in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Matrix of Policy, Message and Impact on Youth Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy/Legislation</th>
<th>Key Message</th>
<th>Impact on Youth Work</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)</td>
<td>Young people must not be discriminated against, their best interests must be taken into account, and their views must be taken into account on matters affecting them.</td>
<td>Youth voice and participation must occur, youth services must be inclusive and equitable, young people’s best interests must be at the heart of the work carried out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s First (2011)</td>
<td>Children’s safety from welfare concerns and abuse situations.</td>
<td>Staff and volunteers equipped with the skills to deal with child protection issues and report to ensure the safety of young people they work with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Work Act 2001</td>
<td>Definition of Youth work, assessor of youth work, voluntary participation.</td>
<td>Focus of youth work towards ‘planned programme of education’, provided a framework to assess quality youth work (NQSF).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Recreation Policy (2007)</td>
<td>Rights to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities to promote physical, cultural, mental and social well-being.</td>
<td>Youth voice in design of programmes, recreational needs met including young people marginalised, disadvantaged and with a disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Children’s Strategy (2000)</td>
<td>Listen to and include young people, integrated partnerships with key players in young people’s lives, young people’s lives benefit from research and receive quality supports/services.</td>
<td>Youth participation and advocacy on issues concerning them. Increased emphasis on evidence informed work, research/evaluation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Programmatic Context

4.2.1 Foróige Leadership for Life Programme

The Leadership for Life programme was developed by Foróige’s Best Practice Unit in 2009. The opportunity to develop the programme was the result of funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies. The funding provided the capacity to develop the programme based on practice wisdom from within the organisation and research on international literature that was available. The programme has been developed as a way of exploring vision and passion, and to enable young people to develop key skills such as planning, decision making, critical thinking, goal setting and problem solving that are core to leadership. The leadership programme defines leadership as facilitating change and development of the individual and society through use of core social and emotional competencies, including self-awareness, collaboration, empathy and relationship building (Foróige, 2010a, 2010b). The programme being researched is a three module, 80 hour youth leadership programme that is offered to young people aged 16-18 years which consists of facilitated youth leadership content, individual reflection, self-directed learning, team research and a community action project. The programme contains experiential activities that are explored in groups as well as practical work and opportunities for leadership in each module. Outlined below are the learning outcomes and content for each module.
Learning Outcomes for Module One

Upon completion of module one of the leadership programme participants can expect to be able to:

- Understand key concepts and characteristics of good leadership.
- Identify their personal strengths and motivations that inspire them to become leaders.
- Clarify and develop their personal values.
- Develop a clear vision of what they would like to achieve as a leader.
- Practice communication skills such as listening and presenting.
- Practice problem solving and critical thinking skills as part of a group.
- Set clear goals and develop action plans to achieve them.
- Communicate their leadership action plan to others.
- Reflect on their learning via learning journals.

Content for Module One includes 15 one hour facilitated learning experiences including 15 sessions on:

1. Introduction to the programme & participants – introduces participants to the programme content, sets a group contract and offers the participants the opportunity to get to know each other and what they are committing to and the concept of leadership and leaders.
2. Introduction to Leadership – participants gain an understanding of the concept of leadership, what it means to them. Participants gain an understanding of the differences and similarities between them.
3. Understanding leadership – participants understand the influence of power, famous leaders and skills to be an effective leader.
4. Team building and critical thinking Team building and group critical thinking activities where participants begin to emerge as leaders. The importance of critical thinking and taking on leadership roles is made.
5. Communication skills I - participants understand the importance of communication skills and how these link to leadership.
6. Communication Skills II – participants understand the importance of listening and contribution. Participants also learn about presentation skills. The connection between communication skills and leadership is made.
7. Team Problem Solving – team problem solving activity which enables participants to take on greater roles as leaders. Problem solving linked to leadership.
8. Self awareness – activities in relation to enhancing self-awareness, young people connect with what’s important in their lives and become aware of what is important in other people’s lives. Self-awareness linked to leadership development.
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9. Values – further activities explore participant’s values and what is important in their life and how their values inform the decisions they make. Values also linked into leadership decisions.

10. Community needs analysis – participants envisage their community and how what they would like to improve. Young people consider how they can make an impact in their community and this is connected to leadership.

11. Global visions – a global perspective is taken when the participants are engaged in a philanthropic activity where they can make change on a global level. Participants need to argue for and debate for their particular change.

12. Personal vision and goal setting – participants explore their own lives and what contribution they would like to make. They develop a personal vision and link this to how they intend to be young leaders.

13. Action planning – participants develop a concrete action plan to achieve their goal by setting SMART goals and considering what will strengthen and act as a barrier to their goal.

14. Presentations – participants present their plan to their peers and ask their peers for support, analysis and feedback in realising their goal.

15. Evaluation – participants evaluate their participation on module one and the module itself. They consider where what they have learned and how they intend to take this forward.

Module 1 also involves 15 hours of self-directed learning and personal reflection outside of group time.

Learning Outcomes for Module Two

On completion of module two participants will be able to:

- Understand and critique different leadership styles
- Develop a greater understanding of their style of leadership.
- Explore the challenges and difficulties of leadership.
- Organise and plan a team project.
- Understand and use the Logic Model for planning.
- Research local/national/global issues.
- Develop and articulate constructive arguments.
- Practice problem solving and team building exercises.
- Understand the value of critical thinking to solve problems.
- Explain and apply methods of conflict resolution.
- Reflect on their learning via learning journals.

Content for Module Two includes 15 one hour facilitated learning experiences including 15 sessions on:

1. Understanding leadership – participants explore their concept of leadership now and their progress on their personal leadership goal.
2. Research skills – participants are introduced to research methods and begin preparation for their team research project. The importance of research in leadership is considered.
3. Planning using the logic model – participants are introduced to the logic model as a tool for planning their team research project. Planning and project management are linked to leadership
4. Leadership styles - participants are introduced to a leadership style assessment and engage in a team activity to explore each others’ styles of leadership. For the team research project leadership is rotated and different styles of leadership are critiqued.
5. Self awareness and values – this session focuses on further self-awareness and refining their values as leaders
6. Team Research Project – this session offers the participants practical assistance with their team research projects.
7. Communication skills – participants understand further the importance of clear communication and the importance of being aware of emotions and how these can be communicated as a leader
8. Conflict Resolution – participants explore conflict followed by role plays to resolve conflict situations in customer service. Participants consider the importance of conflict resolution as a leader.
9. Debating – participants explore their comfort zones and what it is like to move beyond them through impromptu debating.
10. Team Research Project – participants spend this session resolving any issues that are emerging on their team research project with the facilitators and their peers.
11. Who Leads? – participants’ explore their attitudes, values, stereotyping and how these can inform their decisions consciously and unconsciously. This is then linked to leadership decisions.
12. Critical thinking – participants spend time exploring critical thinking statements and stretch their ability to analyse statements from the media.
13. Team research project - participants spend this session resolving any issues that are emerging on their team research project with the facilitators and their peers.
14. Presentations – teams present their research projects to their peers and external agencies working in the topic area that they are interested in.
15. Evaluation – participants evaluate their participation on module two and the module itself. They consider where what they have learned and how they intend to take this forward into their community action project.

Module 2 also involves 15 hours of self-directed learning and a group research project completed outside of group time.

Learning Outcomes for Module Three

On completion of module three participants will be able to:

- Apply their learning and demonstrate leadership skills through a practical community based project
- Plan and organise an individual community action project
- Evaluate their project and present a portfolio of their experience
- Reflect on their learning via learning journals
Module 3: Is the culmination of the programme and enables the participants to focus on their own individual community leadership action project. The community action projects are an opportunity for young people to exercise leadership in their community, and put their skills into practice. The facilitator’s role is to support participants in selecting and carrying out an appropriate action project, but it is not to organise this for them. They meet regularly with their facilitator and peers for support and to explore any challenges arising. This module includes a personal 20 hour community action project. Participants must articulate a plan for their community action project i.e. what they intend to do, why they intend to do it, who it will benefit, what resources they intend to use, what activities will be involved and what the outcome of the project will be. Participants carry out a logic model and when they are ready initiate their community project and need to carry out the following to complete their module 3.

Community Action Project – from concept to completion the participants engage in their own personal leadership project in their communities.

Reflective Journal and Portfolio – participants complete a journal and portfolio to outline what they did and their learning from the project.

Some examples of community action projects include:

1. One young leader set up a camogie team (Irish team game) for younger girls at her local GAA club. While she was undertaking module two she was working on this goal – meeting with her coach and club officials, and beginning recruitment by visiting local schools and talking to the pupils. Her team research project for module two looked at healthy behaviour and exercise. For her community action project she continued recruiting for an under 11 camogie team for her club, and organised and ran a training camp for the girls she had recruited. She is continuing to coach the team in her spare time.

2. Another leadership goal in module one was to fundraise and travel to Zambia with the Alan Kerins Project. Working as part of a team, he set fundraising goals, and took the lead in organising events himself to help reach the team fundraising target. For module two his group researched issues of poverty and youth in Zambia, and the work of Alan Kerins Projects to address these. For his community action project, he travelled to Zambia with Alan Kerins projects, where he worked with local young people, learned about the culture and challenges youth in Africa experience and shared his own challenges. He came back inspired to continue to raise funds for Zambia and he reported being incredibly appreciative of all he had.

3. Another individual leadership goal was to get a new garbage bin put into the local village, this participant felt there was a lot of litter. Her research in the early stages of carrying out this goal suggested that there would be significant opposition to her plan, as local businesses did not want the bin near their premises. For her community action project, she organised for her local club to improve the garden for residents of a local nursing home. They
met with the residents and managers of the home, raised money to buy flowers, planted a garden and organised for a local handyman to repair the broken bench.

Programme Delivery

The programme is delivered by trained Foróige staff and volunteers who receive two days training to run the programme. The training includes an overview of the theoretical underpinnings, the logic model to the programme, an understanding of leadership theory, an outline of the Foundation Certificate and what it involves, grading of the participants work, models of programme delivery and facilitation on the content of the programme. Facilitators are either Foróige staff or Foróige volunteers selected on the basis of experience, facilitation skills, enthusiasm and recommendations from managers in the case of staff and Regional Youth officers in the case of volunteers. The programme recommends that 2 facilitators run the programme together over the course of one academic year. Facilitators meet for 30 minutes to prepare for the session and a further 15 minutes after the session to evaluate how it went. Facilitators are provided with support from their managers, regional youth officers and Foróige’s Best Practice Unit. The programme is delivered in three settings; the Foróige club led by volunteers, Foróige projects led by staff and volunteers and schools led by Foróige staff and volunteers. Exploring the setting in which the programme is delivered i.e. community versus school is beyond the scope of this research however could be considered for a future study.

Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action

The entire three modules (see figure 4.3) lead to a qualification of Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action from the National University of Ireland, Galway. This is the first of its kind in Ireland for young people in this age group. The Foundation Certificate is offered in association with the UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement who acts as the university examiner for the programme. The participants are assessed through continuous assessment and to attain the award the young participants must submit work on each module of the programme including a personal reflective journal, workbook, team research project and individual community
action project portfolio. The facilitators grade the young peoples’ participation on the programme, their attendance, their presentations and workbooks, team projects and community projects. Each student receives feedback on their performance and the work is graded further by staff in the Best Practice Unit to ensure consistency and bell-shaped curve in terms of grades across the country. Finally, NUI Galway review the participants work and participants either pass or fail the course the results of which are put forward to the exams board. The Foundation Certificate is a level 6 certification and awards young people 15 ECT’s (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) which can be used in a related discipline. In receiving this award it offers young people the opportunity to graduate from a National University amongst other graduates from degree programmes, masters and higher degrees which for some may help generate a self-belief in their capacity to access third level education. The Foundation Certificate is recognition for the first time from a third level institute of youth work in a formal capacity and is attractive for young people due to the recognition of the content that they cover and the work they put into the programme. For those young people involved in the leadership programme in 2011/2012 111 young people graduated from the Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action.

Figure 4.2 Components of Leadership Programme Accreditation
4.2.2 Foróige Leadership Programme Development

The youth leadership programme evaluated here was developed from a process that involved extensive literature review, consultation with youth, staff and volunteers to ensure it is needs-led, developed based on available international evidence and in an outcomes focused manner with a logic model to illustrate the desired outcomes of the programme. The programme was then piloted and adjusted based on feedback.

A literature review was carried out by the Child and Family Research Centre to inform the development of the leadership programme. Foróige’s Best Practice Unit also completed an extensive literature search to inform the core components necessary for leadership development. Initially, module one was developed with a working group including staff and volunteers. Expected outcomes were drawn up and experiential activities developed to meet these outcomes. The programme was piloted with young people on the Best Practice Unit Youth Advisory Board. Feedback was received and the programme was amended as required. A similar approach was taken for module two bearing in mind a spiral curriculum so as to ensure the material in module one was built upon. Module three was brought about to enable young people to have the opportunity to exercise their leadership skills in their community. See figure 4.2 for an illustration of the programme development cycle for the leadership programme.
4.2.3 Foróige Leadership Programme Logic Model

The logic model in figure 4.4 illustrates how the programme activities link to the expected outcomes for the young participants. As can be seen their involvement in experiential activities and the various projects are anticipated to lead to improved communication skills, improved critical thinking, the ability to collaborate with peers on tasks, lead to improved sense of self-awareness as well as enhanced sense of their own leadership style, enhanced sense of ability to contribute to their community as well as feeling more supported and more resilient.

The leadership programme aims:

- To enable young people to develop the skills, inspiration, vision, confidence, and action plans to be effective leaders.
- To empower young people to make a positive difference to their society through the practice of effective leadership.
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**Figure 4.4 Youth Leadership Programme Logic Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Short-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Medium-term Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-Term Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foróige Ethos &amp; Values</td>
<td>Active experiential learning modules including weekly self-reflection journal</td>
<td>300 Young people involved in a One Year Youth Leadership programme</td>
<td>Young people demonstrate:</td>
<td>Young people demonstrate an improved positive sense of self and ability to contribute to community</td>
<td>Young people demonstrate enhanced ability to seek out and seize leadership opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved communication skills</td>
<td>Improved critical thinking</td>
<td>Young people take an active leadership role in their community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Critical thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved self-awareness</td>
<td>Improved self-awareness</td>
<td>Young people feel connected to their community and recognised for their contribution to society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership programme:</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved ability to collaborate on tasks</td>
<td>Improved leadership skills as well as awareness of own leadership style</td>
<td>Young person feels resilient and supported in their leadership roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workbooks &amp; Manual</td>
<td>Values clarification</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved problem solving and coping strategies</td>
<td>Improved problem solving and coping strategies</td>
<td>Young people are consciously and actively involved in their development and that of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Practice Unit &amp; Manager</td>
<td>Team work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved planning and goal setting</td>
<td>Improved planning and goal setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Leadership Styles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improved ability to resolve conflicts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>NUIG Accreditations &amp; Support</td>
<td>Goal setting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peer support</td>
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<td>Guest speakers</td>
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<td>Individual projects</td>
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<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Debating</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team projects with rotating leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentations in front of peers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual Community Action Project</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Short-Term Outcomes**: Young people demonstrate improved communication skills, improved critical thinking, improved self-awareness, improved ability to collaborate on tasks, improved leadership skills as well as awareness of own leadership style, improved problem solving and coping strategies, improved planning and goal setting, improved ability to resolve conflicts.

**Medium-term Outcomes**: Young people feel connected to their community and recognised for their contribution to society, young people feel more supported.

**Long-Term Outcomes**: Young people are resilient and supported in their leadership roles, young people display improved resilience to life’s challenges.
4.3 Description of the Service Provider – Foróige

As mentioned above Foróige (Irish for Youth Development) is the organisation with which the Leadership for Life programme was developed and is run. Foróige began in 1952 and today serves 64,000 young people annually in a range of youth work services from local youth clubs to more specific youth projects. Young people aged 12-18 years are eligible to join Foróige’s which run themselves by electing a youth committee who determine the activities of the club. Foróige youth services and projects involve young people in the 10-20 year old category. Foróige’s purpose is ‘to enable young people to involve themselves consciously and actively in their own development and in the development of society’. Foróige also works with young people experiencing adversity whether through poverty, social exclusion, early school-leaving, substance use, youth crime, minority groups, poor school attainment etc., Foróige operates a number of programmes such as the Big Brothers Big Sister Programme, Youth Citizenship, the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship, Relationships and Sexuality Education, Pro-social behaviour programmes as well as the Youth Leadership programme core to this study. Foróige’s philosophy is that each person has unique qualities and attributes, that they are creative, that they can take responsibility, that they are interdependent with others, that they can make a difference in the world, that they have influence and that they can learn from every situation.

4.3.1 Leadership Programme Setting

The leadership programme is delivered by trained Foróige staff or volunteers in a number of different contexts which will be outlined here. Foróige staff deliver the programme in youth projects such as Neighbourhood Youth Projects, Youth Development Projects, Garda Youth Diversion Projects and Youth Services. Foróige staff also deliver the programme in a number of school settings. In both the community setting and the school setting staff have volunteers to co-facilitate the programme with them. In the majority of cases staff run the programme once a week for between 1-1.5 hours. Foróige volunteers deliver the leadership programme either in conjunction with a staff person as part of a project or school or on their own with the support of either project staff or Regional Youth Officers in the youth club setting. The support that staff provide to volunteers in general is
practical in the form of photocopying or availing of premises, as well as this they provide guidance to volunteers delivering the programme. In some cases, a number of Foróige clubs have come together to run the programme as they have had insufficient young people interested in the programme in their area but by bringing other clubs together have generated sufficient interest to run the programme. In some cases, the volunteers run the programme over a number of Saturdays throughout the year or one evening a week. All Foróige staff and volunteers have been Garda Vetted, reference checked and undergone recruitment processes to be in the position they are in. Additional to this, the Leadership for Life programme recruits staff and volunteers with an interest in running the programme, with prior experience of facilitation and who are committed to running the programme over the duration of one year. The Leadership for Life programme also runs through a five day international conference which offers young people the opportunity to take part in either module one or two. Young people involved in the conference were not invited to take part in the study as most would only get the opportunity to complete one of the modules.

4.4 **Summary**

The purpose of this Chapter was to provide contextual information for this research. Initially, it examined the development of youth work in Ireland, as well as outlined national and international youth leadership programmes researched. Following this, a number of national and international policies that shape the landscape of youth work in Ireland were dealt with. In the next section, a detailed description of the Leadership for Life programme was presented which focused on its structure, logic model and development. Finally, the setting in which the leadership programme is run was described. The next chapter will deal with the findings of the research.
Chapter Five: Research Findings

5 Research Findings

Introduction

The overarching aim of this study is to explore the connection, if any, between leadership, resilience and social support among youth. This Chapter focuses on presenting the findings of the research carried out to meet the objectives of this study. In Section 5.1, a brief description of the characteristics of the sample is presented. Section 5.2 addresses objective 1 and presents the baseline findings of the study at time one. Section 5.3 speaks to objective 2 and presents the findings from the data at time one, two and three for the leadership and comparison groups separately. Section 5.4 addresses objective 3 and presents a comparative analysis for the leadership and comparison groups at time one, two and three. Section 5.5 addresses objective 4 and examines the impact of the programme on young people in both the high and low risk groups. Finally, objective 5 is addressed by Section 5.6 which focuses on key messages for research, policy and practice will be further elaborated on in Chapter 6.

5.1 Sample Characteristics

Introduction

As described in Chapter Three, a quasi-experimental design was taken using a mixed methods approach to explore the connection between youth leadership, resilience and social support. The data required to address the research objectives was collected from young people using questionnaires, interviews, photovoice and from programme facilitators using focus groups. Five measures including 24 sub-measures were administered to the young people at three time points through questionnaire format. The study explored the impact of a youth leadership programme on 267 young people involved in the leadership programme and compared them to a group of 164 young people of similar age, gender and geographical location who were not involved in the leadership programme.

Details of the number of participants involved in the questionnaire data collection over the three time points is outlined in Table 5.1. At time one (T1), 267 young
people were involved in the leadership group and 164 were involved in the comparison group, this dropped to 184 and 99 at time 2 and dropped further again at time 3 to 140 and 45 young people, respectively. This indicates a 52% retention rate for the leadership group and a 27% retention rate for the comparison group. More young people were sought for the comparison group, however challenges occurred in achieving similar numbers to the leadership group. Retention was low due to length of the study and facilitators found it difficult to locate participants, particularly in the comparison group, in the following school year. Having no incentives may also have affected retention rates.

| Table 5.1 Number of Participants and Retention Rate across the Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Time 1** | Leadership | 267 | 184 | 140 | % retention |
| | Comparison | 164 | 99 | 45 | **52%** |
| **Time 2** | Leadership | 184 | 99 | 45 | **27%** |

This analysis consisted of exploring the demographic data for the leadership and comparison groups, and comparing them to each other at time one. In terms of mean age both groups were very similar, the leadership group had an average age of 16.9 years while the comparison group had a mean age of 17 years.

| Table 5.2 Descriptive Statistics for Leadership versus Comparison Groups |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Demographic Characteristics** | **Leadership T1** | **Comparison T1** | **Chi Square** |
| Mean Age | 16.9 | 17 | |
| Age | 16 | 34.2% | 30.0% | - |
| | 17 | 45.5% | 43.8% | |
| | 18 | 20.3% | 26.3% | |
| County | Carlow | .4% | .0% | |
| | Donegal | 15.7% | 11.6% | |
| | Dublin | 26.2% | 25.6% | |
| | Galway | 30% | 37.2% | |
| | Kilkenny | 2.6% | 1.8% | |
| | Leitrim | 3.0% | .6% | |
| | Limerick | 2.6% | 3.7% | |
| | Longford | 3.7% | .0% | |
| | Mayo | 3.7% | 5.5% | |
| | Sligo | 7.5% | 9.1% | |
| | Tipperary | 4.5% | 4.3% | |
| | Waterford | 0% | .6% | |

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001

Males and females were very similar with 39.1% male (n=104) and 60.9% female (n=163) in the leadership group and 38.8% male (n=64) and 61.3% female (n=101)
in the comparison group as seen in figure 5.1, which is slightly different to the overall population of Foróige (figure 5.2).

**Figure 5.1 Gender**

![Pie charts showing gender distribution for leadership and comparison groups.](image)

Break down by area (countryside, town, city) was also similar between the groups with no statistically significant difference evident as per figure 5.3.

**Figure 5.3 Geographical Area**

![Pie charts showing geographical distribution for leadership and comparison groups.](image)

Both groups demonstrated similar for academic level and average grades as seen in table 5.3, with no statistical difference observed between them.
Table 5.3 School Level & Grades for Leadership versus Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristics</th>
<th>Leadership Group T1</th>
<th>Comparison Group T1</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honours</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>73.4%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Grades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>.4%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>.0%</td>
<td>.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001

The ethnicity between both groups was very similar, as well as this the ethnicity of the participants in this study was similar to that of the total population for Foróige in 2011 (see Appendix G). The living arrangements were also very similar between the two groups (see Appendix H). In terms of perception of self as a leader there was a similar self-perception between both groups at time one as to their perceived leadership ability (table 5.4).

Table 5.4 Leadership Self-Perception for Leadership vs Comparison Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Leadership Group T1</th>
<th>Comparison Group T1</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you see yourself as a leader?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>45.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

- A total of 431 young people took part in the leadership research at time one including leadership programme participants (n=267) and a comparison group (n=164) of young people of similar age, gender and geographical location.
- Both groups were very similar in that there was no statistically significant difference between the groups in terms of age, school grade, academic level taken, ethnicity, area or living arrangements.
- For the quantitative data the retention rate was 52% for the leadership group and 27% for the comparison group over the entire study.
5.2 Findings in Relation to Objective 1

To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support among a set of young people, including those who are about to participate in a youth leadership programme and a comparison group who will not take part in the programme (time one).

Introduction

The following section presents the baseline data collected at time one (T1) on the perceived resilience, social support and leadership skills of young participants for the leadership and comparison groups. A one-way between-group analysis of variance (One-way ANOVA) was performed to establish the difference between the leadership and comparison groups at time one. Mean scores are presented in the tables. For all analysis variables were analysed to determine the level of missing data. In cases where there was extreme missing data the variable was removed. When calculating summative scores attention was given to the possibility of missing data and only computed scores for cases where sufficient data existed.

The results indicate that the leadership group were statistically significantly higher than the comparison group at time one on the following measures communication skills, team work, leadership skills and community involvement (table 5.5). Sibling support appears to be the weakest source of support across both groups. Eta squared from Cohen (1988: 284-7) interprets eta squared as .01 = small effect, .06= moderate effect, .14= large effect.
### Table 5.5 Baseline Mean scores for Leadership versus Comparison Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Measures</th>
<th>Leadership Group T1</th>
<th>Comparison Group T1</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolescent Well-being</strong></td>
<td>8.56</td>
<td>9.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resilience1</strong></td>
<td>35.39</td>
<td>35.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand Self</strong></td>
<td>11.85</td>
<td>11.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resilience2</strong></td>
<td>38.06</td>
<td>37.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy</strong></td>
<td>12.43</td>
<td>12.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decision Making</strong></td>
<td>14.89</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Thinking</strong></td>
<td>18.12</td>
<td>17.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Skills</strong></td>
<td>23.10</td>
<td>22.35</td>
<td>F=4.302*</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal Setting</strong></td>
<td>14.74</td>
<td>14.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Work</strong></td>
<td>12.06</td>
<td>11.66</td>
<td>F=4.110*</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem Solving</strong></td>
<td>18.86</td>
<td>18.39</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life Skills ^</strong></td>
<td>101.25</td>
<td>98.36</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Skills</strong></td>
<td>41.69</td>
<td>40.27</td>
<td>F=3.850*</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friend Support</strong></td>
<td>11.07</td>
<td>10.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parental Support</strong></td>
<td>10.58</td>
<td>10.03</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sibling Support</strong></td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>9.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult Support</strong></td>
<td>9.77</td>
<td>9.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Social support^^</strong></td>
<td>40.27</td>
<td>39.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concrete</strong></td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>10.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional</strong></td>
<td>10.24</td>
<td>9.96</td>
<td>+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Esteem</strong></td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td>9.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advice</strong></td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>10.91</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>F=4.739*</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resilience Total</strong></td>
<td>73.16</td>
<td>72.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.  
^^ Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling and adult support.  
+Levene’s test for homogeneity p < .05 null hypothesis rejected  
*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001

While not the primary focus of this study some interesting findings in respect of gender and also in relation to self-perception as a leader emerged (see Appendix I for Gender and Appendix J for Self-perception and Grade). It is beyond the scope

---

1 Leadership skills measure was a cumulative score. This decision was based on an exploratory factor analysis. The data gathered through this survey were factor analyzed using principal axis factoring with a varimax rotation. In addition, seven alternate models were also run using different factoring and rotation models. The criteria established in advance of the selection of factor items were: a factor loading of .35 or higher; at least a .10 difference between the item’s loading with its factors and each of the other factors, and interpretability (Kim & Mueller, 1978). Review of factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1.0 and subsequent analysis of scree test plots indicated that either a one, or at best two, factor solution would be most appropriate since the scree test had distinct and obvious breaks at these points (Kim & Mueller, 1978). The majority of analysis models identified a one factor solution. Based on these findings, and the desire to include all of the items into a single scale, the decision was made to use a one factor solution.
of this study to explore this in greater depth and it is recommended that further exploration be carried out.

- Males scored significantly lower on adolescent well-being scale than females, indicating males have a more positive sense of self than females, in both the leadership and comparison group.
- Females scored higher on empathy and resilience than males in the leadership group, and females scored significantly higher on empathy in the comparison group than males.
- Self-perception as a leader yielded significantly more positive outcomes on 12 of the measures for the leadership group and on 13 of the measures for the comparison group.
- Getting higher average grades in school yielded significantly more positive outcomes for 9 of the measures for the leadership group and 4 of the measures for the comparison group.

Summary at Time One

Leadership Skills: Overall the leadership group are significantly stronger than the comparison group on communication skills, team work, leadership skills and community involvement at time one.

Resilience & Social Support: There was no significant difference between the leadership and comparison groups with respect to resilience and social support at time one.
5.3 Findings in Relation to Objective 2

To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support on completion of the youth leadership programme (time two) and at six months follow-up (time three) in respect of both groups.

Introduction

For this section both the leadership and comparison group will be explored across all three time points to determine if there are any significant differences arising over time. Mean scores are presented in the tables.

Comparison Group T1 (baseline) versus Comparison Group T2 (post-intervention)

A paired T-test was carried out to evaluate the impact of time on the comparison group. There was a statistically significant decrease for the comparison group between time one and time two for resilience 1, friendship support, sibling support, total social support, esteem support and advice support (See Appendix: K)

Comparison Group Time 2 versus Time 3 (follow-up), and Time 1 versus Time 3

A paired T-test was carried out to evaluate the impact of time on the comparison group between time one and time three, and time two and time three. There was a statistically significant increase in sibling support between time two and time three, which saw this score return to baseline levels. Community involvement significantly decreased between time one and time three for the comparison group. (See Appendix: L)

Leadership Group T1 (baseline) versus Leadership Group T2 (post-intervention)

A paired T-test was carried out to evaluate the impact of time on the leadership group. There was a statistically significant increase between time one and time two on resilience 2, decision making, critical thinking, life skills, leadership skills, sibling support and community involvement, see table 5.6.
Table 5.6 Paired T test Mean scores for Leadership Time 1 versus Time 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Measures</th>
<th>Leadership Group T1</th>
<th>Leadership Group T2</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Eta Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Well-being</td>
<td>8.62</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience 1</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>34.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand Self</td>
<td>11.69</td>
<td>11.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience 2</td>
<td>38.02</td>
<td>38.81</td>
<td>T= -2.118*</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>12.35</td>
<td>12.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>14.98</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>T= -2.468*</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>18.19</td>
<td>18.76</td>
<td>T= -2.435*</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>22.96</td>
<td>23.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>14.58</td>
<td>14.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Work</td>
<td>11.90</td>
<td>11.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>18.88</td>
<td>19.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Skills ^</td>
<td>101.23</td>
<td>103.14</td>
<td>T= -2.461*</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills</td>
<td>41.24</td>
<td>42.10</td>
<td>T= -2.048*</td>
<td>.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend Support</td>
<td>11.04</td>
<td>11.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Support</td>
<td>10.62</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling Support</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>T= -1.958*</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Support</td>
<td>9.70</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Social support^^</td>
<td>39.89</td>
<td>40.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>10.14</td>
<td>10.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem</td>
<td>9.69</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td>10.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>10.86</td>
<td>11.27</td>
<td>T= -2.136*</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience Total</td>
<td>72.92</td>
<td>73.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.
^^ Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling and adult support.
*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001

Leadership Group Time 2 (post-intervention) versus Time 3 (follow-up)

A paired T-test was carried out to evaluate the impact of time on the leadership group between time two and time three. Statistically significant increases were seen for Resilience 1, Empathy, Critical thinking, Goal setting, Team work, Leadership skills, Life skills between time two and three for the leadership group (table 5.7).

Leadership Group Time 1 (baseline) versus Time 3 (follow-up)

Between time one and time three paired T-tests were carried out to explore whether there was any difference for the leadership group. Statistically significant increases were seen for Resilience 1, Resilience 2, Empathy, Decision making, Critical thinking, Communication skills, Goal setting, Problem solving, Leadership skills, Sibling Support, Life skills, Community Involvement, Resilience Total (table 5.7)
Chapter Five: Research Findings

Table 5.7 Paired T test Mean scores for Leadership Time 1 versus Time 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Measures</th>
<th>Leadership Group T1</th>
<th>Leadership Group T2</th>
<th>Leadership Group T3</th>
<th>Significance T1 v T3</th>
<th>Significance T2 v T3</th>
<th>Eta squ</th>
<th>Eta squ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Well-being</td>
<td>8.64</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>8.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience1</td>
<td>34.87</td>
<td>35.11</td>
<td>36.06</td>
<td>T=-3.567***</td>
<td>T=-2.743**</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand Self</td>
<td>11.74</td>
<td>12.02</td>
<td>11.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience2</td>
<td>37.86</td>
<td>38.85</td>
<td>38.86</td>
<td>T=-2.325*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>12.42</td>
<td>12.42</td>
<td>12.92</td>
<td>T=-2.506*</td>
<td>T=-3.174**</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>15.05</td>
<td>15.66</td>
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<td>T=-2.894**</td>
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<td>T=-2.608**</td>
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<td>T=-2.440*</td>
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<td>T=-2.482*</td>
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<td>106.06</td>
<td>T=-4.402***</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>T=-2.762**</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
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<td>42.50</td>
<td>43.73</td>
<td>T=-4.581***</td>
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<td>T=-3.367***</td>
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<td>10.29</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
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<td>10.36</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Esteem</td>
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<td>9.76</td>
<td>9.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>9.97</td>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>10.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Community</td>
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<td>11.36</td>
<td>T=-2.777***</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Resilience Total</td>
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<td>73.96</td>
<td>74.92</td>
<td>T=-3.533***</td>
<td>.08</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.
** Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling and adult support.
*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001

Summary of Findings between Time one, two and three

Social support:

- The participants in the comparison group significantly decreased on a number of social support measures between time one and time two. However, their scores remained quite sustained for the paired-T tests across all three time points with the exception of an increase in sibling support at time three which returned sibling support to its original levels at baseline.

- The leadership group demonstrated a significant increased in sibling support between time one and time two as well as between time one and time three.

Resilience:

- The leadership group significantly increased on resilience 2 between time one and time two.
• Between time one and time three the leadership group garnered statistically significant increases in resilience 1, resilience 2 and resilience total.

**Leadership Skills:**

• The leadership group demonstrated a statistically significant increase in decision making, critical thinking, life skills, leadership skills and community involvement between time one and time two.

• Between time one and time three there were statistically significant increases in empathy, decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, life skills, leadership skills and community involvement.

These results indicate that the leadership programme appears to contribute to a significant improvement in self-perception for those young people partaking in it.

5.4 Findings in Relation to Objective 3

To establish the difference in leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support between each group at the three time points.

**Introduction**

This section explores the emerging differences between the leadership group and the comparison group. Young people for whom there was matched data sets available at the time points are included in the analysis. Mean scores are presented in the tables.

**Leadership Group T1 (baseline) versus Comparison Group T1 (baseline)**

One-way ANOVA for leadership versus comparison at time one, for only those young people with time two data, indicates a statistically significant difference for advice support with the comparison group scoring significantly higher than the leadership group at time one, F(1, 281)=4.208, p=.041, eta squared=.01 (see table 5.8).
Leadership T2 (post-intervention) versus Comparison T2 (post-intervention)

One way ANOVA for leadership versus comparison at time two indicates significant improvement in the leadership group on the following variables; goal setting $F(1, 281)=3.926, p=.041$, eta squared=.013, leadership skills $F(1, 281)=7.608, p=.006$, eta squared=.027, sibling support $F(1, 285)=8.803, p=.003$, eta squared=.032, total social support $F(1, 280)=5.577, p=.019$, eta squared=.019, esteem support $F(1, 279)=5.703, p=.018$, eta squared=.019 and community involvement $F(1, 281)=12.917, p<.000$, eta squared=.045, (see table 5.8).

Leadership Group T3 (follow-up) versus Comparison Group T3 (follow-up)

One-way ANOVA for leadership versus comparison at time three indicates significant improvement in the leadership group on the following variables; resilience 1 $F(1, 182)=4.487, p=0.36$, eta squared=0.02 resilience 2 $F(1, 182)=12.553, p=.001$, eta squared=.06, empathy $F(1, 182)=9.276, p=.03$, eta squared=.05 critical thinking $F(1, 183)=10.157, p=.002$, eta squared=.055, communication skills $F(1, 183)=7.526, p=.007$, eta squared=.04, goal setting $F(1, 183)=11.546, p=.001$, eta squared=.06, team work $F(1, 183)=5.506, p=.020$, eta squared=.029, problem solving $F(1, 183)=13.683, <.000$, eta squared=.07, emotional support $F(1, 182)=5.391, p=.021$, eta squared=.021, community involvement $F(1, 183)=13.285, p<.000$, eta squared=.07, and Resilience Total $F(1, 182)=10.482, p=.001$, eta squared=.057 (see table 5.8). See Appendix M for Graphs illustrating the changes between the groups over time.
Table 5.8 ANOVA Means for Leadership vs Comparison Group over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Measures</th>
<th>L-Ship Gp T1</th>
<th>Comp Gp T1</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>L-ship Gp T2</th>
<th>Comp Gp T2</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>L-Ship Gp T3</th>
<th>Comp Gp T3</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<td>Adolescent Well-being</td>
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<td>8.41</td>
<td>9.09</td>
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<td>34.74</td>
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<td>34.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand Self</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11.98</td>
<td>11.76</td>
<td>11.87</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Resilience2</td>
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<td>Decision Making</td>
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<td>19.34</td>
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<td>14.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Work</td>
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<td>11.73</td>
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<td>11.74</td>
<td>11.60</td>
<td>12.12</td>
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<td>17.64</td>
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<td>106.06</td>
<td>97.04</td>
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<td>10.65</td>
<td>11.09</td>
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<td>Total Social support^^</td>
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<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.29</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>10.10</td>
<td>9.86</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Community</td>
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<td>10.19</td>
<td>11.36</td>
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<td></td>
<td>73.79</td>
<td>72.45</td>
<td>74.92</td>
<td>70.25</td>
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</table>

*Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.

^^ Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling and adult support.

+Levene’s test for homogeneity p < .05 null hypothesis rejected

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001

A Chi-square test indicated that there was no significant difference between the leadership and comparison groups in terms of leadership self-perception at time one. At time two and time three there were statistically significantly more young people who believed themselves to be leaders in the leadership group than in the comparison group, X^2(1, n=283)=13.025, p<.000, phi=.223 and X^2(1, n=185)=11.483, p=.001, phi=.264, respectively, see table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Percentage Leadership Self-Perception Groups over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Leader Gp T1</th>
<th>Comp Gp T1</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
<th>Leader Gp T2</th>
<th>Comp Gp T2</th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Leader Gp T3</th>
<th>Comp Gp T3</th>
<th>Chi Sq</th>
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<td>F=12.911***</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
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<td>21.6%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001
Summary

Social Support

- At time one, for participants with paired data, the comparison group were significantly higher on advice support than the leadership group, all other variables were similar between the groups.
- At time two the leadership group were statistically significantly improved over the comparison group on sibling support, esteem support and total social support.
- At time three the leadership group were significantly improved over the comparison group on emotional support.

Resilience

- At time three the leadership group were statistically significantly improved over the comparison group on measures of resilience 1, resilience 2 and resilience total.

Leadership Skills

- At time two the leadership group were statistically significantly improved over the comparison group on goal setting, leadership skills and community involvement.
- At time three the leadership group were statistically significantly improved over the comparison group on empathy, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving and community involvement.

Young people in the leadership group were more likely to perceive themselves to be leaders at time two and three compared to the comparison group.

Photo-voice

Using a visual approach, the young people were asked to depict their leadership journey. The pictures illustrated here have been chosen to illuminate some of the learning and the journey’s experienced by the young people involved in the leadership programme.
Figure 5.4 illustrates the emergence of a butterfly from a cocoon. The young person describes feeling that they have emerged from a lack of confidence, like the small caterpillar, to be the confident leader they are now.

Figure 5.4 Butterfly Picture

**Draw a picture to represent your leadership journey!**

Describe what you have drawn!

"At the beginning of the leadership course I wasn’t confident. I was new/fresh to what I was about to learn—comparing it to a caterpillar egg before hatched. Then through the modules I grew from strength to strength & learned so much, like an egg hatching = a caterpillar, growing and finally at the end of my journey I feel I have become a leader and reached my goal, like a caterpillar eventually forming into a beautiful butterfly!"
Figure 5.5 depicts how the leadership journey for this young person started with knowing very little about leadership. They illustrate a ‘small leadership’ which grows and continues to grow for them as they progress on their journey as a leader.

Figure 5.5 Leadership Picture

This picture represents my leadership journey and the knowledge I've gained and how far I have come as a leader. This was as I first started out. I knew very little about leadership, but after undertaking 3 modules, my knowledge, skills, and confidence as a leader have grown and it still continues.
Figure 5.6 illustrates how the young person feels they went from being shy and isolated, hidden like a turtle inside his shell before the programme. After the leadership programme the young person feels more confident, social and feels they have the skills for leadership.

Figure 5.6 Turtle Picture

 DRAW A PICTURE TO REPRESENT YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY!

Describe what you have drawn!

BEFORE STARTING THIS PROGRAMME I WAS VERY SHY AND ISOLATED (LEFT) BUT (RIGHT) OVER THE COURSE OF THE PROGRAMME I’VE BECOME MORE CONFIDENT AND SOCIAL. THIS HELPED BUILD MY COMMUNICATION AND OVERALL LEADERSHIP SKILLS.

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Figure 5.7 illustrates how the young person has transformed from being one person in a crowd listening to others, to being the person who is talking to the group and leading them.

Figure 5.7 Leading the Crowd Picture

Draw a picture to represent your leadership journey!

Before

After

Me

Not me

Describe what you have drawn: In the 1st picture it just shows me in the crowd as I didn't like to stand out too much but in the 2nd picture it shows me talking to a group of people which shows how much I've gained from the course.

Bliss sorry I'm not great at Art.
Summary

The photo-voice pictures graphically depict the individual journeys of the participants, breathing life into the research. They capture vividly the changes that the young people feel they have experienced over the course of the leadership programme. They bring attention to the impact the programme has had on their sense of self, their growth and their transformation. The illustrations tell the story of the young people going from shyness to confidence and taking on leadership opportunities and stepping out from the crowd as well as growing into leadership roles.

Facilitator’s Observations

Facilitators were afforded the opportunity to explore their perceptions of the programme and changes they perceived to have occurred for the participants through the use of focus groups. A total of 23 programme facilitators participated in five focus groups. The changes facilitators observed in the participants and how they believe the young people benefited from the programme are explored in this section (See Appendix N for emerging focus group themes). In terms of skills development, the facilitators reported that the young people demonstrated enhanced skills in a number of areas. Those mentioned the most across the focus groups included: communication skills, presentation skills, reflective skills, research skills, team work and self-awareness. As well as these, many reported that they could observe very distinct improvements in the young people’s confidence.

The year accelerated their learning even from public speaking. They’ll all say themselves their confidence, they’re a tight group now as a team but are even able to articulate their own emotions, feelings and their thoughts much better now, much clearer than before from the beginning. [FG1]

Facilitators also reported that the participant’s support networks grew from their involvement in the youth leadership programme. They perceived that the participants had gained additional friends, and had enhanced their ability to access other supports as a result of their engagement in the programme. Facilitators highlighted that they had gained additional opportunities to build relationships with
the young people, and similarly the participants had more opportunities to understand each other. During the leadership group other issues arose and facilitators described being able to deal with these in meaningful ways. For some, they felt that it gave them a more rich understanding of the needs of the young people they were working with as well as opportunities to address these needs.

Even your own relationships with them... you don’t know when in life they might need somebody and you might be just the person [FG5]

Community involvement was also seen as an integral aspect of the programme. From the facilitators perspective the programme brought with it an important connection between the young people and their communities. There was a sense of pride from the facilitators for the work that the young people did and the recognition that they got from their communities for it. As well as this, there was a large degree of respect and support from the communities for the young people who did get involved locally.

I think when the young people felt that they were actually being listened to within the community, that it motivated them to keep working, actually see we could change something so I think it’s important they see that themselves you know? [FG2]

5.5 Findings in Relation to Objective 4

To track the changes among those identified with initial lowest and highest perceived well-being prior to participation in a youth leadership programme and again in light of having received the youth leadership programme.

Involved in this aspect of the study are a selection of young people who scored either high or low on the adolescent well-being scale. The adolescent well-being scale is a measure for depression and scores of over 13 indicate the respondent may have symptoms of depression. Young people with scores of over 13 were considered high ‘risk’ and invited to interview. As well as this, young people with low scores, between 0-4, were considered low ‘risk’ and also invited to interview. These young people were tracked over the course of the programme to explore what their experience was and how this related to their perception of their leadership skills, resilience and social support. This section presents both the
quantitative and qualitative data for the young people in the high and low ‘risk’ groups.

5.5.1 Quantitative Strand

In the leadership group at time one, 12.0% of young people could be considered high ‘risk’ as indicated by the adolescent well-being scale see table 5.10. Low ‘risk’ young people ranged from 0-4 on the adolescent well-being scale (n=16) and high ‘risk’ young people scored over 13 on the same scale (n=22).

Table 5.10 Percentage Youth in Risk categories for the Leadership group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>LeadershipT1</th>
<th>Adolescent WB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Risk</td>
<td>Middle Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>(n=16)</td>
<td>(n=145)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Chi-square test indicated that both the high and low ‘risk’ groups were similar in terms of gender break down $X^2 (1, n=38) =2.538, p=.103, \phi=.258$, see table 5.11.

Table 5.11 Percentage Gender in high and low risk groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>LeadershipT1</th>
<th>Adolescent WB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Risk</td>
<td>High Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Percentage</td>
<td>M 62.5%</td>
<td>F 37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>(n=10)</td>
<td>(n=6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 5.12 indicates a Chi-square test revealed that the low ‘risk’ group perceived themselves as leaders statistically significantly more than the high ‘risk’ young people at both time one $X^2 (1, n=33)=9.512, p=.009, \phi=537$ and time two $X^2 (1, n=33)=4.733, p=.009, \phi=-.457$. No statistically significant difference was observed for leadership self-perception at time three, $X^2 (1, n=33)=.306, p=.269, \phi=-.236$, indicating that the high ‘risk’ group were just as likely to see themselves as leaders as the low ‘risk’ group at this time point.
Table 5.12 Leadership Self Perception for Low & High Risk Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>LeadershipT1</th>
<th>LeadershipT2</th>
<th>LeadershipT3</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Adolescent WB</td>
<td>Adolescent WB</td>
<td>Adolescent WB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low  High  Chi-Square F=12.457***</td>
<td>Low  High  Sig F=6.240*</td>
<td>Low  High  Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-perception as a leader</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>62.5%  9.1%</td>
<td>100%  68.2%</td>
<td>90.9%  81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37.5%  86.4%</td>
<td>0%   31.8%</td>
<td>9.1%  14.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001

**Paired T-Tests**

Bearing in mind the small number involved in this analysis, paired T-tests indicate that for the low ‘risk’ group there were statistically significant increases in adolescent well-being score, indicating a reduction in subjective well-being, this could be considered regression to the mean. Statistically significant improvements were noted for team work between time one and time three for this group (see Appendix: O).

For the high ‘risk’ group statistically significant improvements were noted for adolescent well-being, see table 5.13 for mean scores. As well as statistically significant improvements were observed for decision making, critical thinking, parental support, sibling support, total social support and advice support between time one and time two. Statistically significant improvements were maintained for adolescent well-being at time three. Goal setting and leadership skills saw statistically significant improvements between time one and time three. Decreasing trends were observed in a number of areas of social support; however, these were not statistically significant.
Table 5.13 Paired T test Mean score for High risk Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Measures</th>
<th>T1</th>
<th>T2</th>
<th>T3</th>
<th>Significance T1 v T2</th>
<th>Significance T1 v T3</th>
<th>Significance T2 v T3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent W8</td>
<td>17.18</td>
<td>12.59</td>
<td>14.94</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience1</td>
<td>31.95</td>
<td>32.45</td>
<td>33.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand Self</td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>11.05</td>
<td>10.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience2</td>
<td>34.27</td>
<td>34.91</td>
<td>35.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>12.14</td>
<td>12.45</td>
<td>13.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>15.45</td>
<td>15.56</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>16.09</td>
<td>17.82</td>
<td>18.56</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>21.27</td>
<td>21.64</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>13.09</td>
<td>13.32</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Work</td>
<td>10.95</td>
<td>11.05</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>18.32</td>
<td>18.09</td>
<td>18.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Skills ^</td>
<td>93.50</td>
<td>97.36</td>
<td>100.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Skills</td>
<td>37.18</td>
<td>37.86</td>
<td>41.25</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend Support</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td>10.64</td>
<td>10.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Support</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling Support</td>
<td>8.52</td>
<td>9.52</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Support</td>
<td>8.82</td>
<td>9.41</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot-Soc Supports ^ ^</td>
<td>36.36</td>
<td>39.18</td>
<td>36.31</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>9.95</td>
<td>9.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>8.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>8.82</td>
<td>9.86</td>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.45</td>
<td>10.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience Total</td>
<td>66.23</td>
<td>67.36</td>
<td>68.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.

^^ Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling and adult support.

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001

A mixed between-within subject’s analysis of variance was also carried out which revealed similar patterns as the above analysis. The low ‘risk’ group scored significantly higher than the high ‘risk’ group on most variables at time one. However, the high ‘risk’ group scored higher in terms of empathy than the low ‘risk’ group (see Appendix P for Graphs of low, middle and high ‘risk’ groups). Over time the high ‘risk’ group improved on the majority of measures, while the low ‘risk’ group continued to remain stable and substantially higher than the high ‘risk’ group.

Summary of Quantitative Findings for High and Low ‘Risk’ Youth

The high ‘risk’ group were significantly less likely to see themselves as leaders at time one. However, by time three there was no statistically significant difference
between the two groups, indicating that the high ‘risk’ young people saw themselves as leaders just as much as the low ‘risk’ group.

The findings indicate that the low ‘risk’ group increase significantly on team work, while the high ‘risk’ group demonstrated statistically significant improvements in adolescent well-being, decision making, critical thinking, friendship support, sibling support, total social support and advice support between time one and time two, and adolescent well-being, goal setting and leadership skills between time one and time three.

5.5.2 Qualitative Strand

Introduction

This section will present the young people’s perceptions of their leadership skills, resilience and social support over the course of the leadership programme. Young people from the high and low ‘risk’ groups were invited to take part in interviews at three time points. The rationale for this was to explore whether adversity and subjective well-being had an impact on the acquisition of leadership skills, resilience and social support over the course of the leadership programme and 6 months after the programme was completed. All names have been altered to protect the identity of the young people and pseudonyms have been used.

Demographics:

As outlined above, young people with the highest (risk) scores and lowest (risk) scores on the adolescent well-being scale were invited to interview. Thirty young people were invited to interview at time one with twenty two youth being available (7 male, 15 females aged 16-18 years; 11 high ‘risk’- 1 male, 10 female; 11 low ‘risk’ - 6 male, 5 female). As indicated in the quantitative analysis earlier more females were involved in the youth leadership programme at the outset. As well as this significantly more females scored in the high ‘risk’ category which is similarly reflected in the gender breakdown at interview for the high ‘risk’ group. The first time point for interview data collection was three months into the leadership programme. This was due to needing all questionnaires to be returned to allocate youth to high and low ‘risk’ groups.
At time two there were 21 young people (10 low ‘risk’; 11 high ‘risk’) included in the interviews. The second data collection was after the youth leadership programme was complete.

At time three there were six young people (2 low ‘risk’; 4 high ‘risk) included in the interviews, seven young people were invited to interview at time three with one young person being unavailable. A smaller number of interviewees were selected at time three as data saturation was occurring. The third data collection occurred 6 months after the programme was completed.

**Findings**

Interviews carried out at time one were exploratory. They were used to ascertain what the young people felt about leadership, the skills required to be a leader and the skills they felt they had. The interviews also explored the young people’s perception of their social support and their sense of their own resilience. For ease of presentation these will be dealt with sequentially and include the three time points. Social support will be dealt with first, followed by resilience and finally leadership.

**Social Support**

When interviewing the young people with respect to their perceived social support, the young people described forms of support which can be grouped into the classifications used within the social support measure. These classifications include sources of support and types of support. As well as this young people’s perception of change in their social support over time was explored. See Appendix Q for table of support classifications and references to them.

**Sources of support**

**Friends**

In the interviews, peers were highlighted as critical in terms of support by the low ‘risk’ participants (n=10). They play a pivotal role in the participant’s lives, and engaged with them on almost round the clock contact through school, texting, social networking etc., Participants highlighted that sometimes it was easier to talk to their friends than their family. They reported that their peers had a similar frame
of reference for their life for example what was happening at school, in the community and all the other relationships and issues that surrounded their life. For the high ‘risk’ group friends were also very important (n=7). When talking about their friends this group referred to how they made them smile and were there for them to help them through the everyday ups and downs they experienced. This group reported relying on friends for advice and support when they were down.

I’ve great friends. They always make me smile when things are bad, or they have a way of making it seem smaller like it doesn’t really matter [Sile]

**Parents**

Most young people in the low ‘risk’ group (n=9) indicated that their parents were a crucial positive and encouraging support in their lives. The participants highlighted the importance their parents had played in giving them a solid foundation of values but also how instrumental their parents were in helping them to take on different opportunities. For some, they felt their parents gave them a strong basis which enabled them to take steps beyond themselves and their family to contribute to the wider community.

They [parents] give you more confidence to do what you’re doing like… it’s good to have someone behind you thinking that you will do well. [Sarah]

For the high ‘risk’ group they highlighted their parents most frequently as sources of support to them (n=10). They illustrated how their parents were important in encouraging them, giving advice and helping them through difficult times. One young person also illuminated that without the level of support she got from her parents she could see how other young people would turn to negative things to get the support they needed.

**Siblings**

Siblings were considered to play an important role in the support network of some young people in the low ‘risk’ group (n=5). Despite siblings being referred to less than the other supports, those who did mention them, they deemed them as vital supports. In the main siblings were relied on for encouragement, advice, mentoring
and guiding, particularly where the sibling was older. Where siblings were younger there was the sense that they had a responsibility to look after the younger sibling and act as a role model. Siblings weren’t mentioned in as positive a light as much as by the high ‘risk’ group (n=2), however by time two participants in this group did report that they were having less fights with their siblings.

Myself and my sister we used to fight, now I just kind of step back and don’t just say things on the spur of the moment any more. [Alison]

*Other Adults*

For the low ‘risk’ group other adults played a positive role in their lives (n=7), some of these were in the form of extended family, youth workers, coaches and teachers. They helped to encourage them when they needed it or offer advice. Other adults weren’t mentioned as much as by the high ‘risk’ group (n=3).

*Types of Support*

Young people described forms of support which can be grouped into the classification of types of support used in the social support measure, these include esteem, emotional, concrete and advice.

*Esteem Support*

When it came to the category of esteem support the participants in the low ‘risk’ group reported that their support network helped them to believe in themselves. They encouraged them when they need it and motivated them when they found things difficult, for example school, sports or community involvement. They helped them with problems or challenges by bolstering them to believe that they could overcome them. Esteem support resonated most frequently at time one (n=10) with participants referring to being motivated and encouraged by their family and friends regularly as well as been recognised for their contribution to others. Esteem support was illuminated through the belief parents instilled in their young people that they could take on anything, that they were in control of what they did in their lives, they encouraged and pushed their children beyond their self-imposed boundaries as well as played down events young people perceived as catastrophes. Feedback from adult mentors also played a crucial role in the esteem support of young people with some young people getting a good degree of
Chapter Five: Research Findings

recognition on the basis of their sports, school work or other areas that they excelled at.

Mum encourages me every time I play football – embarrassing sometimes, she pushes me the extra bit, makes you push forward and encourages you to do better. [Michael]

For the high ‘risk’ group they did not refer to esteem (n=3) or how much their parents and peers valued them as much as their counterparts (n=10) at time one. By time three however all young people interviewed in this group referred to things that resonated with the category of esteem support, such as being recognised for their contribution to others and seeing that others supported them to believe in themselves. The emphasis on support that can be categorised as esteem support appeared to have grown for this group.

Then dancing and all, if I quit that she’d [mum] kill me because she knows I like it and all that kind of stuff, so yeah. They support everything that I do, yeah, they’re real supportive in that way. [Alison]

At time three all participants in both groups felt that there were people in their lives that encouraged them to put their effort and energy into things that they liked. As well as this parents encouraged them when they knew they enjoyed things and sometimes wanted to give up. All participants felt that their parents were proud of them for their achievements, especially the graduation from NUI Galway for the Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action. As well as that, they felt that their friends could see a change in them over the year

Yeah my mam and dad recognise how much I have changed in the last year because last year I was very shy, but now I’m outgoing.... mam was pure proud when we graduated down in Galway. She was like I’m so proud of you. It was a great day. [Seamus]

**Emotional Support**

In terms of emotional support the low ‘risk’ participants (n=5) highlighted that their support network listened to them, helped them through challenges and problems that they encountered. They described how their support network sometimes shared
similar experiences that they had gone through and helped them to deal with these challenges by making the challenge seem smaller. At time two emotional support did not feature as prominently for this group (n=4) as the high ‘risk’ group (n=9). It was still there however, the main focus for the low ‘risk’ group appeared to be in relation to esteem support. For the high ‘risk’ group they highlighted how important it was to have people there for them that helped them through difficult times. Most of the young people (n=9) in this group described how it was just really nice to be able to share their problems and have someone listen to them, and not judge them. They talked about how it was easier once the problem was out and not just bottled up in their heads. They reported how valuable it was for them to have someone understand and help them to get a handle on understanding why they felt the way they did. As mentioned above, this group appeared to discuss things that had a stronger focus in the category of emotional support than esteem support at time two.

It’s really good like. If I talk she listens and it helps me with a problem. [Karen]

At time three all participants in both groups felt that there were people there for them if they had to deal with difficult situations and that there was someone there for them to turn to if they were sad or upset.

Concrete Support

Discussions which could be framed in the context of concrete support were mentioned less frequently than other types of support by both the low and high ‘risk’ groups. The high ‘risk’ group did mention that they would have liked to have had more support in this area, for example financial needs or practical things like someone taking care of them if they were sick. When probed further at time three participants reported that if it wasn’t for the practical support that their parents gave they would be unable to engage in the things they love. In fact, for some, they felt they may not have even found out the things they liked. These supports covered the financial costs of sports or dance, the transport of getting them to training or practice, supporting their fundraising efforts, helping them out if they got stuck on things and giving them jobs to earn extra money.
My Dad is great at dropping me to places and picking me up and then with money you see I work as well so I wouldn’t really need it but if I was stuck they would help me out. [Alison]

Parents were also cited as helping out with school subjects which some of the participants found difficult.

**Advice Support**

Advice was mentioned by many of the young people in the low ‘risk’ group (n=6) as being particularly important when they had to make decisions about what to do. They found that a variety of people including; parents, friends, siblings and other adults were important in guiding their choices. This group were readily willing to accept help when faced with a challenge and needing to find information. They realised that other people could help, and instead of struggling alone believed that seeking advice was the best way to resolve a problem. For the high ‘risk’ they reported seeking advice from their friends or family in relation to decisions, problems or challenges (n=3). They found that when they listened to other people’s experiences this helped them to make decisions as to what to do on a number of things. The young people considered their support networks invaluable in the context of having someone to bounce ideas off, listen, give their perspective and help them in making the best decisions.

They’re there to listen to me. They’re there if I need advice, things like that. [Mary]

At time three all participants in both groups felt that they had people to ask advice from. Whether it was what to take on the trip to Africa, how to handle different situations, what to do in college or how to deal with the presentations they had to give, all felt that there were people there for them to access advice from. They also reported feeling that they had good advice to give in return.

Mam always tells me whatever I do, do it for myself, don’t be doing anything for other people, like don’t do things because they want you to.

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2 A number of young people fundraised for the Alan Kerins Projects as part of their community action project. This group raised money to engage in an intercultural immersion programme and met with young people in Zambia who were also completing the youth leadership programme. During this immersion trip they learned about life in Zambia for teenagers and shared their experiences of life in Ireland.
Don’t live for someone else, do what you want to do. [Alison]

**Supports Changed**

More young people in the high ‘risk’ group (n=9) than the low ‘risk’ group (n=6) felt that their supports had changed at time two. For those who reported that their supports had changed they described realising that they could access more supports through the people in the group. Some also reported feeling more comfortable discussing things with their parents and their friends, and as such were better able to access support. For others, they also felt that they had better resources for supporting themselves which meant that they had increased their own capacity for self-support. As well as having a better capacity to access supports, which may have always been there, they felt better able to identify them.

I’m probably more independent now than I was, I don’t rely on them that much. I’m a stronger person now, than I would have been before, not that they would not be there for me, I just don’t need them as much. [Alison].

I think I can value it [support] better after the Leadership programme so I see it as more. [Theresa]

Other participants in the high ‘risk’ group felt that the supports they had were the same as they were before the programme (n=2) and had not really changed.

**Other aspects**

Other aspects which emerged under social support which were less prominent were support when they did not want to do something as well as the quality of support they received which all participants felt was good. All participants rated the quality of support they received in the region of 7-10 on a 10 point scale. All participants felt that they could frequently access support particularly through the use of new media e.g. texting, social networking, internet, advice chat rooms etc., They also felt that their support was give and take in that they recognised that they had given ample support to friends, siblings, parents and external family as and when it was needed.
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**Social Support Summary**

In terms of social support, the low ‘risk’ group reported receiving more friendship support, adult support, sibling support and esteem support than their high ‘risk’ counterparts. The high ‘risk’ group appeared to receive more emotional support and this may be congruent with the fact that these young people experienced more traumatic life experiences, for example family deaths, depression etc., and as such required more emotional support. The esteem support of the high ‘risk’ group did increase at the 6 month follow-up indicating that this group received recognition for their leadership within the community. Most notable is the fact that both groups felt that their supports changed over the course of the programme with the high ‘risk’ group feeling that it changed the most (at time two).

**Resilience**

When the young people were interviewed about their resilience a number of themes emerged most notably their perception of their resilience, a lack of if, coping strategies, difficulty coping and being healthy (see Appendix R).

For the low ‘risk’ group there were no reports of experiencing challenging situations which they felt they could not overcome, at time one. They reported that they bounced back easily if they had to, they could pick themselves up and move on from various challenges and not let the challenge get them down. They appeared to be very adaptable and described not giving up easily. Over the course of the following interviews they felt that people in their lives contributed to their ability to cope with life’s challenges. Participants highlighted that their relationships with friends, parents, siblings and people in their community were key to dealing with difficulties. This group referred to coping strategies such as talking with family or friends, taking things one step at a time, listening to music, and facing things straight on. Examples of challenges they had overcome included dealing with arguments between friends, getting landed with most of the work on a team project and exams. At time three for one participant a big challenge occurred in her life around holding herself together during a serious parental illness.

For the high ‘risk’ group they reported that things did not always go the way they planned, they dealt with these challenges by trying not to let it get them down and
tried to remain largely positive (n=8). They reported that time helps, particularly if something very bad happened and that it was important to keep that in mind. Others found it harder to move on from difficult challenges, they reported that if you had failed at something it would stay with you for a long time (n=3). For this group sensitivity was a factor, and being challenged or criticised was something they felt was very difficult for them to deal with. Participants also reported things that made it difficult to cope which included: family, friends, themselves and how they looked at things, school, exams, conflict situations, working with other people who have a different view to yourself, stress, pressure and falling out with friends. At time three when it came to challenges they had to overcome in the previous month many stressful events came up, from ending a relationship with a boyfriend, to parental illness, parental arguments, death of loved ones and exams. All these situations placed a lot of stress on the individuals through which they had to cope.

**Vignettes**

Vignettes were thought the most appropriate way to illustrate the participant’s experiences in dealing with challenging situations and displaying resilience. These individuals were chosen because they typify the types of challenges the young people had to overcome in the high ‘risk’ group.

**Vignette 1: Natasha**

Natasha is 16 years old. She describes how she deals with challenges in her life. She describes how she used to cut herself to find relief from difficult situations. She talks about how she used to find that she was so frustrated that she didn’t know how to deal with her feelings. She describes how she would punch walls to release her frustration. She is quite a shy girl when we met first and appears to be more confident, more self-assured now 8 months later. She has been attending counselling in the past year since she started the leadership programme. She talks about how she’s not afraid to stand up for herself or to present her ideas in the group. She highlights that this was not always the case. She often felt that other people were looking at her, thinking she was stupid and shouldn’t be up there. She
felt embarrassed by what she was saying and thought that other people might judge her and was worried about what they might think of her.

Eight months later she is still somewhat cautious and still somewhat uncertain, but she sees more good qualities in herself. She sees that she can contribute and that her voice is as important as others. She realises that she is not there yet, but she is just as valuable and important as others. She appears to have grown in her confidence, and self-belief. She tells me she is not cutting anymore and has found positive alternative ways of dealing with her frustrations. Natasha also describes how her parents are considering splitting up. She realises that it is not what she wants but it might be for the best. She utilises the support of her sister to deal with this, she feels she has good support from her sister and knows she can talk to the counsellor now too.

She has been on a long journey, more than many of the young people on the leadership programme. Natasha had an Adolescent Well-being score of 30 at time one, by far the highest on the programme, at time three it had reduced in a positive direction to 25. This number is still considered very high, however is a substantial improvement. Her involvement in the leadership programme appears to have accrued some positive benefits for her as well as the counselling. She illustrates that through her use of social support, leadership and counselling she has developed positive ways of coping and resilience against life’s stressors. Something she ultimately believes enhances her ability to take leadership of her own life.

**Vignette 2: Helen**

Helen is 16 years old. She is very shy. The ends of her jumper are frayed from pulling at them too much. She looks down at the ground and as we proceed with the interview her answers are peppered with prolonged ‘Mmmm’s’ and many ‘I don’t knows’. She looks at the floor or out the window when she doesn’t have the answer to a question. She is profoundly quiet, she answers in one liners and the interview is incredibly short. When asked does she like to work with others, she answers ‘Sometimes it’s easier on my own than in groups’. She has started the leadership programme because she wants to contribute to her community and sees this as a way of increasing her skills.
At time two when we meet she is still quite shy, her answers are a bit longer and there are still a few ‘I don’t knows’ when posed with questions. She does seem more relaxed and describes how she feels she is more confident now after the leadership programme. She says she enjoyed presenting her project and finds it easier to talk to her friends. She talks about how she will generally try to do things on her own until she knows she can’t resolve it - ‘Because you can’t always rely on people, they have their problems too, so you have to sort it out yourself and get your own way around it.’ She sees herself as putting other people out if she needs their support so she tries to deal with things herself and finds listening to music helps.

At time three when I meet her it is like meeting a different girl. Now she was in fifth year and completed her community action project during the summer. She graduated from NUI Galway in the autumn with the Foundation Certificate and appears much more confident. She held her head up and made good eye contact. Her sentences were long and she had no problem sharing her opinion. She backed up her statements with examples, without being prompted and spoke about how she really enjoyed the programme and felt she got a lot out of it, particularly confidence and the ability to speak in front of a group. She talks about how she has taken on additional leadership roles supervising the younger children in her local girl guides something that she didn’t feel she had the confidence to do before. She says now she can talk to the younger guides and share her experience and give them advice, something she hadn’t done before. She goes on to talk about how she has changed over the past year. She says she moved from being afraid of talking to her Aunts and Uncles. She describes that her mother used to answer their questions as she was too shy. Now over a year later she feels confident enough to speak to her relatives, even initiating the conversation if necessary. More importantly, is that she believes she has an opinion worth sharing.

I used to be really shy around my granny, aunts and uncles, my mum used to answer for me if they asked a question...I have no problem talking to them now, if they don’t talk to me first, I wouldn’t have any problem starting the conversation.

She goes on to talk about being so shy that she relied on her parents to take her everywhere. She says she was even afraid to walk down the road past a dog that
lived there, but now over a year later she is able to do it on her own. She admits it is still sometimes scary but is proud of overcoming that barrier to her independence.

Helen’s story describes how she has not only grown and developed personally through her experience of the leadership programme, but her capacity to contribute to her community has been augmented as seen through her contribution to the girl guides and her community project. Her adolescent well-being score was 17 at time one and it was 8 at time three, this indicates a substantial positive decrease in the score yielding a measurable improvement in perceived well-being.

**Resilience Summary**

In terms of resilience it appears that the young people in the high ‘risk’ group were exposed to more situations requiring resilience such as death of a loved one, family separation, self-harming, depression, chronic shyness to name but a few. The capacity of the young people to overcome their challenges by developing appropriate coping strategies, believing in the value of their voice and linking with supports helped them to deal with these situations and move successfully beyond them.

**Skills Development**

Within the context of skills a number of subthemes were recurrent over the three time points including leadership, communication, team work, conflict resolution and problem solving, social and emotional intelligence, and drive or action (see Appendix S).

**Leadership Skills**

For the low ‘risk’ group they described their approach to leadership as guiding their team mates and encouraging them to achieve something together. They talked about motivating others, helping team mates get along, solving problems and resolving disagreements. As the course progressed they reported that they were more willing to put themselves forward for leadership positions and actively sought leadership opportunities. Some took on leadership roles within the community sharing a particular strength they had with others for example, holding a football
summer camp for younger people in their area. For others, they learned valuable skills in believing they could take on leadership roles and actively sought to exercise their skills.

For the high ‘risk’ group their perception of leadership was around standing up for what they believed in and listening to others to make sure that everyone’s views were taken on board. They felt that a leader’s role was to bring people together, to guide them and help them to solve problems. They did not feel that the leader was any different to others on the team, but did have more responsibility. Three young people interviewed from this cohort said they found themselves in both leadership and follower roles, while seven reported being more comfortable in follower roles at time one. Some seemed to feel more secure in these positions. They said it was easier to go along with the majority than to try to stand out from the crowd. There was, for some, a sense of discomfort that their opinions, if voiced, would not be taken well and a lack of confidence was evident. They reported that if someone else would be better than them they would prefer the security of staying in the shadows. However, some did say that if the leader was pushy or not nice they would not like it and would find it hard to advocate for changing the leader. This was not the case for all in this group as some were eager to take on leadership roles.

At time two the young people in this group felt that their leadership skills had improved immensely and in such a way that they felt more likely to see and take on leadership roles (n=7). They described how they had taken the lead on their team projects, how they had gotten people to rally together to achieve a goal and how they felt that other people listened to their opinion. At time three for participants in both groups they reported that they were in stronger positions after being involved in the leadership programme. Some of the young people described this as a profound change. One girl commented: *I’d say yea definitely, I wouldn’t have had any leadership skills at all at the start and now I just have.* [Diane-L].

**Leadership Skill Summary**

At time one the low ‘risk’ group were taking on more leadership roles than the high ‘risk’ group. By time two the high ‘risk’ group were taking on more leadership roles within and beyond the youth leadership programme, indicating their increase in confidence in pursuing these roles. The growth in application of leadership skills
was evident from both groups, as both cohorts were engaging in meaningful leadership opportunities within their communities. Most notable was the fact that the high ‘risk’ group began to see themselves as leaders more and to put themselves forward for more leadership roles.

**Communication skills**

Many young people in the low ‘risk’ group illustrated that they had strong communication skills including the ability to communicate comfortably in public such as giving a presentation, listening, challenging others and speaking with people in authority. Participants reported that their opinion mattered this was particularly true when they listened to the opinions of others, they believed their opinions were just as valid. They described that if something arose that they did not agree with, even if it they found it difficult to challenge they would. As time progressed they felt they were more assertive in how they dealt with others. They had developed an ability to get their point across in a way that was respectful but also meant that they were true to themselves. They felt that their presentation skills had also improved through the range of presentations and debates they had been involved in as part of the programme.

Counter to this many young people in the high ‘risk’ group (n=8), reported being uncomfortable speaking in public. For some, this was down to feeling that others would judge their opinions, disagree with them or think they were stupid. They did report finding it difficult to talk to authority and challenge others. At time two most young people (n=8) felt that their communication skills had improved, mainly through the group discussion, team work, presentations and debates. The participants reported that they had more opportunities to express themselves, which meant they became more comfortable communicating with other people from peers to people in authority to experts. Some still found it quite nerve wracking, however reported feeling that their communication skills had improved a lot from their first attempt at presenting.

All the stuff about listening and getting to know your type of communication style, your way of kind of carrying yourself in a conversation or in anything... It’s taught all of us more about ourselves and then helped us to sort of maximise the way we would communicate. A lot on
communications, I’ve learnt a lot from that part of it. [Karen]

**Communication Summary**

The low ‘risk’ group felt they had good communication skills to start with and were not afraid to speak out on matters affecting them. They also reported improvements in their communication skills over the course of the programme. The high ‘risk’ group on the other hand reported being less comfortable speaking in public and with their communication skills in general. They described how they believed their communication skills, presentation skills, ability to speak in public and challenge others improved over the course of the programme.

**Team Work**

Most young people in the low ‘risk’ group enjoyed working as part of a team (n=9), in fact many found it easier than working alone as it shared the workload. Being part of a team meant that many of different people could contribute to reaching the goal. This meant that they were more confident about making decisions when other opinions fed into the process. This in general resulted in them being better able to reach their goal. For many they found team work easier and less stressful from individual work where all the responsibility lay on them. This group did however also acknowledge that team work was not always easy and saw problems and conflicts arise which needed to be dealt with.

Many of the participants in the high ‘risk’ group were in favour of team work as it shared the load (n=7), some also preferred to work on their own (n=3). For those who preferred to work alone there was a fear of conflict arising within the group. As well as this, the pressure of having to express themselves which could potentially lead to being judged meant that it was easier for them to be self-reliant. For this small number of young people they reported that team members could be more of a hindrance than a help, they might let them down and they would have to take on all the work. As time progressed participants in this group did acknowledge, similar to the other group, that they expected the team work to be easier than it was. Disagreements did arise and some people had to take on more work while others did not contribute as much. However, participants did report that
these situations gave them opportunities to exercise their assertiveness, problem solving, conflict resolution, engage their peers in accountability and as such draw out their leadership skills. By time three this group could see more of the benefits to team work as it generated more support, shared the load, encouraged them to exercise their leadership skills and generated more ideas.

Difficult kind of trying to work with people that maybe you don’t have the same view as, but that’s not necessarily a bad thing... okay, well we’ll try compromise... We have to see it from all points of view, if someone very closed minded it makes it difficult. [Lauren]

Team Work Summary

The low ‘risk’ group all appeared to prefer team work than individual work at time one, some outlined the challenges it could bring however unanimously they would select this approach over working individually. The high ‘risk’ group initially were more sceptical of team work and some found it easier to work alone than work with others. As the programme progressed the high ‘risk’ group continued to see some of the pitfalls of team work but could also see more of the benefits. By time three all participants in both groups felt that team work was a good way of working as it increased the ideas and confidence in the end goal.

Conflict Resolution & Problem Solving

There was a lot of similarity between how both groups dealt with conflict resolution and problem solving. Firstly, they described how important it was to ensure everyone remained calm or that you worked towards establishing calm. After this it was seen as very important to enable each side have their story heard and for people to be given the opportunity to respond. It was clear that some felt that everyone has a right to their opinion but unanimously they reported that there were better ways of resolving conflict than fighting. The groups described how it was important to look at the options including the advantages and disadvantages of the various options. It was felt that if conflict arose on a team project that it was important to resolve it to enable the team to continue working to reach their goal. The groups highlighted that it was important to talk about the conflict or problems that arose and come up with a plan to resolve them. One person outlined how someone not pulling their weight
that the whole team pulled together when it was highlighted. This he reported helped the team to be stronger as they addressed the issues facing them and realised the importance of having a plan and everybody’s contribution to the project.

I’d be like - Oh here – what’s the story like, we’re working as a team, this isn’t on like, it’s not like an individual game, it’s a cooperative like. [Seamus]

At time three all participants in both groups saw problem solving as a key skill that they as leaders had developed. They broke it down into; what is the issue, did they have all the information, keeping calm or relaxed, helping come up with options, or seek additional advice and support from other people if necessary, then make a decision based on the information they had at hand. Whatever way the young people approached solving problems it required and making an informed decision by having a plan.

Conflict Resolution/Problem Solving Summary

Both groups appear to have a good sense of how to deal with conflict and problems. As well as this both felt that they had gotten good exposure to situations that required their problem solving and conflict resolution skills. This suggests they had realised the importance of having a plan by gathering information, coming up with options and making a decision. Added to this was listening to both sides for conflict resolution to find a solution.

Social & Emotional Intelligence

Both groups reported having a good degree of empathy and ability to relate to others. This was evident from their ability to understand the needs of others, interpret what it would feel like to be in a difficult situation and demonstrate compassion. There was however, a notable difference between the groups in terms of their self-awareness, self-control and self-confidence, with the low ‘risk’ group reporting having more than their high ‘risk’ counterparts at the outset. The high ‘risk’ group did grow most notably in confidence over the course of the programme.

In the context of social and emotional intelligence, the low ‘risk’ group described being able to respond to friends in need and having a strong degree of self-
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awareness which they admitted was dependent on the situation. Furthermore, they reported having self-control which enabled them to deal with their own emotions such as anger and frustration. As well as this, confidence was reported regularly as being pivotal to their ability to take on leadership roles, which they also described as having grown over the course of the programme.

For the high ‘risk’ group, self-control and self-confidence were far less prominent at the outset, with some young people noting that they did not feel confident at all. By time two and three it was evident that the high ‘risk’ group’s confidence had improved with many noting that they felt more confident now as a result of their participation in the programme. Some highlighted how they had developed greater friendships, felt more capable of challenging others and speaking in public. They also felt stronger about challenging how self-critical they were as well as seeing the good in themselves and valuing their strengths within the team. They described how they had really gotten to know the other young people on the programme and felt they had a stronger connection and sense of self-worth which enhanced their self-confidence.

Oh definitely made me less self-conscious and you know? Better with people than I used to be, and yeah, more confident. [Theresa]

Social Skills

Something that emerged in time three that did not appear before was an improvement in social skills which was most notable for the high ‘risk’ group. The participants emphasised that through the leadership programme they felt their social skills with others had improved. They reported being more chatty and comfortable in social situations. They believed that their interactions were better, they could be themselves and ultimately this helped them feel good about themselves.

I’m way better at talking to people now. [Theresa]

For one participant she reported being more confident speaking with her relatives and even comfortable enough to initiate conversations, which she had not done previously. She described a substantial shift in her ability to interact with others and improvement in her social skills. She reported a clear sense of relief at being able to
engage in conversations with her relatives which left her feeling happy and content in her own skin.

I have no problem talking to them, if they don’t talk to me first, I would not have any problem starting the conversation... I would never have done that before... It feels weird; I was never like that before, it feels better, that I’m able to do it. [Helen]

**Social & Emotional Intelligence Summary**

The low ‘risk’ group, at time one, reported having a good degree of self-awareness, self-control and self-confidence, particularly in their interactions with others. The high ‘risk’ group on the other hand reported being less confident and having less self-control, which they reported improved over the course of the programme.

**Sense of Achievement & Self-Belief**

When asked what they were most proud of, many reported that it was graduating from NUI Galway after having completed the course. For others, it was completing their community action project. They had participated meaningfully in their communities resulting in a strong sense of pride and accomplishment. They had faced challenges and overcome them, and as a result had increased their sense of self-belief as young leaders. This sense of achievement and self-belief came about through setting realistic goals and then going on to achieve them.

Yeah. Step by step, like when you say 10,000 Euros it sounds so much but when you say 1,000 euro in seven months - that we could do. [Karen]

**Environmental Conditions**

**Authentic Opportunity**

One core aspect that enabled both groups to demonstrate their leadership skills was their involvement in real opportunities for leadership. For both groups, participating in these authentic leadership opportunities was critical to enabling them practice, apply and further develop their skills. For the low ‘risk’ group this came in many forms for example, helping an uncle out on the election campaign, training the under 8 football team, being the captain of the under 16 team, being
school prefect etc., They were able to see that by taking on responsibility in their communities they gained opportunities to build their skill set, network with others, and apply their leadership skills. The high ‘risk’ group mentioned opportunities like getting involved in clubs such as drama, dance, Foróige, or singing at a Christmas concert etc., as real opportunities that they were engaged in that helped them exercise their leadership skills.

At time three of the six participants interviewed five continue to be active youth leaders in their community and one was intending to consider another project when her leaving certificate was complete. Of the remaining five; one is an active leader in his local youth café, another gives her time to sharing her skills in dance with younger people and wants to focus her efforts on getting into dance college. Another young person who went to Africa has plans to return in the near future and wants to continue to fundraise for orphans in Zambia. Another young person plans to take on additional supervisory and leadership roles in her local Girl Guides. One young person wants to become a Foróige volunteer to share what she has learned with others.

**Giving**

Something which come out strongly for both groups was generosity or giving (n=10, n=10). Both groups emphasised the importance of giving both personally and as a leader. The span of giving encompassed four categories; giving time, ideas, recognition and reward. Firstly, participants saw that it was important for a leader to be able to give their time, listen genuinely to their team mates and take their input on board. Secondly, sharing ideas was considered an important aspect of generosity; if a person was really invested in the group they would not keep their ideas to themselves and look for individual recognition but instead they would share the idea for the benefit of the entire group and this would then help everyone to achieve greater things.

> If you are going to take the place of a leader of a group you have to be generous with time and listen, if you weren’t able to take on board what other people were saying then you wouldn’t be a very good leader. Especially knowing what your team need from you as well and that people know you have time for them. It doesn’t always have to be money. [Karen]
Next came, recognition. This was in relation to being able to appreciate their team’s contribution and not take all the credit for the work done. Without acknowledging their team mate’s participation it was unlikely that the team members would want to continue to contribute to the work. Gratitude as small as saying a ‘thank you’ was considered to have a lot of mileage.

I love when people appreciate you, if I do even a little bit of work and if someone says thanks it means so much cuz people just go oh yea she did that. If someone says thanks it is really good, it shows that people appreciate your effort. Because I am very appreciative of people. I always say thanks and get that back. [Diane]

Finally, reward was seen as important component, whether this was in the format of public praise or a celebration of achievements. Reward enabled team members to see that there was a value placed on their contribution which in turn impacted on the motivation of members to contribute to the group. The participants also highlighted that generosity was reciprocal, that if you were generous to others then the likelihood was that they would be generous in return. While mentoring did not arise directly in relation to the youth leadership programme during the interviews, the young people did indicate that they got a lot of support during the programme and outlined other people they considered mentors and guides for example coaches, teachers, youth workers and relatives. Having a mentor or guide gave them the opportunity to receive support.

**Action**

For action subthemes such as persistence, meaning and motivation emerged most frequently. Furthermore, being a role model was also reported as important.

**Persistence**

Persistence emerged as critical to both groups in terms of achieving their goals and they reported that giving up early would not get them to where they wanted to go. For the low ‘risk’ group persistence was an important part of who they were (n=10). There was a great sense of satisfaction when they achieved their goal and overcame barriers that got in the way. They were very aware that if they gave up
too early it meant they would not accomplish anything and this enabled them focus
on seeing things through.

If you get knocked down once and don’t get up
again then you’re not really a leader, you have to
take the falls. [Diane]

Young people in the high ‘risk’ group reported that persistence was important in a
leader. They thought it was important not to give up, particularly if they failed at
something once. They highlighted that persistence helped to encourage them
particularly, the first time they tried something and to endure through those initial
doubts, challenges and barriers. They did however highlight that a person needed to
know when to give up if there was no point in proceeding. Especially, if it caused
stress or prevented a person from ending something that was going nowhere.
Furthermore, they brought attention to the fact that just the right level of
persistence was important, not so much that they would annoy others, but sufficient
that they could overcome obstacles. This group were more cautious of being too
persistent something the other group did not mention.

Motivating

Motivating others also resonated with the participants as it was seen as especially
important when trying to create a team to work towards a goal. Without the ability
to motivate the team participants felt that it they would not be able to reach their
goal. Both groups were aware of the importance of engaging team members on
their team project, some called this inspiring others. The low ‘risk’ group saw this
as integral to being a good leader, as a person could not really lead if their team
were not too interested in being a part of what they were trying to do.

Young people in the high ‘risk’ group found it harder to motivate others. They
highlighted that it did not matter how enthusiastic or motivated they might be that it
did not always result in them motivating others. They put it down to that they may
not be interested, may not want to listen or just have other things that they would
prefer to do. This ultimately made it very difficult and the young people recognised
that they needed to be committed and good at getting others to buy into their ideas
to be good leaders. They highlighted that sometimes in some situations it was
impossible to motivate others and that needed to come from themselves. What it
came down to was; ‘encouraging the team to want to do it rather than pushing them into it’ [Alison]. Others saw that a key aspect of motivating others was to stand out from the crowd, be different, speak to another agenda and to encourage others to follow you ‘Yes I think I inspire and motivate other people, I’m definitely not a sheep and other people do follow me’ [Sile].

**Meaning**

As the young people explored their motivations behind being a leader, meaning was something which had particular resonance with them. This was especially so when considering that they were going to invest their time and potentially other people’s time into a project. Both groups described how important it was to have meaning behind why they were completing a particular project. This they described was what drove their motivation to complete the project. ‘If it didn’t have meaning then why do it?’ [Alf]. Young people saw that unless there was a greater reason behind what they were doing that it was pointless and they could be spending their time doing something else. The participants reported that with meaning came respect for themselves, their time and their effort. Participants described that if there was a reason, then it kept them motivated to ‘push on through’ [Alf]. Without meaning or purpose it was unlikely they would achieve what they set out to.

Yes. It drives you doesn’t it? To have something in it that means something to you. Without it you wouldn’t be doing it really, you’d just be sitting there hating your life, not caring. [Theresa]

**Role Models**

At time one when asked, the low ‘risk’ group (n=9) were slightly more likely to see themselves as role models than the high ‘risk’ group (n=7). What impacted whether young people perceived themselves as role models was whether they felt other people saw them as role models. In cases where other people did see them as role models it strengthened their belief in themselves. More young people in the high ‘risk’ group did not see themselves as role models, or believe that others would, with four young people declaring that they were not role models (n=4). Some saw their strengths as not necessarily strengths that others would want to look up to.

No, I just don’t see myself as a good role model so I can’t see other people thinking I am [Hannah]
As the programme progressed more young people could see themselves as leaders and thought that they had useful skills and ideas to share. For the high ‘risk’ group they were more likely to see themselves as role models at time two than time one.

**Other Areas**

Other themes that emerged but which were less prominent included: critical thinking, decision making, being democratic, gratitude, increased maturity, continual development, calmness, dedication, independence, being open, people skills, looking at things from different perspectives, risk taking and understanding community needs.

**Leadership Summary**

The above components largely map onto the tentative conceptual model that was presented in Chapter 2 and illustrates how these areas had particular resonance with the young people on their youth leadership journey. The results above indicate that the high and low ‘risk’ youth were often at different points in their capabilities, however also illustrates that the high ‘risk’ youth grew a lot in terms of skill set and capacity to take on leadership roles. Overall, the young people reported that they garnered particular benefits from their involvement in the youth leadership programme when tracked over the course of the programme and at 6 months follow-up. These benefits were seen in their personal development and development as young leaders. As well as this, it was apparent from their interactions with their communities that their communities benefit from their leadership. The participants reported that they gained many skills and attributes including assertiveness, communication skills, confidence, social skills, problem solving ability, leadership skills, seizing leadership opportunities, taking on responsibility, maturing, improving presentation skills, a growth in the ability to work with others, the ability to set and achieve a goal, enhanced resilience, improved perception of social support and enhanced sense of continual development.

**Connecting Youth Leadership, Resilience & Social Support**

It would appear from the above narrative that the young people involved in the youth leadership programme perceived an enhanced capacity to access and utilise
social support. For some, the leadership programme offered them additional supports in the form of new friends, youth workers and community members. As well as this, due to their active involvement in their communities they garnered greater recognition from people around them thus enhancing their esteem support. Accounts from the participants indicate that their capacity to deal with challenges and their ensuing resilience to life’s stressors appeared enhanced. Furthermore, as indicated above the youth leadership programme enhanced other skills such as leadership, communication, team working capabilities etc., This indicates that there may indeed be a link between involvement in the youth leadership programme and its capacity to enhance resilience and improve perceptions of social support.

**Summary**

These interviews highlight the contrasting changes that occurred in participants’ worlds. There is evidently both personal growth taking place and an increase in leadership capacity for both cohorts. The interviews demonstrate that while the low ‘risk’ group may start off in a stronger place that the low ‘risk’ group, both groups benefit substantially from being involved in the leadership programme. While the young people in the low ‘risk’ group do indeed start higher on skills and while their qualitative accounts are that they have improved further on these various components, quantitatively in the main they maintain their skill level. On the other hand, the young people in the high ‘risk’ group quantitatively started significantly lower than their low ‘risk’ counterparts but increased on the majority of measures. As well as this, the interviews have illuminated how the leadership programme has positively affected their ability to communicate, their confidence, social skills, capacity for resilience, and their ability to access social support. This group may indeed have started lower than the low ‘risk’ group however, they have gained skills and abilities that have helped them overcome potentially greater barriers than their counterparts would have experienced. Quantitatively it is evident that the high ‘risk’ youth did in fact gain greater degrees of skills than their low ‘risk’ counterparts.
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5.6 Findings in Relation to Objective 5

To identify key messages for practice, policy and research in light of this study.

5.6.1 Qualitative Strand

To help inform what fits well for practice, policy and research five focus groups were carried out with 23 programme facilitators (17 Foróige staff, 6 Foróige volunteers). As well as this, aspects from the young people’s interviews which fit well will be drawn on here.

Programme Administration

Within the administration of the programme some points must be highlighted which may help with the future roll out of youth leadership programmes.

Application Process

A number of facilitators used an application or interview process to ensure that they had people who knew what they were signing up to at the beginning of the programme. For those that did not use an application process some of their participants did not fully grasp why they were doing the programme and what they wanted to get out of it. For these facilitators they could really see the benefit of using an application the following year. Some facilitators who did use an application form noted that they were able to gauge the participant’s potential commitment to the programme. ‘They don’t necessarily have to be coming with a lot of skill. They just needed to be coming willing to learn and eager to participate’ [FG1]. Facilitators assured the researcher that the application process used was not a way of selecting elite young people but as a way of gauging their expectations of the programme, their interest and commitment. Two facilitators highlighted that despite using an application form they had taken on one young girl in one case and two boys in the other case who did not complete the application form. They later found that they were not suitable to the programme, were generally disruptive to the others and did not appreciate that there had been a process that others had gone through to get there, two of whom dropped out. By virtue of completing the application form it was felt that the facilitator would have a better sense of the
participant’s commitment and thus ensure that the facilitator made the best selection possible.

**Schools Environment**

For some people who facilitated in the school environment they felt that the schools were a barrier to enabling the young people to see the facilitators as equals. Facilitators reported that it took the young people several weeks to relax into the leadership programme and stop seeing them as ‘teachers’ and to see them as facilitators. Others reported that while it was a challenge it gave them a captive audience and they had very good attendance, with the exception other school business arising e.g. work placements and speakers coming to the school. As such, the environment was seen as critically important for good learning to happen. One facilitator suggested that ‘even within the school environment if you change the seating around, you’re sitting in circles it still takes them quite a while to adapt and adjust’ [FG2]. Therefore, it is important that the facilitator takes time to consider the environment and ways to maximise the participation of the young people and their adjustment to working in a style different to typical classroom learning.

**More Time**

Suggestions from the young people included having more time for leadership. They felt that more time would enable them get more involved and take on more opportunities. They reported that once a week was too little and that sometimes they had forgotten to do things in between. They suggested having more frequent meetings because they really enjoyed the programme. They reported that it gave them an opportunity to express themselves in a way that they typically did not get to in their school or community environment. Their experience of the programme was that it enabled them to see their potential and as such they wanted more of the positive re-enforcement.

> More time, maybe twice a week because we died for it, we really wanted Leadership every week we loved it. It always brought us closer together each week. [Diane- Youth from low risk group]

Other young people felt that it was a shame that their peers missed a few sessions.
For one young person she described how not everyone made it every week. She felt that this was disruptive and that the others missed out on really important things. She would have liked if there were more sessions closer together and that then more people might have made it every week. The facilitators also thought that more opportunities to engage the young people would be beneficial but also realised that this would be difficult given their other work priorities.

Programme Integrity

All young people interviewed at time two were asked about programme integrity. They were asked ‘did the programme run as it was meant to i.e. once a week for one hour? Were all the topics outlined covered?’ All participants reported that the leadership programme ran as expected, some programmes ranged from one hour to one hour 30 minutes. One young person said that their facilitator fitted the programme into class time which was 40 minutes and thought that it was too rushed. They would have liked more time to process the contents of the programme better. When the facilitators were asked about their integrity to the programme content, they responded that they found the programme very easy to follow and that the content was very good so there was no need to amend or develop supplementary sessions. Some facilitators and young people found module two challenged them more and moved them out of their comfort zones. Module two included components on; presenting, debating, project management and a team research project. The focus of this module was to enable the young people implement their skills and think critically. One facilitator felt that the logic model was very challenging for him and he did not feel comfortable facilitating it with young people. Other facilitators however remarked that the young people found it very easy to use and useful to manage their projects. Some facilitators found particular activities difficult, such as the conflict resolution or the critical thinking activities. However, others found these quite useful and reported that they had a good grasp of them. Others participants and facilitators commented that it was this additional challenge which enabled the participants to learn new skills and implement the ones they had developed.
**Facilitators Benefits**

The facilitators reported that they also gained from their involvement in the programme. These benefits included gaining a better understanding of the young people they worked with, improved facilitation skills, enhanced confidence, a new lease of enthusiasm for working with young people, increased focus, organisation skills, reflection skills, improved relationships with young people and their co-facilitators, and learning from the programme content itself. Others who had facilitated it for a second time felt that it got easier the more they ran the programme. As well as this, they reported that they learned things from the programme at a deeper level. Overall, facilitators reported really enjoying the programme and described it as being a very positive way of engaging with young people around a very positive topic.

**Other Suggestions**

Other suggestions were made regarding the reflection questions being varied, additional guidance on the community action projects, having a good understanding of the grading requirements for NUI Galway, the cost of the foundation certificate and fundraising to cover it.

**Section Summary**

This section explored the perception of young people, staff and volunteers to programme implementation, integrity, challenges and suggestions for change, as well as the benefits to facilitators.

**5.6.2 Connecting Youth Leadership, Resilience & Social Support**

This section explores, using multiple regression analysis, the connection between youth leadership, social support and resilience. Multivariate analysis is an approach used to describe or explain relationships between different phenomena (Tachnick & Fidell, 1996; Pallant, 2007). By including a number of variables and relationships, the multivariate models can help us to delineate the predictability of independent variables on one continuous dependent measure (Pallant, 2007; Tachnick & Fidell, 1996). This allows the research to explore the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable, and control or adjust for the effect of other independent
variables in the model. For the purpose of the multiple regressions, life skills and leadership skills were combined to give a new variable called leadership skills total. A standard multiple regression was used to assess the ability of demographic measures to predict levels of leadership skills. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity.

**Time One: Model 1-3**

As can be seen in table 5.14, the results of the multiple regression for model 1 indicates that 21.0% of the variance in leadership skills total is explained by leadership self-perception (beta=.329, p<.000) and average grade (beta=-.332, p<.000). Leadership self-perception was positively associated i.e. an increase in leadership self-perception leads to an increase in leadership skills. Grade was negatively associated i.e. lower grades had a lower leadership score. The results of the multiple regression for model 2 indicates that 23.9% of the variance in leadership skills total can be attributed to resilience (beta=.443, p<.000). The results of the multiple regression for model 3 indicates that 31.1% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by empathy (beta=.339, p<.000), understanding oneself (beta=.280, p<.000) and adolescent well-being (beta=.215, p<.000).

**Time one: Model 4**

Model 4 gives a more realistic world view. The results of the multiple regression for model 4 indicates that 44.0% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by resilience (beta=.270, p<.000), leadership self-perception (beta=.215, p<.000), empathy (beta=.249, p<.000), and understanding self (beta=.162, p=.007).
Table 5.14 Multiple Regression Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Time one</th>
<th>Time two</th>
<th>Time three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>-.073</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader self-perception</td>
<td>.329***</td>
<td>.213***</td>
<td>.303***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural/Urban</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Year</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>-.028</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Grade</td>
<td>-.332***</td>
<td>-.183</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living arrangements</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>-.028</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>-.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience Total</td>
<td>.443***</td>
<td>.270***</td>
<td>.590***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Well-being</td>
<td>.215***</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.349***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>.339***</td>
<td>.249***</td>
<td>.492***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding self</td>
<td>.280***</td>
<td>.162**</td>
<td>.185**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F value</td>
<td>8.575</td>
<td>42.766</td>
<td>16.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001
Time Two: Model 1-3

The results of the multiple regression for model 1 indicate that 9.3% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by leader self-perception ($beta=.303$, $p<.000$), as per table 5.14. The results of the multiple regression for model 2 indicates that 33.0% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by resilience ($beta=.590$, $p<.000$). The results of the multiple regression for model 3 indicates that 36.3% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by empathy ($beta=.492$, $p<.000$), adolescent well-being ($beta=.349$, $p<.000$) and understanding self ($beta=185$, $p<.005$).

Time Two: Model 4

The results of the multiple regression for model 4 indicates that 46.4% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by resilience ($beta=.386$, $p<.000$), empathy ($beta=.332$, $p<.000$), leader self-perception ($beta=.158$, $p=.006$), and adolescent well-being ($beta=.181$, $p=.008$).

Time Three: Model 1-3

The results of the multiple regression for model 1 indicates that 8.8% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by leader self-perception ($beta=.321$, $p<.000$). The results of the multiple regression for model 2 indicates that 31.3% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by resilience ($beta=.483$, $p<.000$). The results of the multiple regression for model 3 indicates that 23.7% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by empathy ($beta=.335$, $p<.000$), understanding oneself ($beta=.241$, $p=.002$) and adolescent well-being ($beta=.158$, $p=.038$).

Time Three: Model 4

The results of the multiple regression for model 4 indicates that 38.6% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by resilience ($beta=.319$, $p<.000$), leader self-perception ($beta=.181$, $p=.004$) and empathy ($beta=.225$, $p<.000$).
Model 5: Reduced Overall Model – Over time

Model 5 is a reduced overall model, this incorporated systematically deleting variables that were far from significance yielding a final reduced model see table 5.15. **Time one:** The results of the multiple regressions for model 5 indicate that 42.9% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by leadership self-perception (beta=.217, p<.000), average grade (beta=-.201, p<.000), resilience (beta=.254, p<.000), empathy (beta=.248, p<.000) and understanding self (beta=.203, p<.000). Average grade had a negative effect in that a lower grade indicated lower leadership skills.

**Time two:** The results of the multiple regression for model 5 indicates that 46.8% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by resilience (beta=.381, p<.000), empathy (beta=.324, p<.000) leader self-perception (beta=.159, p=.005) and adolescent well-being (beta=.188, p=.003).

**Time three:** The results of the multiple regression for model 5 indicates that 39.6% of the variance in leadership skills total can be explained by resilience (beta=.316, p<.000), empathy (beta=.218, p<.000), leadership self-perception (beta=.184, p=.003), social support (beta=.135, p=.054) and understanding self (beta=.133, p=.045).

Table 5.15 Reduced Overall Model Multiple Regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Time 1 Model 5</th>
<th>Time 2 Model 5</th>
<th>Time 3 Model 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader self-perception</td>
<td>0.217***</td>
<td>0.159**</td>
<td>0.184**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural/Urban</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Grade</td>
<td>-0.201***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living arrangements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.135*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience Total</td>
<td>0.254***</td>
<td>0.381***</td>
<td>0.316***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Well-being</td>
<td>0.188**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0.248***</td>
<td>0.324***</td>
<td>0.218***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding self</td>
<td>0.203***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.133*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
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<td>0.468</td>
<td>0.396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F value</td>
<td>33.024</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cases</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001
Section Summary

This section highlights the interrelationship between resilience, adolescent well-being, empathy, social support and understanding yourself with youth leadership skills development. It also highlights that resilience and empathy are the strongest predictors of leadership skills. Furthermore, self-perception as a leader has a strong correlation with leadership skills. Grade also demonstrated a negative correlation with leadership skills, as grade decreases so does leadership skills. The findings here will be used to inform practice, policy and researcher in terms of new directions in programme content and highlight important relationships in the development of youth leadership.

Summary of Key Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>431 young people</th>
<th>267 Leadership youth and 164 Comparison youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>52% Leadership group and 27% Comparison group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time 1**
- Leadership group are significantly stronger on communication skills, teamwork, leadership skills and community involvement than the comparison group at time one.

**Leadership Group Time 1-3**
- Leadership group increased statistically significantly on:
  - Sibling support and resilience.
  - Decision making, critical thinking, life skills, leadership skills and community involvement at time two, and furthermore on empathy, communication skills and goal setting at time three.

**Leadership versus Comparison Group T1**
- When missing cases at time two were adjusted for, the comparison group were significantly higher on advice support than the leadership group at time one, while all other measures were similar.

**Leadership versus Comparison T1-3**
- Leadership group were statistically significantly improved over the comparison group on:
  - Sibling support, esteem support, total social support at time two, and furthermore on emotional support at time three.
  - All measures of resilience.
  - Goal setting, leadership skills and community involvement at time two and at time three further increases were seen in empathy, critical thinking, communication skills, team work and problem solving.

**High & Low ‘Risk’ Youth**
- High ‘risk’ group were significantly less likely to see themselves as leaders at time one. By time three there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups, indicating that the high ‘risk’ young people saw themselves as leaders just as much as the low ‘risk’ group.
- Low ‘risk’ group increase significantly on team work and decrease adolescent well-being, while the high ‘risk’ group demonstrated statistically significant improvements in adolescent well-being scale, decision making, critical thinking, friendship support, sibling support,
A connection was found between resilience, adolescent well-being, empathy, social support and understanding yourself and youth leadership skills development. Multiple regressions also highlighted that resilience and empathy are the strongest predictors of leadership skills. Self-perception as a leader has a strong correlation with youth leadership skills, as does grade.

5.7 Summary

This Chapter has presented the findings of the research in relation to the five objectives of this study. The first section outlined the demographics of the sample population indicating a strong degree of similarity between the leadership and comparison groups. The next section looked at the baseline data from both groups and revealed that the initial leadership group was stronger than the comparison group on a number of variables. The following section, explored how both groups fared over the three time points. This analysis revealed that the comparison group decreased on a number of variables while the leadership group improved statistically significantly on a number of measures. The next section compared the leadership group directly to the comparison group. When adjusting for cases lost it revealed that the comparison and leadership groups were similar at time one, except the comparison group perceived significantly greater advice support. Over time the leadership group improved statistically significantly when compared to the comparison group in terms of leadership skills, resilience and social support. The next section looked more closely at a subset of the participants categorised in low and high ‘risk’ groups for adolescent well-being. The findings here reveal that while the high ‘risk’ group start substantially lower than the low ‘risk’ group they make statistically significant improvements which are backed up with qualitative reports of their experience. Finally, key messages for policy, practice and research are explored by way of qualitative findings from facilitators and young people as well as carrying out multiple regression analysis. These findings will be further discussed in Chapter 6.
Chapter Six: Discussion

6 Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the research findings in relation to the objectives of the study. Section 6.1 will first present a discussion of the findings in light of the available research as it relates to objectives 1-3 of the study. Section 6.2 will then present a discussion of the findings in relation to objective 4. Section 6.3 will discuss the findings in relation to objective 5. This Chapter will also reconsider the tentative conceptual model described in Chapter 2 in light of the research. This discussion will highlight what has been learned from this study and how these findings can inform further work in the area of youth leadership, resilience and social support for policy, practice and research.

Firstly, the research findings in relation to Objective 1-3 will be discussed. Then a discussion of the results in relation to Objectives 4 and 5 will be dealt with separately.

6.1 Discussion of the Findings in Relation to Objectives 1-3

The research objectives are reiterated below before progressing further:

1. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support among a set of young people, including those who are about to participate in a youth leadership programme and a comparison group who will not take part in the programme (time one).

2. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support on completion of the youth leadership programme (time two) and at six months follow-up (time three) in respect of both groups.

3. To establish the difference in leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support between each group at the three time points.
Objectives 1-3: Establishing the leadership skills, resilience and social support of young people in an intervention group and comparison group at three time points to determine whether the ensuing intervention, a youth leadership programme, impacted leadership skills, resilience and social support.

For ease of discussion, Objectives 1-3 will be discussed collectively. This decision was based on two reasons. Firstly, Objective 1 and 2 explore the same factors (leadership skills, resilience and social support) but do so at different time points (baseline, post-intervention and 6 months follow-up). Secondly, Objective 3 focuses on comparing the two groups over the research time points to determine if there is a difference and so fits into this section.

After reviewing the findings thoroughly, the researcher identified three key findings which will be elaborated on, these are: 1) the youth leadership programme appears effective in increasing and sustaining leadership skills over time 2) youth leadership programme involvement appears to increase young people’s capacity for resilience 3) youth leadership programme involvement appears to improve perceived social support.

1. The youth leadership programme appears effective in increasing and sustaining leadership skills over time

Youth leadership development is a growing area of interest among those who work with adolescents (Kahn et al., 2007; Anderson et al., 2007). Young people today play a pivotal role in their communities, providing much needed social capital, energy and innovation which help contribute to solving the problems of communities they live in (SRDC, 1996). As such leadership development in the adolescent population is an important area of consideration. Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2004) highlight that opportunities for youth leadership must be framed not only to develop skills and knowledge, but in the application of these skills in authentic ways. Youth can contribute to their communities in a positive way or unfortunately be considered part of the problem, as was seen in the England Riots 2011. During that unrest young people in cities across England took part in rioting, looting and destruction due to anger with police after a young man was shot dead (Lewis et al., 2011). Conversely to this, young people can also been seen as change makers and activists for example in Egypt and Libya over the same time period as
they fought for reform, institutional change and democracy (Mohyeldin, 2011). Whether young people are viewed as leaders or villains depends on the situation and their response to it. Youth leadership programmes can facilitate the development of human capital, build community social capital and enable youth contribute to their communities (Beaulieu et al., 1990).

The focus of this youth leadership programme has been on facilitating young people to develop skills which they can use to contribute towards their communities. While there is a growing body of literature pertaining to youth leadership, a meta-analysis carried out by Ricketts and Rudd (2002) found that very few leadership programmes were proven. Furthermore, as can be seen by the youth leadership studies outlined in Chapter 4, there has been limited quantitative research, particularly beyond completion of the programme.

In this study, when the leadership group were examined over time, one-way Paired T-Tests found that the leadership group demonstrated a statistically significant increase in decision making, critical thinking, life skills, leadership skills and community involvement between time one (baseline) and time two (post-intervention). Further statistically significant increases were seen in empathy, communication skills and goal setting at time three (6 months follow-up). This suggests that the benefits accrued were maintained and enhanced as the young people continued to garner benefits beyond the life of the programme. This reveals that the youth leadership programme may confer positive benefits for the participants. It must also be noted that between time two and time three the leadership group completed their community project (6 months prior) and graduated from the National University of Ireland, Galway (3 months prior) to the completion of the survey. This, along with qualitative findings, suggests that once the young people were put on a youth leadership path including self-belief as a leader, they continued to use their leadership skills, seize opportunities within their communities and gain positively. These findings have similar resonance with the quantitative study by Bloomberg et al., (2003) which found that young people demonstrated improved social skills, leadership skills, and an expanded sense of community responsibility.
In terms of qualitative data, participants reported being better able to communicate. For some this was a dramatic change going from being quite shy to being more assertive. 

"Just I can get my point across a lot easier now. I can just communicate better... if you can’t talk to people, you can’t lead." [Theresa]

The young people also reported that they had gained the ability to lead people, found it easier to work as a team and share the responsibility. They described having improved presentation skills, the ability to resolve conflicts and finding the solutions to problems. As well as this, they felt they were more active in their communities. Furthermore, social and emotional skills such as empathy, relating to others, self-awareness, confidence and self-control were believed to have improved over the course of the study. These findings echo those of Stiftung’s qualitative study (2003) which found young people reported an improvement in confidence, maturity, communication, critical thinking and ability to create a persuasive argument. In the Foróige leadership programme participants perceived an improvement in their leadership skills, their ability to communicate, presentation skills, confidence and access to leadership opportunities.

"I realised, I have to do things for myself, like school and college I could not let people do everything for me. I realise it is all for myself. I realised I have to take action, myself." [Alison]

When considering the comparison group’s quantitative findings over time (Paired T-Test), there was no significant change in leadership skills. However, community involvement did significantly decrease compared to time one. This may be due to the awareness they had of the leadership group being involved in the community and by comparison perceived that they were less involved in their communities.

The results above highlight that the comparison group did not improve over the course of the study with respect to their leadership skills. However, the leadership group improved statistically significantly on a number of measures of leadership skills, community involvement and empathy. This suggests that involvement in the youth leadership programme may confer positive benefits in developing skills, exposure to leadership opportunities and engagement in the community.
When comparing the leadership group directly to the comparison group, the findings from the one-way ANOVA analysis in this study indicate that both groups were very similar at time one, when adjusted for lost cases. One exception was that the comparison group were statistically significantly higher on advice support than the leadership group at time one. When considering the entire population at time one, the leadership group were significantly stronger than the comparison group. This may be explained, in part, by some of the lower scoring cohort from the comparison group not returning at time two. When this was adjusted both groups demonstrated a greater degree of similarity.

At time two the leadership group demonstrated statistically significant improvements over the comparison group for goal setting, leadership skills and community involvement. In addition, at time three the leadership group demonstrated further statistically significant improvements over the comparison group on empathy, critical thinking, communication skills, team work and problem solving. It must be noted that the retention rate of the comparison group was lower at time three which may be due to the lack of incentives and long time period of the study. The difference between the groups does suggest that the increases observed in the leadership group may be attributed, in part, to the youth leadership programme as the groups were similarly matched in terms of age, gender and geographical location.

In the quantitative study carried out by Anderson et al., (2007) they found that their leadership group started off at a higher point than the comparison group on a number of the measures. This is similar to the initial findings of this study at time one. However, in this study when adjusted for lost cases both groups had a stronger degree of similarity at the starting point. A point to consider is that young people involved in youth leadership programmes may do better than those not involved, due to self-selection.

Another interesting finding is that seeing yourself as a leader appears to be linked with better outcomes. This suggests that self-belief plays an important role in youth leadership development which concurs with Bandura’s (1977b, 1997) view that self-belief and self-efficacy are key attributes to being able to carry something through to action, which often determines how well a person does in life. This
finding is comparable to research by Nelson (2010) who found that young people were beginning to see themselves as leaders.

2) Youth leadership programme involvement appears to increase young people’s capacity for resilience

Resilience is seen as the ability to overcome serious threats or challenges which enable the person to ‘bounce back’ and maintain their health and well-being (Ungar, 2004; Benard, 2006). A person’s capacity for resilience can depend on their exposure to risk and protective factors. Exposure to a disproportionate number of risk factors can overwhelm a person and limit their capacity for resilience (Arthur et al., 2002). Conversely, having abundant protective factors can buffer against the stresses of everyday life and traumatic experiences (Arthur et al., 2002; Hjemdal et al., 2006). When considered in the context of youth leadership development, resilience can be seen as an important component for young leaders particularly as young leaders are likely to encounter many challenges (Broadwood & Fine, 2011; Goleman, 2002). If a young leader is resilient they should be better able to face challenges they encounter and overcome them. On the other hand, if a young person is resilient they may have a greater capacity to demonstrate leadership.

In the context of this study, improvements in resilience were statistically significant for the leadership participants over time as measured by Paired T-Tests. Improvements in resilience 2 and resilience total were statistically significant at time two. While all measures of resilience; resilience 1, resilience 2, and resilience total were statistically significant at time three. The comparison group on the other hand decreased significantly on resilience I between time one and time two, however this returned to baseline levels at time three. This indicates that involvement in the youth leadership programme may confer positive benefits in terms of youth’s capacity for resilience and ability to deal with challenges that occur. This may be connected to participants’ perception of improvements in critical thinking, problem solving, conflict resolution and communication skills.

When considering how the leadership group compared directly to the comparison group, the findings from one-way ANOVA analysis revealed that the leadership group demonstrated statistically significant improvements over the comparison
group on resilience 1, resilience 2 and resilience total between time one and time three. This indicates that the leadership programme when compared to no-intervention contributes towards positive benefits to its participants in terms of youth’s capacity for resilience. These findings are similar to the increase in protective factors Shelton (2009) found, which led to an increase in resilience of youth who participated in a leadership programme. Broadwood & Fine (2011) also found that by engaging young offenders in youth leadership which set out to contribute to their resilience it also had the effect of reducing their offending. This suggests that youth leadership may have further benefits to society.

Qualitative descriptions of the young people’s experiences illustrated the difficult situations they had been through and how they coped with them. Strategies that were employed to cope with challenges included; talking to other people, getting a different perspective, listening to music, reading a book, drawing, drama, science, going for walks and watching films. As Rutter (1981) points out, core to success in dealing with challenges is how the person adapts and responds to the situation. In this case the strategies outlined helped the youth deal with the challenges they face which can be considered to fit Masten et al., (1990) perception of resilience as preventative or responsive.

I just sit in my room, probably have a little cry, listen to music and just think about it and then I’d go talk to someone and get their opinion, then just try sort it out like. [Sile]

The young people also highlighted in the latter part of the study that they felt that they were more independent now. They reported they had greater personal reserves to draw from and resolve their own issues. These may have come, in part, from the focus on problem solving, team work and conflict resolution within the programme.

3) Youth leadership programme involvement appears to improve perceived social support

Social support leads to the belief that they are cared for and loved, esteemed and valued, and belong to a network of communication and mutual obligations (Cobb, 1976, p.300). Steinberg (2001, p.7) highlights that adolescents’ are remarkably
adaptable and resilience in the face of normative challenges, particularly if they have the support of one or more caring adults’. Having a network of supports offers young people the sense that they belong and that they are loved, something that Maslow (1934) highlighted as central to positive development. Whether received or perceived, social support conveys a benefit to overall health as it acts as a positive buffer to the effects of everyday stress as well as times when there is no stress (Uchino, 2009).

When carrying out Paired T-Tests the research found statistically significant improvements in sibling support for the leadership group between time one and two, which was maintained at time three. Dolan (2003) noted that siblings can be a serious cause of stress in young people’s lives and found that young people perceive their siblings as a poor source of support. This lack of perceived support can be seen in the results of this study which found that the average score for sibling support was substantially lower than that of friend, parent and other adult support at time one. The significant increase in sibling support may be linked to an improved ability to communicate, deal with conflict and solve problems. This may in turn have helped the participants cope with sibling challenges and see them more as a support than previously. Something which is particularly beneficial as sibling relationships can be some of the closest and most enduring relationships people have throughout their lives (Gilligan, 2009; Edwards et al., 2006).

The young participants in the comparison group however, significantly decreased in friendship support, sibling support, total social support, esteem support and advice support as analysed with paired T-tests between time one and time two. As the young people in both groups were from the same area, leadership involvement may have impacted on friend’s spare time, having less time to spend with each other and thus resulted in a perception of reduced support. The lack of intervention this group received may lead to a reduced sense of support, particularly if they were in close proximity to the leadership group. This may have impacted their awareness of what they were ‘not’ involved in. By time three however, the comparison group scores returned to baseline levels. This may be as a result of those scoring quite low at time two not returning at time three, indeed as they had no intervention they had less of an incentive to return.
When comparing the leadership group directly to the comparison group using one-way ANOVA analysis, findings indicate that the comparison group were significantly higher on advice support than the leadership group. At time two however, the leadership group demonstrated statistically significant improvements over the comparison group on sibling support, total social support and esteem support. At time three the leadership group maintained statistically significant improvements over the comparison group in emotional support. As mentioned previously, the improvements in sibling support may be due to the accumulation of problem solving and conflict resolution skills. Furthermore, the fact that the young people were completing a leadership course and graduating from NUI Galway may have also impacted the increase seen in esteem support as they may have received additional attention from family and friends. The quantitative study carried out by Anderson et al., study (2007) did reveal that participants perceived an improved sense of support from their local communities, something which was not assessed by this study. However, this may be considered similar in some ways to the improved sense of support participants in the Foróige leadership programme felt they could access.

From the qualitative aspect of this research, there was a strong emphasis on social support being core to the young people’s ability to deal with challenges and also their self-belief. Parents and friends were seen as strong sources of support including building supports which could be categorised into the types of support described by Cutrona (2000) which are esteem, advice, emotional and concrete support.

Mum encourages me every time I play football – embarrassing sometimes, she pushes me the extra bit, makes you push forward and encourages you to do better. [Michael]

Similar to the quantitative findings, siblings did not feature as frequently as other sources of support. However, where they did feature, for some they were perceived as a very valuable asset and for others as the programme progressed they felt that the dynamic with their siblings had improved.
Myself and my sister we used to fight, now I just kind of step back and don’t just say things on the spur of the moment any more. [Alison]

As with the quantitative findings, these findings suggest that the leadership programme may confer some benefit in helping buffer young people against the stresses associated with siblings and help them to develop appropriate coping and even tap into siblings as being more of a support. Greater positive sibling support as Branje et al., (2004) finds leads to lower levels of internalising and externalising problems.

An illustration of how young people perceived greater social support comes from figure 6.1. The picture brings to light how this young person went from feeling alone, with ‘literally’ the world on his shoulders. He reported that he did not have the confidence to express himself properly and always felt he had to take everything on himself without asking for help. After the leadership programme however, he depicts himself as surrounded by others who are supporting him in achieving his goal. He has learned that leading as part of a team is much more powerful and effective than going it alone. This has resonance with the Anderson et al., study (2007) which found that participants perceived an improved sense of support from their local communities.
Figure 6.1 On Top of the World Picture

Draw a picture to represent your leadership journey!

Describe what you have drawn:

Before being part in the leadership programme I would often feel that I was carrying the weight of the world. I didn’t feel confident enough to express myself fully. I would always try to hide everything in myself without asking for help.

Throughout my leadership journey I have learnt in which work and skills. I have grown into an excellent leader for people and created friendships from around the globe and learned that leading as part of a team is most productive and powerful. It has been trying to become myself.
6.2 Objective 4

To track the changes among those identified with initial lowest and highest perceived well-being prior to participation in a youth leadership programme and again in light of having received the youth leadership programme.

Adolescence is a time of change and uncertainty, as illustrated in Chapter 2. Young people can gain crucial life skills to help them successfully navigate through the myriad of challenges they face in becoming an adult (Santrock, 2007). They may also face challenges which can be overwhelming and test their capacity to withstand adversity (Cicchetti & Toth, 2006; Barry et al., 2005). Normative adolescent development offers youth the landscape to acquire a multitude of skills and abilities. The adolescents who endure adversity, on the other hand, may experience mental, emotional or psychological dysfunction if they cannot cope with the stressors they experience (Cicchetti & Toth, 2006). Adolescent problems can be described as internalising where they turn their thoughts inward e.g. anxiety or depression, or externalising when problems are turned outward e.g. juvenile delinquency (Cicchetti & Toth, 2006).

This research used the adolescent well-being scale as an identifier for youth experiencing emotional distress and poor well-being. In this study, approximately 12% of young people involved in the leadership programme scored above 13 on the adolescent well-being scale which indicates symptoms of depression. This appears to be lower than the national average of 20% of Irish youth who experience serious emotional distress found by the Irish College of Psychiatrists (2005). It is also lower than the findings of the My World Study (Dooley et al., 2012) which found that as many as 1 in 3 young people aged (12-25 years) experience emotional distress at some point in their adolescence. This substantial difference may be because the 12% does not reflect an entire developmental period like the My World study instead it reflects one point in time. The difference may also be due to less young people who experience emotional distress putting themselves forward for a youth leadership programme. An important consideration therefore, is the impact the youth leadership programmes can have for those youth who experience poor well-being. High ‘risk’ young people reported experiencing more traumatic life events than the low ‘risk’ group.
**a) High and low ‘risk’ youth significantly improve in leadership self-belief, with the most substantial improvement for the high ‘risk’ group.**

As mentioned earlier self-belief and self-efficacy are key attributes considered by Bandura (1977b) in enabling people to see something through to action. This study found that young people in both the low and high ‘risk’ groups demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in leadership self-perception over the course of the study. The most marked change occurred within the high ‘risk’ group where only 9.1% considered themselves to be leaders at time one, compared to the low ‘risk’ group where 62.5% considered themselves as leaders. By time three in the high ‘risk’ group 81.3% considered themselves as leaders compared with 90.9% of the low ‘risk’ group, with no significant difference between the groups. This indicates that the high risk young people went from mainly not seeing themselves as leaders to seeing themselves as leaders just as much as the low risk group. Self-belief is a powerful concept which Eden (1993) described may result in a self-fulfilling prophecy effect. This effect can create others to have expectations, in this case to behave as young leaders. This in turn encourages the person to have expectations of themselves and a desire to meet those expectations creating a snowball effect (Eden, 1993). This finding was also backed up by the qualitative findings, where participants reported gaining confidence to take on leadership roles where they would not have done so before.

**b) Youth leadership appears effective for high ‘risk’ youth but sustained engagement may be needed to embed improvements in social support**

In society and service provision, sometimes when a young person displays signs of emotional distress e.g. depression, anxiety, self-harming etc., unintentional restrictions may be placed upon them by well intending professionals. These good intentions may further exclude youth from activities which could support them through their difficulties (Schrank & Slade, 2007). Stigma associated with mental health problems can create barriers to education, training and employment (Secker et al., 2001).

Looking at the high ‘risk’ group first, paired T-tests indicate that statistically significant improvements in adolescent well-being occurred. This group demonstrated statistically significant increases in decision making, critical thinking,
sibling support, parental support, total social support and advice support between time one and time two. Statistically significant improvements in leadership skills and goal setting were observed at time three. Positive trends were noted over time for resilience, communication skills, team work, problem solving, life skills and community involvement. However, the perception of the supports from friends, parents and siblings as well as esteem support and total social support, returned to baseline levels at time three. This may be due to a couple of reasons. Firstly, the young people in the leadership programme may have received more attention from their sources of support because they were involved in the leadership programme. Secondly, they may have had access to more supports from being involved in the programme. This group may need further programme engagement or community linkages to sustain social support improvements so they are not transient. It must also be noted that the numbers involved in this aspect of the study are very low so results should be interpreted with caution. These results suggest that the young people in the high ‘risk’ group do benefit significantly from their involvement in youth leadership, despite having reduced subjective well-being. Nevertheless, engaging these young people in other community activities may sustain the improvements in social support seen at time two. Noteworthy however, is the fact that the improvements in skills and resilience were maintained at time three despite a perceived reduction in support.

When considering the low ‘risk’ group their paired T-tests indicate that their adolescent well-being significantly reduced. A phenomenon called regression to the mean may partly explain what is happening for these participants. By virtue of the fact that youth in the low ‘risk’ group were so low on the scale starting out meant that the only place for them to go was up (Clarke & Clarke, 2003). Alternatively, it may be the case that the young people’s critical thinking and analytical ability improved and thus they question more their subjective well-being. The paired T-test also revealed that this group increased significantly on team work. For many of the other measures there were positive trends or very slight fluctuations. This indicates that for the low ‘risk’ group they largely maintained where they were on the measures.

Overall, these findings are comparable to the study by Anderson et al., (2007) who explored how low and high functioning youth did in their leadership programme.
evaluation. They found that those who began the group at lower overall functioning were more likely than youth who began the programme at a higher level of functioning to report positive changes. In this study similarly, the high ‘risk’ youth started at a substantially lower level than the low ‘risk’ group, but the high ‘risk’ group improved on more measures than the ‘low’ risk group.

The qualitative findings provide further evidence that the high ‘risk’ participants gain a substantial benefit from their involvement in the leadership programme particularly in their ability to take the lead, communicate, work in teams, resolve conflict and solve problems. In initial interviews with the high ‘risk’ group they appeared to be quieter, shyer, had more challenges and traumatic events to deal with. As the interviews progressed it became obvious that all the young people involved in the interviews were benefiting at some level from the leadership programme. It was not obvious that social support had reduced for the high ‘risk’ group at time three however, some reported feeling more independent and not needing as much support now as they had before.

I’m probably more independent now than I was, I don’t rely on them that much. I’m a stronger person now, than I would have been before, not that they would not be there for me, I just don’t need them as much. [Alison].

When considering the social and emotional intelligence of participants, social skills was something which came to the fore for the high ‘risk’ group indicating that the leadership programme may have contributed towards their ability to engage with their peers, family and others. Comparably, Bloomberg et al., (2003) also found that social skills improved for their cohort when involved in youth leadership. While Roberts (2009) and Goleman (2006a) also see social skills as an important aspect of leadership. Furthermore, confidence was cited regularly as having improved for both groups in the Foróige leadership programme, notably however the high ‘risk’ group reported lower confidence starting out but described a substantial improvement over the duration of the programme. This is similar to findings by Stiftung (2003) who through qualitative research found that participants in that study improved in confidence over the course of their leadership involvement. The confidence that young people reported to have gained in the Foróige study were in presentations, public speaking and communication.
Considering this in light of neuroscience research, which indicates that exposure to experiences that enhance skills in adolescence can lead to the development of new neuronal pathways is promising for future leadership programme development (Giedd, 1999; Begley, 2000). These pathways if reinforced through practice can result in long term benefits for participants in terms of skills that contribute both personally and economically to their development.

Oh definitely made me less self-conscious and better with people than I used to be, and yeah, more confident… I’m way better at talking to people now [Theresa].

As would be expected, the low ‘risk’ group were most comfortable in considering themselves as role models, whereas for the high ‘risk’ group this did not fit as comfortably with them initially.

No, I just don’t see myself as a good role model so I can’t see other people thinking I am [Mary].

As the programme progressed the participants got more comfortable with taking on leadership roles as well as seeing themselves as leaders and role models. This is further backed up by figure 6.2. This picture illustrates how one young person described growing from a small seed full of the potential into a small tree and then slowly into a bigger tree revealing that their journey is ongoing and the tree (and themselves) will grow bigger. It also draws attention to how she feels if she does something inspiring then other people might also do the same. This is fitting with both Kouzes & Posner’s (2007) view of inspiring others to greatness.
When it came to resilience the stories garnered from the young participants, particularly the high ‘risk’ youth, indicated many experiences of adversity in their lives. This potentially links to this group’s lower perception of well-being as they had greater challenges to deal with than the low ‘risk’ group. Similar to the risk factor research which highlights excessive exposure to too many risk factors may impact their ability to cope (Arthur et al., 2002). Over time it became clear that the
young people involved in the research were in fact gaining benefits beyond leadership skills, which could help them, deal with life’s challenges such as resilience and access to social support.

Furthermore, for this subset of the study, some participants reported that their social support had improved. Youth in the high ‘risk’ group were more likely to indicate that their social supports had improved than the low ‘risk’ group, this is similar to the quantitative findings at time two. Having ample esteem support was more frequently cited by the low ‘risk’ group, while emotional support was more frequently cited by the high ‘risk’ group. This may be to do with the fact that the high ‘risk’ group had more to deal with and as such required more emotional support. For the low ‘risk’ group they were typically involved in more leadership roles prior to the programme and thus may have received more recognition. Sibling support also appeared to have improved with the high ‘risk’ group describing less fights and better approaches to dealing with their siblings. Siblings, as mentioned earlier, can be a source of stress for adolescents (Dolan, 2003). Other adults were not mentioned as frequently by the high ‘risk’ group. This group were not engaged in as many community activities as the low ‘risk’ counterparts and this could have limited their exposure to other adults for support. The adult support that low ‘risk’ youth experienced, may have enabled them gain a different perspective on their talents and contributed to their overall esteem support.

They [parents] just care for you and they’ll help you with a problem. Just love and care, you know. They’ll be there for you when you’re upset...they’re always there for you... just supporting you. [Seamus]

6.3 Discussion in Relation to Objective 5

To identify key messages for practice, policy and research in light of this study.

As seen in Chapter 2 some programmes called youth leadership can have a variety of focuses which not necessarily all emphasise becoming leaders. For example, programmes that focused heavily on personal development, others focused on prevention of youth offending behaviour, while others focus on the prevention of drugs and alcohol use with little focus on actually engaging in or evaluating leadership (Project Venture, 2002; Shelton, 2009; Klau, 2006). Many programmes
which have undergone evaluation demonstrate positive qualitative reports (Detzler et al., 2007, Lee et al., 2008, Stiftung 2003, Conner & Strobel 2007) however there is limited quantitative research particularly over a longer period available (Anderson et al., 2007; Bloomberg et al., 2003).

When considering influencing future practice important lessons can be learned from the programme facilitators and participants. As was highlighted, having a proper application procedure which enables young people put forward their interest and commitment to the programme ensures that everyone gets the best out of the programme. Further to this, it may be worth considering targeting youth who would not typically see themselves as leaders, particularly those who are more marginalised or who experience adversity. Paying attention to the environment is a key component to ensuring the group settles into the process, this is particularly important for those delivering youth leadership in schools. This has resonance with Bronfenbrener’s (1979) emphasis on the importance of context. The fact that young people and facilitators called for more time indicates a strong level of satisfaction and a desire for additional engagement. This can be considered a particular strength to the programme as at times it can be difficult to engage older adolescents (DES, 2003). Having resources that were comprehensive, user-friendly, and accompanied by adequate training and support appeared to ensure that fidelity to the programme was high. Finally, the additional benefits that facilitators gained from their involvement should be noted, particularly their perception of gaining an enhanced skill set and better linkages with the young people which meant they could access support easier.

In considering implications for practice, policy and research this research explored the connection between youth leadership, resilience and social support. This was to explore whether youth leadership involvement had any part to play in offering additional benefits to youth in terms of their capacity for resilience or their access to social support. Employing multiple regression analysis the research revealed that there is indeed a connection between youth leadership, resilience and social support. A number of measures were statistically significant in predicting leadership skills across time and these included: leadership self-perception, average grade, resilience, adolescent well-being, empathy and understanding oneself. At time three social support also emerged as statistically significant.
These findings indicate the potentially powerful relationship these variables have in relation to youth leadership. Self-perception of oneself as a leader is important in enhancing leadership skills, therefore greater efforts at a practice level need to be explored as to how to incorporate self-belief into leadership programmes. Resilience is an important contributor to leadership skills, indicating that as youth gain resilience their capacity for leadership will be enhanced. Furthermore, as youth gain skills and coping strategies through leadership these appear to contribute to enhanced resilience. Adolescent well-being is a factor in predicting leadership skills, therefore enabling youth to cultivate positive well-being sets the stage for one’s capacity as a leader. Empathy and understanding oneself also came to the fore as being significantly related to leadership development. This is particularly noteworthy when considering the contribution that young leaders can make in the lives of others when in leadership roles, as well as their own personal development. Social support also featured as being a significant contributor to youth leadership. This suggests that increased social support can lead to increased leadership capacity.

Revisiting the tentative conceptual model in light of the research

The tentative conceptual model presented in Chapter 2 consists of two parts. The first part links adolescent development, social support and resilience to youth leadership. This part also considers how youth leadership occurs in normative development and for youth who experience adversity. The second part explores how skills development, environmental conditions and action contribute to youth leadership.

Part I

Social Support

It was evident from the qualitative findings that social support is an important factor for young leaders. The findings from the multiple regressions at time three also indicated that social support contributes towards youth leadership. For high ‘risk’ youth social support was a positive contributor to their being able to take on youth leadership roles. Similarly, their involvement in youth leadership conferred the benefit of enhancing their social network and improved access to social
support. However, this enhancement was only transient and may be that as they needed the support to complete the programme that it was received and thus easier to see. This also appeared to the somewhat the case for the low ‘risk’ youth. Their sense of support was strong which many reported helped them to see themselves as leaders and put themselves into leadership roles. As well as this they garnered additional adult support in particular from this extra engagement in the community. They reported high levels of esteem support at time one. This suggests that here is a reciprocal benefit between youth leadership and social support. The qualitative strand brings attention to the important roles parents, friends, other adults and siblings had in enabling young people to deal with challenges, put themselves forward for tasks and receive praise. This has resonance with findings from Dolan (2010) which highlights that involvement in civic activities has a number of benefits; deepening existing relationships, accessing new ones, reciprocity of support, increase in self and external sources of esteem and respite from focusing on one’s own difficulties.

**Resilience**

Resilience emerged as a contributing factor to the development of youth leaders. The multiple regression analysis indicates that there was a correlation between youth leadership and resilience. This indicates that as resilience improves so does leadership. Furthermore, evidence from the qualitative analysis indicate that the participants, particularly those in the high ‘risk’ group faced difficult challenges including: serious illness of a parent, death of a loved one, arguing parents, isolation, shyness, self-harming etc., These young people described how they reported better abilities to deal with the challenges they faced, had improved problem solving and expressed improved self-reliance. Which given their experiences fit within categories outlined by Masten et al., (1990) as preventative and responsive resilience enabling coping. Being involved in the leadership programme appears to yield a benefit to the young people experiencing personal challenges. They reported that it gave them a positive channel to put their energy into, including taking on leadership roles in their community and enabled them to believe in themselves. As well as this, it may have given them a broader view of the world and an opportunity to see the challenges others faced. This may have had the effect of helping them to put things in perspective, making their particular
challenges easier to deal with. It appears that through developing the skills to lead others that these young people also gained the skills to lead their own lives in a positive way. This suggests that there is a reciprocal benefit between youth leadership and resilience. Benard (1991) believed that contributions to resilience include: social competence, problem solving, autonomy and sense of purpose which are similar to the reported improvements arising from involvement in this youth leadership programme.

Normative Youth & Youth Experiencing Adversity

As could be seen from the discussion in relation to objective 4, youth in the high ‘risk’ group - those experiencing adversity appear to benefit significantly from their involvement in youth leadership. In terms of leadership skills statistically significant improvements are noted at time two and are maintained at follow-up. Positive trends in resilience are recorded and social support improves significantly between time one and time two however, social support returns to baseline levels at time three. Qualitative reports from the high ‘risk’ group provide further evidence for enhancements in leadership skills, resilience and social support. This is similar to findings by Newman (2004) and Brendtro (2009) that highlight young people can best overcome adversity if they have strong social support networks, have someone to talk to outside the family, are involved in activities that promote their positive development and development of skills as well as have opportunities to contribute to others. As well as this normative youth or those in the low ‘risk’ category benefit from their involvement in the youth leadership programme. They largely maintain their quantitative scores with statistically significant improvements for team work, while their perception of their subjective well-being reduces. However, qualitative reports describe enhanced leadership skills, social support and a greater capacity for resilience. This illustrates that youth leadership appears to yield benefits to both groups by offering additional support networks and enhanced skills to deal with challenges. Protective factors have a more positive impact on the life course of children who grow up under adversity than risk factors (Werner, 2001). Therefore, it makes economical sense to strengthen young people’s protective factors so they can do better in society.
Part II

Skills Development

As illustrated in the conceptual model in Chapter 2 there are a number of skills considered important for the youth leader, these include social and emotional intelligence (Goleman et al., 2002), collaboration skills (Kouzes & Posner, 1995), communication skills (Ricketts & Rudd, 2002), and knowledge (Shriberg et al., 2005). The findings of this research indicate that involvement in the leadership programme does increase social and emotional intelligence (understanding self and empathy), collaboration skills (team work, decision making, problem solving), communication skills, and knowledge (how to lead others). Evidence from the qualitative research indicates that social skills and confidence, components of social and emotional intelligence, were also improved. Furthermore, the qualitative results report that communication skills including assertiveness and presentation skills improved for those who were involved in the programme. Interestingly, some young people found team work more difficult than they thought it would be, but overall they found that their ability to work with others improved over the course of the programme. The improvements seen here indicate that personal development appears to be enabled through the process of leadership development. This places young people in the position where they develop greater self-awareness, following which they can better apply their skills. Shriberg et al., (2005) argues that leadership development is personal development. While this study does indicate that personal development occurs when engaging in leadership development, one must not assume that personal development programmes will naturally result in young leaders. Personal development may lead to a more developed person however, will not necessarily result in a leader. Leadership development as demonstrated here may lead you to a more developed person and also a leader.

Environmental Conditions

When it comes to having the right environmental conditions the leadership programme does provide authentic opportunities for the young people to exercise their leadership skills. A 20 hour self-directed community action project requires
the participants to plan their leadership project from concept to completion by
themselves. They must evidence their work through a portfolio and submit a
learning journal which captures their experience. While some found the community
action project a challenge, ultimately, it gave them the chance to create a vision for
how they would like to contribute to their community and to realise that vision by
harnessing their skills. Kouzes & Posner (2007) emphasise that a key part of
leadership is seeking out and seizing every opportunity they can. The community
action project provides participants with a tangible way of engaging with the
community. This engagement gives young people the opportunity to give
something back which is led and driven by them. Further to this, mentoring was
also a component within environmental conditions. While some youth had mentors
in the form of coaches, teachers or youth workers it was not consistent across the
board and could benefit from a more structured approach as there are significant
benefits to be gained particularly in relation to social support (Dolan et al., 2011).

Action

For anything to occur there needs to be action. Within this study qualitative
findings indicate that motivating others and being a role model had resonance with
the participants in enabling them to recruit followers. This enabled them to inspire
others to work with them, something that Kouzes & Posner (2007) see as crucial to
recruiting others to a leaders cause. As well as this, the participants demonstrated a
strong degree of persistence to complete goals, and illustrated how important being
persistent was, as without persistence people would just give up and not achieve
anything.

Well I suppose I try persist in everything I do, I try
not to quit half way through no matter what it is, I
try and finish it out to the end [Lauren]

This is similar to Roberts (2009) view of how determination is important to
leadership. It is this determination that enables a person to meet the challenges they
face and encourage others through them. The improvement in self-belief as a leader
as seen in this study links in with Flanagan and Faison’s (2001, p.12) argument that
to ‘deepen democracy young people need to be encouraged to become engaged in
and take a stand on issues of concern to their communities’. Self-belief and self-
efficacy as Bandura (1977b) highlights will enable them to see things through to action.

Tentative Conceptual Model Summary

The tentative conceptual model presented in Chapter 2 and the ensuing discussion here highlight that there is a connection between leadership skills and resilience, and leadership and social support. Furthermore, this research draws together components which inform how youth leadership can be developed, adding to the argument that leadership can indeed be learned. From this perspective, it is seen as a set of learnable skills, environmental conditions and will to action that enable extraordinary things be achieved. The leadership programme has benefits not just for normative youth, but also youth who experience adversity. Adding a valuable contribution to how we see youth leadership and who should be involved in it. Supporting the argument made by Shriberg et al., (2005, p.194) ‘there is a leader in everyone, and the greatest inhibitor to leadership development is the belief that leadership cannot be learned’.

6.4 Summary

The purpose of this Chapter was to elaborate on the research findings in relation to the objectives of this study in light of the available literature in this area. In the first section a discussion took place which addressed objectives 1-3 of the study. This discussion placed the findings in the context of other research and highlighted that the young people in the leadership group demonstrated enhanced leadership skills, resilience and social support. The second section of the discussion looked at how a subset of the leadership group fared, namely those in a high and low ‘risk’ groups. This discussion drew out how the high ‘risk’ group appeared to benefit substantially more than the low ‘risk’ group from their involvement. The third section of the discussion began exploring messages for policy, practice and research which will be expanded on in the recommendation section of chapter 7. Finally, the section revisited the tentative conceptual model in light of the research findings. The following chapter will bring together the conclusions of this study and a make a set of policy, practice and research recommendations to inform future work.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7 Conclusion

Introduction

This Chapter serves the purpose of concluding the research of this study. The first part, Section 7.1 revisits the overall aim and objectives of this study. The next section, Section 7.2, describes briefly how the study was conducted. Section 7.3 outlines the key research findings from this study. Section 7.4 of the chapter will set out recommendations for practice, policy and research. Finally, Section 7.5 will provide some concluding remarks to the study.

7.1 Aims & Objectives Revisited

The aim of this study was to explore the connection, if any, between leadership, resilience and social supports among youth. This was to discover if there are any associated benefits to youth leadership involvement for a cohort of youth involved in a youth leadership programme compared with young people who do not receive the programme.

The five objectives of the study were:

1. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support among a set of young people, including those who are about to participate in a youth leadership programme and a comparison group who will not take part in the programme (time one).
2. To establish the levels of leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support on completion of the youth leadership programme (time two) and at six months follow-up (time three) in respect of both groups.
3. To establish the difference in leadership skills, resilience and perceived social support between each group at the three time points.
4. To track the changes among those identified with initial lowest and highest perceived well-being prior to participation in a youth leadership programme and again in light of having received the youth leadership programme.
5. To identify key messages for practice, policy and research in light of this study.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.2 Methodology
This study involved a mixed-methodology approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative components. The research employed a quasi-experimental design involving young people who received the Foróige Leadership for Life programme and a comparison group who did not. Under the quantitative strand of the research questionnaires were collected at three time points over an eighteen month time period. The study focused on 267 young people who were involved in the leadership programme and a comparison group of 164 respondents. Standardised measures of Life skills, Leadership skills, Resilience, Social Support and Empathy were utilised. The qualitative strand of the research involved interviews with 22 participants at three time points categorised as high and low ‘risk’ of well-being issues. As well as this, five focus groups with 23 programme facilitators including Foróige staff and volunteers was carried out after the programme was completed.

7.3 Key Research Findings from the Study
As discussed in Chapter 6, the study yielded a number of core findings. These are revisit can be grouped under five headings.

1. The youth leadership programme appears effective in increasing and sustaining leadership skills over time

The young people involved in the youth leadership programme demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in decision making, critical thinking, life skills, leadership skills and community involvement between time one and time two. Furthermore, the benefits were maintained and built upon between time one and time three, as youth demonstrated statistically significant increases for empathy, communication skills and goal setting. This suggests that programme participants improved over the course of the leadership programme and beyond.

When comparing the leadership group directly to the comparison group, the leadership group demonstrated statistically significant improvements over the comparison group on goal setting, leadership skills and community involvement at time two. At time three the leadership group demonstrated further statistically significant improvements over the comparison group on empathy, critical thinking, communication skills, team work and problem solving. These findings indicate that the youth leadership programme involvement may increase, sustain and grow the
leadership skills of the young people involved when compared to a cohort of youth who receive no intervention.

2. **Youth leadership programme involvement appears to increase resilience**

Young people involved in the youth leadership programme demonstrate statistically significant increases on all measures of resilience when compared to the comparison group. The comparison group demonstrate no statistically significant change over the three time points. Resilience is an important component for young people, which helps them navigate and overcome challenges effectively both day to day and in more traumatic events ensuring they ‘bounce back’ from them.

3. **Youth leadership programme involvement appears to improve social support**

The youth leadership programme participants demonstrated statistically significant improvements in perceived sibling support over time. This indicates that young people involved in the leadership programme may gain additional skills to enable them to source more support from siblings or to help them deal with challenges in sibling relationships better. The leadership group also demonstrated enhanced emotional support when compared to the comparison group.

4. **Self-Perception as a Leader improves for high & low ‘risk’ youth over time**

Seeing yourself as a leader improves for both high and low ‘risk’ groups over time. The high ‘risk’ group improve the most on this measure coming from a baseline of 9.1% believing they are leaders to 81.3% at follow-up. While there was a significant difference between the groups at time one, by time three there was no significant difference between the groups in terms of self-belief. This suggests that belief in ones’ own capacity for leadership is significantly improved over the course of the programme. The very nature of this change in self-belief can result in a youth seeing more opportunities to use their skills and take on leadership roles.

5. **Youth leadership is effective for high ‘risk’ youth but sustained engagement may be needed to enable further advancements in social support**

When this study looked at how high and low ‘risk’ youth fared when it came to leadership skills, resilience and social support, it became evident that the high ‘risk’
group started at a significantly lower skill level than the low ‘risk’ group. The high risk group demonstrated statistically significant improvements in adolescent well-being, decision making, critical thinking, sibling support, parental support, total social support and advice support between time one and time two. At time three further statistically significant improvements were seen in leadership skill and goal setting. Positive trends were noted over time for resilience, communication skills, team work, problem solving, life skills and community involvement. However, many of the supports from friends, parents and siblings as well as esteem support and total social support, returned to baseline levels at time three. Therefore, high ‘risk’ young people may need additional longer-term involvement to sustain social support increases.

7.4 Messages for Practice, Policy and Research

Objective 5 of this study was to make recommendations for future practice, policy and research. As mentioned previously, parallel to the rising interest in youth leadership is the growing need and desire of youth organisations to couch their programme development in evidence based/informed practice. This in some cases is to qualify for funding and demonstrate that money invested does yield positive outcomes and is value for money. Employing an evidence-based approach is further echoed in *The Agenda for Children’s Services* (OMC, 2007). It is within this context that recommendations for practice, policy and research will be presented next.

7.4.1 Key Policy Recommendations

Policy makers need to make resources available to support young people’s access to youth leadership at both the programme and organisation level for a number of reasons:

- Youth leadership programme involvement improved leadership skills but it also appears to go further and enhance participants’ capacity for resilience, community involvement, empathy, understanding self and social support. This can positively impact on a community’s capacity to resolve their own problems but also adds to the human capital available in society.
o It is a short investment of one year in the lives of young people which sees the participants continue to garner benefits beyond the life of the programme and contribute to their communities.

o As well as this, having skills in goal setting, communication, critical thinking, team work, problem solving, being empathetic and leadership skills are very beneficial to employees, entrepreneurs and college students. For organisations who want to advance in increasingly competitive markets, having access to these skill sets are crucial to their survival and growth. Investment by governments and businesses in youth leadership makes economic sense. Businesses could contribute, for example by sponsoring leadership programmes, making available staff to mentor young people, offering internships etc.,

o Policy makers need to explore embedding high quality youth leadership programmes within or parallel to the school curriculum to offer more youth opportunities, particularly those who may not traditionally see themselves as leaders.

o ‘At risk’ youth benefit significantly from their involvement in youth leadership, therefore policy makers should look to youth leadership programmes as not just for the elite but as a opportunity for ‘at risk’ youth to develop and gain respite from their adversity. For them to gain access, substantial provision is required which also highlights the importance of recruiting a portion of ‘at risk’ youth.

- The world that young people are growing up in now is faster paced and less traditional. All young people need to develop resilience at a young age, particularly if they are to be adaptable in the face of continual change so as to maintain their health, well-being, happiness, are economically stable and are effective leaders. Policy makers need to look at resilience as a necessity to all people including leaders and consider youth leadership programmes as a way of enabling resilience.

- Policy makers need to realise that good leaders need a wide range of social support. Attention needs to be focused within schools and youth organisations as to how to build effective social support networks, particularly as
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

communities face growing hardship in the face of economic uncertainty. For example, sponsoring mentoring programmes, adult-youth partnerships, encouraging government personnel to contribute time toward mentoring youth or youth leaders, supporting youth leadership programmes which increase youth’s capacity for community involvement and community support.

- When policy makers are investing in programmes for youth, greater accountability and emphasis in relation to evidence-based/informed practice are needed. As well as this, greater funding needs to be made available for organisations to develop evidence-based programmes within an Irish context. Furthermore, increased funding is required to rigorously evaluate programmes to ensure they result in positive outcomes for young people.

- There is likely to be a need for further youth leadership initiatives in Ireland, ones that meet young people’s needs after they leave youth organisations. Notably the young people involved in this study wanted to meet more than once a week to engage in this programme, however due to insufficient resources, personnel etc., it would be very difficult to extend this programme further without substantial investment of money, time and facilitators. It does however highlight the on the ground need and desire for youth leadership initiatives. Politicians would well take note to protect this area and see it as an area for growth which will benefit society in the immediate and long term, particularly when considering where to cut funding.

- Sustainability is a key issue which emerges in the face of cut backs and the capacity of youth projects to be able to provide opportunities for young people. Programmes that demonstrate outcomes also need to have behind them suitably qualified staff and volunteers to implement them so they can achieve the desired outcomes. Youth work in Ireland is currently at risk of losing incredibly competent staff as a result of cut backs. Already many youth project staff work reduced hours and can just about deal with the challenges and needs that the young people are presented with. An increasingly overburdened Health Service Executive struggles to deal with the challenges presented to it and requires youth services to provide increasingly targeted services for young people in need. This focus may reduce further the capacity of projects to be able to
respond to the development needs of young people and force them to focus solely on youth with very high levels of need.

7.4.2 Key Practice Recommendations

- Communities and schools need to find ways of involving youth as leaders by seeing them as resources and enabling them to contribute towards problem solving.

- Communities and schools also need to support youth leadership programmes so that young people can enhance their skill set and significantly contribute to their communities, youth organisations and future employers.

- When it comes to understanding oneself it is important for programmes to build in self-assessments e.g. personality tests etc., to ensure that the young people gain a better understanding of themselves and why they do what they do. Better understanding of oneself will lead to better leaders.

- The community action project enabled youth to exercise their skills. Therefore future youth leadership programmes should require that young people are involved in leading their own community action project, service learning or internship.

- Core components of programmes could benefit from focusing on coping strategies, stress management, conflict resolution and problem solving which will enable greater resilience. Within the curriculum every effort should be made to enable young people to apply their learning in their own lives at home and in the community. For example, scenarios in the programme could relate to life’s challenges and more challenging aspects of being a leader while also incorporating application to one’s own situations.

- Building further support into programmes would be beneficial e.g. building in leadership mentoring roles that would support, mentor and guide the young person through their community project and future leadership opportunities. This may pave the way for previous completers of the programme to contribute back and support newer recruits through the process, bringing further leadership opportunities and responsibility to the leaders.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

- Engaging parents, siblings and other community adults to help provide technical support and human resource links to the young people involved may support young people further through their journey.

- The fact that siblings score consistently lower than any other source of support in both the leadership and comparison group merits further consideration, particularly as a potential stressor which may affect adolescent well-being but also a potential untapped source of support for adolescents. This may well be an area for further exploration in the format of an initiative to help young people cultivate positive relationships with their siblings, something which could easily lead to reciprocal benefits in terms of support, resilience and health and well-being.

- For high ‘risk’ young people, youth leadership programme involvement can be a refuge for them from the challenges they are facing. The programme can confer benefits in terms of coping strategies, problem solving, social and emotional skills, resilience and social support which are beneficial to their personal lives and their lives as leaders. They could however benefit from further sustained linkage with the community or with additional programme involvement to maintain their social support improvements. Mentoring would be a good additional support to this group to ensure that the social support benefits accrued are sustained.

- As young people in the high ‘risk’ group improve significantly when involved in the programme it is important that when inviting young people to be part of youth leadership programmes that young people considered to be in a high ‘risk’ group are offered the same opportunities to take part, as they may indeed benefit to a greater extent than their low ‘risk’ counterparts.

- Qualitatively esteem support appears to be a stronger source of support for low ‘risk’ young people than high ‘risk’ group, indicating that perhaps a greater emphasis on building young people’s esteem support (support in terms of recognition for achievements) may be beneficial in helping high ‘risk’ youth see themselves as leaders and engage in opportunities.

- For programmes to increase leadership skills the people who get the most out of them are the ones that exhibit higher empathy, self-perception as a leader, resilience, adolescent well-being, social support and understanding self. If
empathy can be facilitated within the programme results will be further enhanced, for example incorporating sensitivity training and diversity training will result in better leaders and result in them getting more out of the programme. Similarly, if young people can become more resilient this will also result in them becoming better leaders for example focusing on coping strategies, stress management, leadership mentoring, coaching etc., In addition to this if young people can understand themselves better this too will enhance their leadership skills. Therefore incorporating personality tests, self-assessments and reflection are important. Finally, if young people gain greater supports their leadership skills will be enhanced; encouraging peer support, mentoring, parental involvement and community involvement would be beneficial.

- Self-belief was an important component in predicting leadership skills, therefore it is advised that youth work take a closer look at self-belief and how to incorporate methods to increase the self-belief of young people. For example, affirmations, positive self-talk, cognitive labelling and reframing, cognitive behavioural therapy, formal recognition and the use of portfolios to record the impact they are making. These approaches can help to enable young people to reframe their thinking so that they begin to believe in themselves creating a positive reinforcing loop, something which does not just have implications for leadership but for just about every aspect of life.

- When it comes to programme implementation, how a programme is implemented can be the difference between reaching the desired outcomes and failing. A well implemented intervention with less efficacy can outperform a more effective one that is poorly implemented (Lipsey cited in Blase et al., 2011). Adequate training and ongoing support are necessary to ensure that the facilitators are very comfortable with the content which will help to ensure proper implementation to occur.

- Given the limited discourse on ethics in leadership throughout the research it may be an important component to consider for further leadership programme development. In light of the global financial crisis, it is clearly not sufficient to just develop young leaders. Importantly, young leaders need to be cultivated
who base their decisions on an ethical framework which considers their broader impact on society.

- This research also brings to light the importance of research to link back to practice so that better outcomes are achieved for young people. Therefore, practitioners should take note of the development process of the programme as it may have contributed towards the programme’s ability to reveal positive outcomes for young people. Particularly, when developing other programmes ensuring that they research-based, needs-led, employ a consultation process, include the voice of youth, use a pilot process and monitor and evaluate to improve the programme.

- Advanced pathways for young people who have completed the leadership programme could be developed in topic specific areas e.g. business, politics, arts, sports, entrepreneurship, technology, social entrepreneurship, social justice. The youth leadership programme could be considered a starting point from where the young people can branch out into further areas of expertise.

- Additional partnerships between those delivering the programme and other organisations e.g. schools, community organisations to enable a broader reach of the programme which would include a wide range of participants nationally and internationally.

7.4.3 Key Research Recommendations

- There is the need for additional research in this area, first in different settings including diverse environments e.g. sole delivery in schools, different populations etc., Particularly if the programme was going to be implemented in a school setting by teachers instead of youth workers. As those who were implementing the programme in the schools found the group had difficulty adjusting to the new style of working.

- A larger scale study would be beneficial to further elucidate the impact of the youth leadership programme.

- Further longitudinal research would be beneficial to explore the impact over several years.
• Further research in the area of other youth leadership programmes to explore other factors which may contribute to youth leadership development and enable a broader understanding of additional components which may be useful.

• Continued research to define the vital aspects which shape resilience would be beneficial.

• Further research exploring the links between youth leadership and resilience would help advance understanding of the concept of resilience and its application in youth leadership.

• Additional research to explore the impact of the leadership programme in relation to youth with externalising behaviour. For example, a number of young people were involved in the programme from Garda Youth Diversion Projects and it would be interesting to explore whether their involvement in the programme contributed to their resilience, social support and positive leadership skills.

• Further research into the factors shaping social support for young leaders.

• More research is needed in relation to how the different types and sources of support shape young people and young leaders differently.

• Further research into the area of high ‘risk’ youth and the benefits they gain from involvement in youth leadership including a larger sample size.

• Multiple methodologies are recommended in research pertaining to adolescents as one method alone may only shine a light on one aspect of all that is occurring for the young people during the complex transition process they are experiencing.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

As can be seen from this study involvement in youth leadership programmes can add an important contribution to youth and their capacity to recognise themselves as leaders and change makers within their communities. Furthermore, this youth leadership programme appears to have a positive impact on the lives of young people beyond their acquisition of leadership skills in particular, in their capacity for resilience, and perception of social support.

Resilience emerged as linking strongly to youth leadership development. As resilience contributes to the young persons’ ability to deal with and overcome
challenges it adds to the capacity of youth to be leaders in their community, particularly, when considering ‘at risk’ youth. This study indicates that young people in the high ‘risk’ group benefit considerably when it comes to resilience as indicated through the challenges they described and their reports of being better able to deal with them after the programme. The leadership programme offered youth the opportunity to explore situations of conflict and complex problems in a safe space and encouraged them to apply these new skills in other contexts. The exposure of young people to situations that encourage their independence and carefully support them as they take on new challenges enables them to learn skills which are clearly practical in other aspects of their lives.

Social support was also linked to leadership skills through the multiple regressions, however it was not as strong as the link with resilience. The qualitative strand brought to light how parents, friends, other adults and siblings were pivotal in their contribution to young people’s ability to solve problems, put themselves forward for tasks, push them when they felt like giving up and praise them when they did well. Youth in the high ‘risk’ group however, could benefit from further connections with community or additional programmes as their significant increases in social support seen at time two were not maintained at 6 months follow-up. Interestingly, however, was the improvement in perception of sibling support which may indicate that the skills acquired during the leadership programme confer a benefit to improving family dynamic among siblings. This could provide for youth a relatively un-tapped source of support which could well enhance adolescent well-being and capacity for resilience.

Further to this, high ‘risk’ youth gained a positive outlet for their engagement in and connection to the community, which they reported enhanced their network of supports. This may have also have aided in giving them a broader view of the world seeing the challenges that others faced. This in turn may have helped them put their challenges into perspective making them easier to deal with. It appears that through developing the skills to lead others that these young people also gained the skills to lead their own lives in a positive way.

The leadership programme described here provided young people with opportunities to collaborate on team projects. One of these involved researching
and compiling a report to share with their community on an issue important to them. This enabled them to develop their skills in working with others, critique various leadership styles, enhance their capacity to research, source information and understand different issues as well as present and share their work with others. These kinds of projects are less typically seen in the formal education system and yet when considering how people work in the real world are important capacities young people need to do well in the workforce and as such need to be cultivated.

This study found that young people’s sense of self-belief as young leaders, their confidence and their ability to communicate on many levels was enhanced. This placed them on a pathway where they can seek out and engage in further leadership opportunities. Additionally, their improvements in decision making, critical thinking, conflict resolution, problem solving and goal setting are skills which employers today actively seek. Moreover, increases in empathy and understanding themselves have knock-on positive contributions to society. Particularly, as youth become more aware of their capabilities, contribute to humanity and seek to engage in civic society.

This study corroborates with other researchers and adds to the argument that leadership can indeed be learned (van Linden & Fertman, 1989; Shriberg et al., 2005). Leadership is a set of learnable skills; in addition to these skills however is the need for the appropriate environment which includes genuine opportunities to practice leadership. Further to having the skills and the opportunity, it is the capacity for action that results in a young person ‘becoming’ a young leader. It is within this framework the author believes that young people can uncover their potential and enable extraordinary things be achieved.

If we as a society were to have higher expectations of all our youth, we would offer them more opportunities to participate in youth leadership initiatives and we would then reap greater rewards. Indeed not every young person will be interested or be in a position to take part in a youth leadership programme, however the snowball effect that can be created by enhancing the self-perception of one’s capacities could substantially magnify the outcomes young people gain and the benefits to society.

The research findings presented here largely supports the tentative conceptual model depicted in Chapter 2. It highlights the interconnection of resilience and
social support in the development of young leaders. Furthermore, the research indicates that the youth leadership programme appears to confer a benefit to both youth experiencing adversity and normative youth with the high ‘risk’ young person gaining possibly more than low ‘risk’ youth. Additional to this, the skills that youth developed as well as the provision of appropriate environments and the opportunity gained to practice leadership through action enabled young people in this programme to become young leaders.

This Chapter has revisited the core aim and objectives of this study. It reminds the reader of the methodology used in this research. The key findings from this study were then reiterated. This was followed by setting forth a number of recommendations for policy, practice and research are made. Finally, a concluding discussion sums up this research.
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Appendix A: Advisory Committee Members

Professor Patrick Dolan, UNESCO Chair in Child, Youth and Civic Engagement, National University of Ireland, Galway

Professor Mark Brennan, Leadership & Community Development, Pennsylvania State University, USA

Dr. Bernadine Brady, Child and Family Research Centre, National University of Ireland, Galway

Appendix B: Ethics Approval

Sent on behalf of Dr Saoirse NicGabhann, Chairperson, Research Ethics Committee

Dear Prof Dolan

RE: Ethical Approval for “An explorative study to establish the association between leadership skills, resilience and social support”

I write to you regarding the above proposal which was submitted for Ethical review. Having reviewed your response to my letter, I am pleased to inform you that your proposal has been granted APPROVAL.

All NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee approval is given subject to the Principal Investigator submitting an annual report to the Committee. The first report is due on or before 30th June 2011. Please see section 7 of the REC’s Standard Operating Procedures for further details which also includes other instances where you are required to report to the REC.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Saoirse NicGabhann
Chairperson
Research Ethics Committee
Appendix C: Information sheet

School/Project/Club Information Sheet

Study Title: An explorative study to establish the association between leadership skills, resilience and social support

Foróige are carrying out a study on leadership in young people. As part of this research, young people aged 15-18 years involved in Foróige and the Albert Schweitzer Leadership for Life programme are being asked to take part. The purpose of the study is to determine the link between leadership, and resilience and social support.

- Participants in the Leadership programme will be asked to fill out a questionnaire in September 2010, May 2011 and November 2011.
- We also need a comparison group to take part in the research. These young people will need to be selected so that they have similar characteristics to the leadership group e.g. similar age, gender and geographical location. They will also fill out the questionnaire in September 2010, May 2011 and November 2011.
- One in ten young people involved will be asked to take part in an interview for a maximum of 30 minutes about their views on how they have developed as leaders.
- Young people involved will be completely anonymous and information obtained will be confidential. Young people taking part in the study may withdraw at any stage. No invasive questions will be asked.
- A two page sheet will be circulated to all those who take part in the study with information of the findings.

Young people are under no obligation to take part in this project. Data will be stored securely and anonymously and all publications from the project will be presented in a way that ensures no individual participant is identifiable. The findings from this research will be presented as part of a dissertation and possibly as conference papers and other academic publications. This research is covered by Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

If you have any questions about the research project please do not hesitate to contact the project researcher, Sue Redmond. Best Practice Unit, Foróige, Block 12 D, Joyce Way, Park West, Dublin 12. Tel: 086-8102770. Email: sue.redmond@foroige.ie
Appendix D: Advertisement

YOUTH LEADERSHIP RESEARCH

We want to hear from you!!

Foróige are carrying out a study of leadership in young people. We would like to ask anyone aged 15-18 years old who are involved in Foróige to take part.

The purpose of the study is to determine the link between leadership, resilience and social support. Resilience is the way people cope with stresses in their life. Being resilient means a person can deal with the up’s and down’s in life. The results of this study will greatly enhance our programme delivery.

- If you choose to take part you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire in September 2010, May 2011 and November 2011.
- Young people involved will be completely anonymous and information obtained will be confidential.
- You can withdraw from the study at any stage.
- A two page sheet will be given to all those who take part in the study with information of the findings.

If you have any further questions about the research please do not hesitate to contact the project researcher, Sue Redmond, Best Practice Unit, Foróige, Block 12 D, Joyce Way, Park West, Dublin 11. Tel: [redacted] Email: sue.redmond@foroige.ie
Appendix E: Parental & Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form

Parent Information Sheet and Consent Form for Questionnaire

Study Title: An explorative study to establish the association between leadership skills, resilience and social support

I am carrying out a study on leadership in young people. As part of this research young people aged 15-18 years involved in Foróige are being asked to take part. The purpose of the study is to determine the link between leadership, and resilience and social support. Resilience is the way people cope with stresses in their life. Being resilient means a person can deal with the up’s and down’s in life.

- If your child chooses to take part in the study they will be asked to fill out a questionnaire in September 2010, May 2011 and November 2011.
- Young people involved will be completely anonymous and information obtained will be confidential.
- If your child chooses to take part they may withdraw from the study at any stage.
- A two page sheet will be circulated to all those who take part in the study with information of the findings.
- No invasive questions will be asked.

Your child is under no obligation to take part in this project. Data will be stored securely and anonymously and all publications from the project will be presented in a way that ensures no individual participant is identifiable. The findings from this research will be presented as part of a dissertation and possibly as conference papers and other academic publications. This research is covered by Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

If you have any questions about the research project please do not hesitate to contact the project researcher, Sue Redmond Best Practice Unit, Foróige, Block 12 D, Joyce Way, Park West, Dublin 12.
Tel: 01-630 1560. Email: sue.redmond@Foróige.ie
Parental Consent Form for Questionnaire

Title of Project: An explorative study to establish the association between leadership skills, resilience and social support

Name of Researcher: Susan Redmond

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated _________ for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I am satisfied that I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information

3. I understand that my child/ward’s participation is voluntary and that he/she is free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without their legal rights being affected.

4. I agree for my child/ward to take part in the above study

Name of Parent/Guardian Date: Signature
_________________________ ____________ ____________

Name of Child/Ward Date: Signature
_________________________ ____________ ____________
Appendix F: Questionnaire

Leadership Questionnaire

Welcome!

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. Please ensure you read the information sheet again that is supplied with this questionnaire before completing the questionnaire. This questionnaire involves answering some questions. To make it easier, we have divided it up into four parts.

1. The first section asks some questions about you
2. The second section is about how you feel and behave
3. The third section asks questions about your leadership skills
4. The fourth section asks questions about you feel supported

Thank you very much for taking part!

Please remember that everything you say is confidential. So, please be as honest as you can.

If there is anything that upsets you, please don’t hesitate to tell us or one of the youth workers.
Section One - About You

Your Initials: first [ ] middle [ ] last [ ]  
Date of birth: ___/___/19  
Gender (please tick)  
Male [ ]  Female [ ]

1. Right now, do you see yourself as a leader? (circle one) Yes [ ] No [ ]
2. Are you doing the Foróige (Albert Schweitzer Leadership for Life Programme)? (circle one) Yes [ ] No [ ]
   If Yes Where? Club [ ] Project [ ] School [ ]
3. Which County do you live in?

   Countryside [ ] Town [ ] City [ ]

5. Year in school?
   1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ] 6 [ ]
   Not in school [ ] College [ ]

6. On average what level subjects do you take?
   □ Honours level  □ Ordinary level  
   □ Foundation level (or Applied Junior/Leaving Cert)

7. What are your average grades in school?
   □ A (85-100%)  □ E (25-39%)
   □ B (70-84%)  □ F (10-24%)
   □ C (65-69%)  □ Not in school
   □ D (40-64%)

8. Ethnic Background: Tick the one that best applies
   □ White [ ] □ Irish Traveller [ ]
   □ Any other white background (please specify ________)
   □ Black or Black Irish [ ] □ African [ ]
   □ Any other black background (please specify ________)
   □ Asian or Asian Irish [ ] □ Chinese [ ]
   □ Any other Asian background (please specify ________)
   □ Other, including mixed background (please specify ________)

9. Your family: Check the line that best describes the adults living in your house right now.
   □ Mother and Father [ ] Foster Parents [ ]
   □ Mother only [ ] Mother and Stepfather [ ]
   □ Father only [ ] Father and Stepmother [ ]
   □ Other relatives [ ]
   □ Other: unrelated (please describe) [ ]
## Section Two – How do you feel and behave

To what extent do the statements below describe you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I cooperate with the people around me</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I try to finish what I start</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. People think that I am fun to be with</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I am able to solve problems without harming myself or others (for example by using drugs and/or being violent)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I am aware of my own strengths</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I think it is important to serve my community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I feel supported by my friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My friends will stand by me in difficult times</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Self...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. There is purpose to my life</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I understand my moods and feelings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I understand why I do what I do</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section Two
To what extent do the statements below describe you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. I have people I look up to</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I know how to behave in different social situations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I am given opportunities to show others that I am becoming an adult and can act responsibly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I know where I go in my community to get help</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I have opportunities to develop skills that will be useful later in life (like job skills and skills to care for others)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I am proud of my cultural background</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I am treated fairly in my community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I participate in organised religious activities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I enjoy my community’s traditions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I am proud to be a citizen of Ireland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I feel bad when someone gets their feelings hurt</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I try to understand what other people feel and think</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I try to understand what other people go through</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section Two: These questions are about how you feel you are doing in general

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26. I look forward to things as much as I used to</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I sleep very well</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I feel like crying</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I like going out</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I feel like leaving home</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I get stomach aches/cramps</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I have lots of energy</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I enjoy my food</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I can stick up for myself</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. I think life isn’t worth living</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I am good at things I do</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. I enjoy the things I do as much as I used to</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. I like talking to my friends and family</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. I have horrible dreams</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. I feel very lonely</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. I am easily cheered up</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. I feel so sad I hardly bear it</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. I feel very bored</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, how would you describe your level of involvement in your community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Not at all active</th>
<th>Slightly active</th>
<th>Somewhat active</th>
<th>Active</th>
<th>Very active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section Three - Skills

Instructions: The following statements describe how you might communicate, solve problems, make decisions and achieve goals in everyday life. **Tick the one that best fits how often you did what is described in the last 30 days.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I have a decision to make...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I look for information to help me understand the problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I think before making a choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I consider the risks of a choice before making a decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I think about all the information I have about the different choices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I think...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. I can easily express my thoughts on a problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I usually have more than one source of information before making a decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I compare ideas when thinking about a topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I keep my mind open to different ideas when planning to make a decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am able to tell the best way of handling a problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section Three

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When I communicate with others...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. I try to keep eye contact</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I recognise when two people are trying to say the same thing, but in different ways</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I try to see the other person’s point of view</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I change the way I talk to someone based on my relationship with them (i.e. friend, parent, teacher etc)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I organise thoughts in my head before speaking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I make sure I understand what another person is saying before I respond</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When setting a goal...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. I look at the steps needed to achieve the goal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I think about how and when I want to achieve it</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. After setting a goal, I break goals down into steps so I can check my progress</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Both positive and negative feedback helps me work towards my goal</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Others...</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I enjoy working together with other people my age</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I stand up for myself without putting others down</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section Three

#### When solving a problem...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24. I first figure out exactly what the problem is</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I try to determine what caused it</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I do what I have done in the past to solve it</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I compare each possible solution with the others to find the best one</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. After selecting a solution, I think about it for a while before putting it into action</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Taking the lead...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29. I am determined when I have a goal in mind</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. I reflect on what I have achieved</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I consider myself to have good self-control in difficult situations</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I am known for inspiring other people to action</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. People follow my lead easily</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. I have high expectations of myself</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. I know how to access opportunities to be a leader</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I am known for resolving conflicts</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. I try to do the right thing</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. I am grateful for things in my life</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Helping others is important to me</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Section Four – How you feel supported

This section asks you about how well you can rely on your friends, parents/guardian, brother(s)/sister(s) and other adult(s).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there friends you can depend on to help you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your relationships with your friends provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognised by your friends?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a friend you could trust to turn to for advice?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you depend on your parent(s)/guardian to help you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel your talents/abilities are recognised by your parents?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you turn to your parent(s)/guardian for advice?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your relationships with your parent(s)/guardian provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you depend on your brother(s)/sister(s) to help you?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your relationships with your brother(s)/sister(s) provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by your brother(s)/sister(s)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could you turn to your brother(s)/sister(s) for advice?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section Four

13. Can you depend on other adult(s) (e.g., sport coach, family friend) you know to help you, if you really need it?  
   No  Sometimes  Yes

14. Does your relationship with this adult provide you with a sense of acceptance and happiness?
   No  Sometimes  Yes

15. Do you feel your talents and abilities are recognised by this adult?  
   No  Sometimes  Yes

16. Could you turn to another adult for advice?  
   No  Sometimes  Yes

17. How long have you been in Fortide? ______ years

18. Have you been involved in another youth organisation (please name) ____________________________
   For how many years? ______

19. Do you take part in any community or volunteer activities? (please circle one) YES or NO
   If YES, approximately how many groups or organisations are you involved with? ________________

20. Do you have anything else you would like to add:

Thanks for completing this survey!
Appendix G: Ethnicity & Living Arrangements

Bar Chart: Ethnicity

Total population of Foróige ethnicity 2011
Appendix H: Living Arrangements

Bar Chart: Living Arrangements

Appendix I: One-Way ANOVA Mean Score for Gender and Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Leadership T1</th>
<th>Comparison T1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent WB</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience1</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience2</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision M</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical T</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Work</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Skills^</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend Support</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Sup</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling Support</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Support</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sup^^</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esteem</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience Tot</td>
<td>71.49</td>
<td>74.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^ Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.

^^ Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling and adult support.

Levene’s test for homogeneity p < .05 null hypothesis rejected

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001
Appendix J: One way ANOVA Mean score for Leadership Self-perception and Grade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>LeadershipT1</th>
<th>ComparisonT1</th>
<th>LeadershipT1</th>
<th>ComparisonT1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y  N  Sig</td>
<td>Y  N  Sig</td>
<td>A/B  C  D/E/F</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent WB</td>
<td>7.4 9.4 ***</td>
<td>8.1 9.9 *</td>
<td>8.1 8.9 12.2</td>
<td>** 8.6 9.6 10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience1</td>
<td>36.3 34.5 ***</td>
<td>36.3 34.2 +</td>
<td>36.2 34.0 31.2 +</td>
<td>36.1 34.3 30.8 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>12.1 11.6 11.9 11.9</td>
<td>12.1 11.2 12.7 +</td>
<td>12.1 11.7 10.2 +</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience2</td>
<td>39.3 37.0 ***</td>
<td>38.8 37 +</td>
<td>38.4 37.5 36.7</td>
<td>38.9 36.4 34.8 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>12.5 12.2 12.5 11.9 +</td>
<td>12.7 11.8 11.5 **</td>
<td>12.4 11.9 12.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision M</td>
<td>14.9 14.7 14.9 14.4</td>
<td>15.6 13.3 13.7 ***</td>
<td>15.6 13.5 12.1 +</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical T</td>
<td>18.7 17.4 * 18.0 17.0</td>
<td>18.7 16.7 15.3 ***</td>
<td>18.3 16.6 15.5 +</td>
<td></td>
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^ Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.

^^ Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling and adult support.

+ Levene’s test for homogeneity p < .05 null hypothesis rejected

*Significant at .05, ** Significant at .01, *** Significant at .001
### Appendix K: Paired T-test Mean score for Comparison Group T1 v T2

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^ Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.

^^ Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling and adult support.

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001
Appendix L: Paired T-test Mean Score for Comparison Group over Time (T2 v T3; T1 v T3)

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*Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.

^^ Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling, and adult support.

*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001
Appendix M: Mixed-Between within ANOVA for Leadership vs Comparison over Time

Leadership skills

Life skills

Community Involvement

Social support

Resilience total
Appendix N: Focus group theme, sources and references

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Appendix O: Paired T-test Means score for low ‘risk’ group

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*Life skills calculated based on total decision making, critical thinking, communication skills, goal setting, team work, problem solving.
^^ Total social support calculated on total friend, parental, sibling and adult support.
*Significant at .05, **Significant at .01, ***Significant at .001
Appendix P: Mixed-Between within ANOVA for Low, middle and high ‘risk’ groups over time

**Leadership skills**

**Life skills**

Empathy (high ‘risk’ group scored higher than the low risk group)

Social support

Resilience total

Community involvement
### Appendix Q: Interview Themes - Social Support

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